

February 2, 2020

Mark 5: 21-43

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Book of Mark is most likely the first of the four gospel books to be written, sometime in the late 60s CE. In this season of Epiphany (from Christmas to Lent) we read through the first half of the gospel which focuses around the question of the identity of Jesus. Starting in Chapter 8 the story moves to one of conflict between Jesus and the forces aligned against him.

Today's section is a marvelously written story within a story that echoes the previous story of the demon-possessed man on **THE OTHER SIDE** of the Sea of Galilee (Gentile land) where the healed man is told to tell everyone what God has done for him. Here a Jewish family is told to tell no-one of what has transpired (hard to do when you seemingly come back to life from the dead!)

be made well, – This expression means to be delivered from suffering or danger, medically it means to be released from chronic or life-threatening illness. This salvation cure is individual but often contains a communal connotation. Looking at the stories today – the two women are delivered from their trauma – but who else is healed, or made whole?

suffering from hemorrhages – She mostly likely have a heavy uncontrolled flow of vaginal bleeding. If it was precise, but less awkward to say (like a nosebleed) Mark would have probably been more precise. When a woman was menstruating she was considered “ritually impure or unclean” and so was required to leave her home, her town and her sanctuary until the flow ended. This was because blood was considered the life-force of creatures, what we mean when we talk about the “soul.” See the whole of Leviticus 17 which includes “¹⁴ For the life of every creature—**its blood is its life**; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.” The Torah Law contained specific rules about women in the traumatic situation of this woman. On top of her medical condition and possible pain of cramps with the bleeding, she suffers a traumatic isolation and banishment from society as per the law in Leviticus 12:

“¹⁹ **When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.** ²⁰ Everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean....

²⁵ If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness: as in the days of her

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat **TO THE OTHER SIDE**, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, “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 So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been **suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.** ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will *be made well.*” ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before

him, and told him the whole truth.³⁴ 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, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?”³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only **believe.**”³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then 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 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!”⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was **twelve years of age**). At this they were overcome with amazement.⁴³ *He strictly ordered them that no one should know this*, and told them to give her something to eat.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What part of today’s story grabs you?**
- **How does it intersect and interact with your life today?**
- **How does Jesus restore the different people suffering from trauma in this story to peace?**
- **Jesus overcomes the natural human reaction to flee from uncomfortable situations, where we don’t know what to say. He stays, he engages, he articulates his love of the woman, the girl and Jairus. His actions proclaim that God is in this hot mess, despite death, pain and trauma. How do you hear an invitation from the Spirit of God in the example of Jesus in these stories to you – or to us - to speak, be, act or become in our world, community and families punctuated with trauma?**

she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.²⁶ **Every bed on which she lies** during all the days of her discharge shall be treated as the bed of her impurity; and **everything on which she sits shall be unclean**, as in the uncleanness of her impurity.²⁷ Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, in water, and be unclean until the evening.” -

in fear and trembling This expression is the same as that used in Philippians 2:12 – “¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with *fear and trembling*;¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” It expresses the awe experienced in the presence of God’s power.

the whole truth – this is the equivalent of our expression today when we are sword to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Daughter In the First Testament this is a typical respectful and affectionate mode of address to females regardless of age or family relationship. For Christians, it would be connected to Jesus’ concept of the Christian community as a new family in Mark 10:29-30 (and elsewhere) – “²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, [³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”

your faith has *made you* | **believe** : The word in Greek for faith & believe is *pistis* – with implies not just intellectual assent but emotional involvement and commitment and is sometimes better translated as “trust” (Marcus)

Most of today’s notes come from the commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Joel Marcus in the Anchor Bible Series.