

Receive the Gift
June 27, 2021, Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of Mark 5:21-43
Fr. Brad

Whenever I feel my gratitude and appreciation slipping into self righteousness and entitlement and complaining about how things are compared to what I might like them to be, I think of Satan and the envy and pride that got him thrown out of Heaven for his insatiable envy of God. In spite of how beautiful and close to God he was, it wasn't enough.

Imagine what human life can be without jealousy, envy or pride.

Throughout the Gospel, we see that Jesus is satisfied to be Himself at the service of the Father and all of His creation and he became the source of healing and new life for a broken world. In His humility he grieves for others' losses rather than his own. In today's Gospel, Jesus once again demonstrates that Love is stronger than death. Only love brings life. Envy brings death.

Everything in life is gift and nothing is to be snatched, grabbed by force, or claimed by right. Life can only be received as gift, respectfully, and in its own time.

Life can only be received as gift. Similarly with love, it is love when it is freely given and freely received. We often say God loves us unconditionally, yet this must be qualified to include that love is something that must be received as gift and not just taken. Love snatched by force is called rape.

In our readings today, the issue of humble acceptance of gift is addressed. In the first reading from Wisdom, we are reminded we were created in goodness, a wholesome creation. But through the devil's envy, evil entered the world and disrupts God's good work.

In the 2nd reading, Paul alludes to the need to work toward a fair balance, a sharing, a coming together in generosity into which we were originally created. But due to envy, pride which entered the world, these along with the accompanying fear and mistrust of one another emerges a vast imbalance, a reticence to share in one's abundance and thus there is a poverty that does not need to be. It is in our humility and gratitude for the gift of life that we share with one another without fear of not having enough or of giving too much away.

In our Gospel Jesus Himself demonstrates the humility and service to God's creation originally intended for creation.

We see in the account, a sense of urgency as Jairus interrupts Jesus out of love for his ailing daughter and shortly after, is interrupted by the woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years.

His life-giving and healing power is over sickness as well as over death itself.

The woman is poor, an outcast, with nowhere else to turn as she appears to have already tried doctors. She is also scared of being noticed so she sneaks up and touches his garment without permission. Nevertheless, she responds to the request to come forward and identify herself. This would have taken some humility to do this in front of everyone.

It was the belief at the time that someone who was unclean under the Mosaic Law and who touched another person would make them unclean. So she might have feared she had made Jesus unclean as well. Her honesty and faith in Jesus impelled her to come clean and as a result she would be made clean. She accepted all the potential consequences of her actions, risked it all, just so she could be made clean, ultimately an act of humility. And the result, Jesus called her “daughter” in front of everyone....and that her faith has saved her. Her shame was now gone, her standing in the community restored, she was resurrected from social death.

Jesus healed her shame as well as the hemorrhage. And by calling her daughter, Jesus showed that she was as precious to him, as Jairus’s daughter was to Jairus. Jesus always invites us to a deeper faith. We may have faith at a certain level but it is through exercising it that we discover more about the reality of God’s love for us and that we can give over our entire selves to His care. ‘Do not be afraid; just have faith’, are words that are meant to touch us and empower us to reach out and touch others in a healing way.

Healing includes not only the physical healing but the restoration of meaning in a person’s life. If I have a purpose, despite being disabled physically or incapacitated in some way, alone, grieving, traumatised by loss or abuse in early life - - if I have a purpose, a loving purpose in life, I have a deeper healing.

Physical healing does happen by seemingly miraculous events sometimes. But many times not. Yet this need not quash our faith in the one whose purposes are beyond ours.

The real enemies are envy and pride. May they be far from us, and may the seeming many afflictions we face in life not distract us from being thankful for the great gift of life itself.

May we find purpose through our faith, a faith that ultimately says, ‘Thy will be done’, and trusts patiently in God’s loving ways. His Love is at the core of His creation. Amen.