

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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In today's gospel we get a "twofer" - two stories in one. At first, it *seems* like today's passage is about Jairus' sick daughter but then suddenly, the story takes a turn as an unnamed woman tugs on Jesus' garment. The story of this woman is sandwiched in between the beginning and the ending of the recounting of Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter.

The writer of Mark is known for using this sandwiching technique- so that we, the readers, would ponder the two **together**.

And, when we do that, we immediately see that these two individuals coming to Jesus are quite different. First, Jairus- a synagogue leader- is named. The woman with an issue of hemorrhaging is unnamed. Jairus comes right up to Jesus, speaks to him directly... the unnamed woman just sneaks up behind Jesus, perhaps not feeling worthy to look him in his eyes and even speak to him. Jairus acts as his daughters' advocate- begging Jesus to go to her. Even the disciples seem to be advocating on behalf of the girl as they urge Jesus to continue on to his house. The unnamed woman has no one to plead for Jesus' assistance on her behalf.

Two people in need... but when it comes to healing, to doing something about their situation- they come from different starting places. One starts off with you might

call an advantage- more resources, more confidence, more standing in the community, and more advocates...

Today too, we see this playing out again and again in our healthcare and medical communities.

We see this with disparity with the treatment of COVID on the world stage. When the US President got diagnosed with COVID, he got whisked off in a helicopter to receive care and drugs only available to his stature. In contrast, the vast majority of people with COVID did not have access to that kind of care and meds and had to suffer and die alone in hospital rooms, away from family, away from their community, away from their advocates.

And we also see this disparity today when many in the LGBTQIA+ community have to endure painful reparative --quote-- “therapies” that see their sexual or gender identity as a problem to be solved. Like the unnamed woman, they **endure** much under many religious leaders, and physicians, **much is spent** on these sorts of treatment; and they often **grow worse** with the trauma of having to undergo such degrading “therapies.”

Even now, many members of the LGBTQIA+ community must go from doctor to doctor looking for a healthcare professional who will speak to them with dignity and find them the help they need. While the healthcare system hasn't been perfect for me either- as a straight, cis-gendered person, however, I've never had trouble

finding a doctor who doesn't question something as basic as my gender - which is a privilege many trans-gendered individuals don't have.

We are all part of the same human family, all part of the same country...But some start out with more consideration, more access, more insurance, more advocates than others...

In our text today, through this comparison- the story of the unnamed woman sandwiched in with the story of Jairus and his daughter - we see just how radical Jesus' love is. Jesus not only brings two *individuals* back to life in a sense, Jesus also heals a *community*.

You see- the unnamed woman and Jairus were part of the same Judean community- but of completely different worlds within that community. Jairus was a synagogue leader - perhaps a pharisee- and most likely had never crossed paths with the woman.

And here, Jesus, meets them BOTH in their brokenness, and heals them BOTH on the SAME DAY. We see just how similar they are, and the common humanity they share in their desperation. And when Jesus names the unnamed woman...Jesus calls the unnamed woman "Daughter" - (he says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well") - Jesus connects her to the girl, Jairus' daughter- and shows that they are BOTH beloved children of God. They are both part of God's family. And by doing this, Jesus restores BOTH of them back to their community.

For at least this one moment in time, these two very different people with different stories are connected. Their stories unite. Jesus heals individuals and by doing so, erases some deeply held divisions in Judean society.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians tries to continue this vision for a connected and united community. He urges the church in Corinth to seek a **“fair balance”** and NOT TIRE of seeking that united community, that community where the disparity is lessened... that community where there is a fair balance - where all can share out of their abundance and receive in their need.

So too, WPLC has a chance to continue this vision of a community with a fair balance among all people. Often Jesus’ healings are just seen as personal stories of healing and transformation - but this passage of the side-by-side stories of the woman and Jairus- ALSO calls us to think about the imbalances of resources in OUR society and they call us to join Jesus’ vision of making those disparities less and less.

And as I think about the disparities in the queer community I mentioned earlier, this passage calls us to make it known in our homes, jobs, and governments that ALL people - including members of the queer community- are beloved children of God, and should be treated as full members of their community - in EVERY sphere of life.

On this Sunday that we are celebrating Reconciling in Christ Sunday, I remind you that WPLC has been a Reconciling in Christ congregation for **15 years**, which means we’ve been publicly seeing, naming, celebrating, and advocating for people of all

sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. That is a LONG time, and it is a big part of WPLC's DNA.

So, what better time than now, on our first Sunday back in the building, to think about how we might continue to work together towards the vision of Jesus- one of lessening societal disparities FOR and WITH the queer community.

Now I know we are all just trying to get back to normal life after a pandemic and this is our first Sunday back to in person worship so you might be saying, **“Come on Vicar Bethany, give us a moment to ease into things here...we don't want a bunch of action items on our first Sunday back!!”** But! This is important! And honestly, it has been a part of WPLC for a long time now - what better way to end this sermon on our first Sunday back to in-person worship.

SO... *if you are* interested in ways to advocate for members of the queer community, I invite you to learn more about our partnership with the Lighthouse foundation and their many campaigns to make sure people who identify as Black and Queer here in Chicago and the North Halsted community, experience full inclusion in all aspects of life.

OR...I invite you to learn more about a campaign that WPLC is looking to start to change the Chicago building code to allow for non-gendered bathrooms to be written into blueprints and building plans.

You can ask me or Pastor Jason more about either of these things if you'd like to find out more about either of these things. Or if you have a different/new idea about how we can advocate for and with the queer community- we'd love to hear that as well.

Dear friends, I'll leave you with this. On this big day of transition back to the sanctuary, when everything feels new and you might have a million other things on your mind- I hope you heard that Jesus heals **communities** as well as individuals. And that we are called and empowered, to do the same as we walk in Jesus' footsteps and the early church in adapting that vision here in our society today. And please... definitely, don't leave.... without having heard that , ABOVE ALL ELSE - **Jesus names you**- whether gay straight, transgendered, whatever your sexual identity or gender identity- Jesus **calls and names YOU a beloved child of God**.

Amen.