

“A Full Day”

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UCC at The Villages, FL
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Psalm 130

Mark 5:21-43

‘With all my heart, I am waiting, Lord, for you! I trust your promises.’

Psalm 130:5

Let us pray... O God,

Help us to operate more and more from the heart

with one another, with the world, and with you.

Amen

This afternoon I will be at The Church on The Square
and it has been my practice to tell the stories of our faith.
I figure that is safe enough for a gathering of Christians
who will most likely be traditional and conservative –
though I will be reciting the Sermon on The Mount
and in my own words.

This text is familiar enough, yet – as we have been learning in
our book study class, Meeting Jesus Again For The First Time,
Jesus’ message often challenged common sense wisdom.

Today, I thought I would speak to the concerns of many Christians –
both conservative and progressive,
about how our society is changing in ways
that don’t seem to be for the better.

It seems like traditional values are being discarded or ignored –
for example, the controversy about not permitting
religious activities in public spaces

Prohibiting the public display of The 10 Commandments is an example,
but why don’t we Christians never make a fuss about displaying
The Sermon on The Mount?

When we get down to it,

Jesus was hitting us where we live with The Sermon on The Mount,
but in good ways, because he is challenging us to follow the ‘law’
that is based on love – loving-kindness.

I believe it is the blueprint for what the American Dream
should aspire to be God’s Kingdom ‘on earth as it is in heaven’...

The next time I visit The Church on The Square –

July 22nd, three weeks from now, I will tell the story from Mark 2-5
about a day in the life of Jesus which happened to be a Sabbath.

Willard, p.2

And what a day it is...

Our Gospel lesson today is the concluding episode of that narrative that began with Jesus and his disciples on their way to the synagogue at Capernaum.

When the disciples pluck heads of grain for a 1st Century “drive thru” breakfast, religious experts tell Jesus they are breaking the Sabbath laws.

When Jesus heals someone in the presence of the Capernaum congregation, they’re infuriated and they go to work on the Sabbath to plot against Jesus – just a little irony there.

And on the following morning – no longer the Sabbath, the same people from the Capernaum synagogue are waiting for Jesus on the beach because their leader’s daughter is dying.

And without a word of protest, Jesus heals the child; And did you notice it ends as it all began – with food, when Jesus says, “Give her something to eat.”

Healing illness and feeding the hungry were considered to be violations of the Sabbath laws – yet plotting revenge was not.

Sad, isn’t it, when people turn a blind eye to what is good just to prove they’re right.

But a number of people from that Capernaum synagogue had a change of heart – and that is the main theme of what this cycle of stories is about.

It is about keeping your heart open to affirm what is good while opposing evil – and being able to tell the difference.

It is about not hardening your heart to conform to social prejudice, but trying to live an authentic life now – which is what eternal life is, and preparing your heart for heaven.

It is about being yourself – now, ‘on earth as [you will be] in heaven’ by integrating the in-ternal world of your heart with the e-ternal world yet to come, without being deformed by the ex-ternal world’s prejudices...

And Jesus models this by taking us along with his disciples on a day that is filled with adventure, conflict, and discovery.

Willard, p.3

Have you ever had a day like that? I don't mean when you were so busy that you lamented there were only 24 hours in a day because you couldn't get everything done to please your boss, your teacher, your family, or yourself. But I'm talking about a day so filled with wonders that you just couldn't pack one more thing into it.

Perhaps it was the day you met the person who would become your partner or spouse.

Perhaps it was the day your first child was born or when your child first left home to go to school or pursue a career.

Perhaps it was a day you were told you had a diagnosis from a physician that challenged you to fight for your life or a report that relieved you from fear.

Perhaps it was a day you set off on your own journey of discovery – your own Odyssey despite 'the devil or the deep blue sea' not only to find safe haven at day's end, but even buried treasure all along the way.

Perhaps it will be when you walk out the door today and just start looking past any personal disappointment, fear, or grief – let alone the world's broken economy and sectarian strife, and start seeing the sanity of God's world and the grace that God sends in the midst of it all.

A day in the life of Jesus is like taking a step into eternity – where it's always "now" and you've got all that you need, already, because you are living in the midst of God's mercy.

And Jesus and his disciples returned to find a crowd waiting for him in whose midst was a woman waiting for her own miracle of mercy.

I have previously put forth the possibility that the 12 years of her illness and the age of the little girl imply they are mother & daughter and that by healing them, Jesus also restored a broken family.

And if you consider that the crowd was made up of the same people who had been so angry with him the day before on the Sabbath, now desperately waiting for him to heal their leader's daughter, then Jesus did successful heart surgery for a community as well.

The narrative concludes as it began as a challenge to individuals – and communities, to keep hearts open to affirm what is good.

Amen

*Our lesson today comes from Psalm 130 which proclaims God's mercy
and reminds us to call upon God – especially when we feel
we are in over our heads....*

1 From a sea of troubles I call out to you, Lord.

2 Won't you please listen as I beg for mercy?

3 If you kept record of our sins, no one could last long.

4 But you forgive us, and so we will worship you.

5 With all my heart, I am waiting, Lord, for you!

I trust your promises.

6 I wait for you more eagerly than a soldier on guard duty
waits for the dawn.

Yes, I wait more eagerly than a soldier on guard duty
waits for the dawn.

7 Israel, trust the Lord! He is always merciful,
and he has the power to save you.

8 Israel, the Lord will save you from all of your sins.

Mark 5:21-43

[21] And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; and he was beside the sea.

[22] Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Ja'irus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet,

[23] and besought him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

[24] And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.

[25] And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years,

[26] and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

[27] She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

[28] For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well."

[29] And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

[30] And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?"

[31] And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"

[32] And he looked around to see who had done it.

[33] But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

[34] And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

[35] While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

[36] But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

[37] And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

[38] When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly.

[39] And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

[40] And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.

[41] Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Tal'itha cu'mi"; which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

[42] And immediately the girl got up and walked (she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

[43] And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.