

23 - JESUS AND POWER - Part 2

Luke 8:40-56

The third and fourth incidents are imbedded together, but revealed to the disciples (and to us) that Jesus had power over disease and death. They also focus on Jesus' special concern for women and children. Then too, they show a special aspect of Jesus' healing ministry: just touching his fringe of his garment and hoping for what had not yet happened was enough in both instances.

Back in Galilee, he was met by Jairus, the leader of a local synagogue whose only daughter was dying. Her death at twelve, on the threshold of puberty, would have been a great family tragedy. There would be no grandchildren. On the way to the family home, Jesus was interrupted by a woman suffering from a hemorrhage lasting for twelve years. She had been unable to bear children.

It was the woman's own faith that brought about her healing in the midst of a great crowd of people. Many of the crowd would have crushed against Jesus too, but they were curious onlookers, not people in desperate need. It was her faithful hope for healing that brought her to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, possibly just the fringe of his prayer shawl.

At the family home, Jesus put the faithless mourners out of the house, but took the parents and three disciples in with him into the room where the child lay. Taking her by the hand, he spoke to her. Her spirit returned and she immediately rose from her bed, alive and well. He then told her parents to give her some food, but not to tell anyone what had happened.

Was the girl comatose and just presumed dead? We always look for rational answers to the riddles of Jesus' miracles. But that is not the point of these four healing miracles. They all tell us that while Jesus had tremendous power over nature, demons, disease and death, he used it only for one purpose: to help people find faith in God's love and will to save. He responded to more than just real human need for life and health.

In telling of Jesus blessing the woman with the terrible hemorrhage, the Greek text used the same word often translated as "save." Her faith had saved her. That is the implication of the woman coming forward to identify herself, She came "to proclaim" - that is the word used in the Greek text too - why she had touched him. Luke made the connection between this woman's healing and the proclamation of the good news of God's salvation through faith. In the instance of Jairus' daughter, there is a connection too between what was needed and a future promise: "Only believe, and she will be saved."

Jesus wanted to convey the hope of faith to the disciples and to us. Note that in the very next section the disciples are sent out to do exactly what Jesus had just done: drive out demons and heal diseases (9:1-6). This was the apostolic mission in its earliest stages. Having learned what faith could do from Jesus himself, they were challenged to go out and proclaim the same message.