

Trinity 5 2024

Wisdom 1.13-15

Psalm 30

2 Corinthians 8.7-end

Mark 5.21-end

Our reading from Wisdom sets the scene so beautifully teaching us that God's will is for the 'wholesome generative forces of the world'.

Generative – it is a word of continuing life into the next generation – it is a word of fertility, the Spirit of God hovering over the world full of hope and the promise of continuing life,

The wholesome generative forces of the world – for us as Christians, this is the Gospel, this is the Good News in the person of Jesus Christ – and Mark shows us this in the interweaving of these two stories from our Gospel. We hear of a 12 year old girl close to death and a woman bleeding for 12 years, if you want to look them up there are lists and lists of the ways that 12 is a significant number for Jewish literature. Here of course the link is to fertility and therefore life. A 12 year old girl is on the brink of her life giving years, and the woman bleeding for 12 years probably approaching the end of hers

Now we may struggle with the association of women's value in their ability to bear children, but I am going to suggest that we set this aside for now, and just allow Mark to tell the story in his way, using the richness of Jesus' encounter with the life giving potential of these two women.

So let's begin with Jairus, the leader of the synagogue in Capernaum responsible for the good order and conduct of worship, a respected figure in the community. I wonder how it felt to have Jesus living in his town? A bit of a headache really - He may have been thinking of Jesus as a bit of a loose cannon, a dangerous heretic even – after all the lawyers from Jerusalem have already come down to investigate and declared that he has a devil in him.

Are we then surprised that he puts this all to one side and falls at Jesus' feet? – literally on his knees in the dust begging for the life of his daughter? Well many of us can relate to the desperation of a parent for his child – but even so, I think it is a place to pause, and recognise this is no small thing that he did - that Jairus was able to put aside all his prejudices, and risk his reputation, his authority and standing in the community for the sake of love. This act will have had repercussions, he will have been the subject of gossip –and put him in an award position going forward -

Perhaps it is not until we are tested to that point that we know just how much we would give up, the sense of understanding where our true values lie – for many of us for most

of our lives we are not asked that question – but I might suggest it is the central question that the Gospel continually asks us – when we read about ears of wheat falling to the ground and dying, when the young rich man is asked to give up all his possessions, when the disciples declare that they will give up everything to follow him are these are the 'generative forces of the world which are wholesome' ?

It took a great deal of courage for Jairus to have made this step.

And then, sandwiched in this tale of the restoration of this child on the brink of womanhood, the potential for new life ahead of her, we encounter another woman, this time at the end of her fertility.

We begin by learning that this woman's uncontrollable bleeding has dominated her life for 12 long years, she has spent everything she had to find a cure. She, like Jairus reaches out to Jesus in desperation. We are told that in touching his cloak she is cured immediately. But – and this might be hard for us to understand, Mark makes it clear that this is not the moment of healing.

Jesus stops. He turns to this woman who has tentatively reached out and touched the hem of his cloak, and tells her that her faith has made her well. This does not mean that the intensity of her belief was what cured her of her bleeding – such ideas have been horribly damaging and incredibly unhelpful. The importance in this encounter is her restoration back into society, *this is the generative life force that is wholesome,*

This woman was suffering from a constant loss of blood – which would have been sapping her strength and vitality – literally losing her life blood – 12 years of feeling unclean, of being excluded from society, 12 years of receiving other people's pity, of her sorrow, the failures and dashed hopes. Her healing was of restoration, of wholeness, social inclusion into a newness of life, an opening of a new sense of possibilities – *the generative forces of the world which are wholesome*

This may speak to us of how healing and wholeness and restoration touches our life. This is not to say we are to welcome suffering, but neither are we to pretend that it does not exist, that we are to push it away or attempt to cut it out of our lives. Our society struggles with the idea of suffering – society asks us to put on a brave face, to hide away until we can smile and say we are fine. But this woman found the courage to go against this, to step out – to ask for help, to risk one more failure – and this is no small thing.

Because what is rather wonderful is that when we do reach out, we can find we are not alone. When we reach out to touch the hem of his garment, we find ourselves being held by the One who loves us best of all.

This is not a quick fix, or an easy answer, but a sense of finding the space where we can truly be ourselves, our truest self it does have the potential to promise a deeper

broader possible world through love and desire for wholeness, and the certainty that the one thing that remains through it all is love, both given and received,

And to know that at some level love cannot ever truly fail, that God has gone before us, walking alongside us, is brought to us in the significance of our communion service – Jesus is the bread of life, his body taken into our body – this moment which reaches back in time and forward in hope - this is the generative life force which we partake of, this is the power of the Spirit enabling us to live and work for the sake of God's kingdom. This same Jesus who healed the woman and the girl continued to love even to the point of death and beyond, and remains present to us now and forever, surrounding us with peace and holding us in love -

Truly, the generative forces of the world that are wholesome.

