

2nd Sunday after Pentecost - June 14, 2020 - Saint David's, Halifax NS

(Using the readings from Proper 5, Year A)

Readings: Genesis 12:1-9; Psalm 33:1-12; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Call to Worship: *(Psalm 33:2-5)*

² Praise the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.

³ **Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.**

⁴ For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.

⁵ **He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.**

Prayer: *(adapted from Psalm 33:20-22)*

**Our soul waits for you, O Lord;
you are our help and shield.**

Our heart is glad in you, because we trust in your holy name.

**Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.**

Receive our worship in Jesus' name. Amen.

Genesis 12:1-4

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Matthew 9:18-26

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, ²¹ for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ And the report of this spread throughout that district.

Reflection:

The woman has obviously heard of Jesus—perhaps from a distance she has listened to his teaching, has watched his hand reach out to bless and to heal, has seen his face warm with compassion. But because of her condition relegating her to the edges of society, she does not want to draw attention to herself, she does not want to risk rejection and humiliation by being seen, she does not want to put Jesus or herself on the spot by asking for his healing touch for then he would be unclean, too. So, with head down, moving slowly, hoping not to be recognized, she comes up behind him and touches the hem of his garment.

Suddenly she feels a rush of healing power surge through her body. Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus feels that power go out of him and he asks, “Who touched me?” But Matthew says only that Jesus turns and sees her, saying: “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” Far from being criticized or rejected, the woman is welcomed by Jesus into the family of faith; he calls her “daughter.” She is no longer an outcast. She is restored not only in her body but as part of the community.

That is Jesus' purpose: to restore, to include, to heal, to reconcile.

Jesus says to his critics who complain he spends his time with the "wrong" kind of people: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. . . . I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

But there is a kind of irony in those words that we sometimes--too often--miss and it has to do with who are the righteous and who are the sinners.

What if we realize that we are not the righteous ones but the sinners,
what if we are not well but sick,

what if we are not at the centre of the community but at its fringes?

And what if, maybe, we do not even recognize those needs and failings in ourselves or in our society or in the church?

It is all too easy for us in the church to think that we are not the ones needing restoration or healing. So, even with our best intentions in reaching out to others, we can carry with us a kind of condescension and therefore an attitude that we know best, a certainty that our world view and experience is right.

But, if we are honest with ourselves, we are compelled to climb down from our pedestals, to leap off our high horses. For, if we are honest with ourselves, we identify wounds and chronic conditions—physical, emotional, spiritual—that keep us from being fully who we are meant to be and that threaten to isolate us and erect barriers against others:

fears, shame, guilt, anger, prejudices, anxieties, errors, self-doubt, grief.

As we see all too well in the turmoil of these days, it is not just as individuals that we carry this deep malaise undiscovered and un-remedied--it is in our society, in the church, sad to say. We pretend all is well, reluctant to look in the collective mirror until we are forced to, afraid to take the step forward toward wholeness.

And yet, and yet. . . we *want* to be well. We mingle with the crowd, edging closer to Jesus, perhaps hoping that even he will not really notice. It is so hard to admit that we need

healing. It is hard to reach out to touch the fringe of Jesus' cloak. It is hard to respond when the love of God comes close -- because it means we are vulnerable, sinful, at times wounded, human beings in need of the grace of God. And if we are open to that powerful grace, it will change us and how we live, set us on a new path, open up new relationships with God and with others. And then what? Are we willing for God to lead us forward into this new life?

Jesus turns and sees the woman and says,

"Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well."

This is the great, good--and terrifying--news of the gospel:

Jesus calls a marginalized woman "daughter" and restores her to community;
he takes a young dead girl by the hand and raises her to new life.

And the report spreads throughout the district--so that everyone knows that people thought to be of no account are precious to God, that no one is beyond God's concern, that no situation is hopeless when God's resurrection power is at work.

Take note: God intends that all should have life and have it abundantly.

That's the terrifying part of the gospel to all of us who resist change and revel in the status quo or turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to another's suffering.

But also, Jesus says, take heart. Take heart--all who feel frightened, isolated, desperate, vulnerable, wounded, ashamed.

Take heart, for the great good news of the gospel is that the love of God comes close to heal us, to forgive us, to invite us to new life and new community.

The love of God has come to earth in flesh and blood, it has come right into our life. It is revealed to us in Jesus who eats with sinners and who breaks down barriers of every kind and who considers no one an outcast. The love of God comes close to us in Jesus Christ and we are all welcomed as daughters and sons.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer:

Each thing we have received, from you it came, O God.

Each thing for which we hope, from your love it will be given.

We offer our deep gratitude.

Kindle in our hearts within a flame of love to our neighbours,

to our foes, to our friends, to our loved ones all,

from the lowliest thing that lives,

to the name that is highest of all., to your name, our Sovereign God;

through Jesus Christ our Lord in whom your love comes close. Amen.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
Amen.*