

“Jesus Loves ALL, Even You”

II Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 5:21-43

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Hamden Plains United Methodist Church, Hamden, Connecticut

Perjah Delgado

I'd love to start my message today with two things: Something I'd like for you to remember and a reflection. Okay first things first, Jesus loves ALL, even you. If you don't remember anything else, please remember that. Now to the reflection: How would you feel if you had to confess your worst sin, I mean your deepest darkest secret to our wonderful worship hosts before they led you "in" today? Just so that you could feel welcomed to come here? Let's just take a moment and silently reflect for a few seconds how that would make you feel.

When I say the word church, I start to wonder what comes to your mind. Church, church, church. You might have some sort of memory of that one Wednesday Night or Sunday morning that one of the very spiritually mature leaders from your church told you that if you confess with the right words that Jesus Christ came to save us from sin and you invite God (who has always been referred to as "he") into your heart-you won't burn in hell with all the "bad" people. And, if you follow this Jesus guy, that one rebellious friend that might pressure you into getting a really cool tattoo will have to go because they might hinder your salvation. That you have to dress up, put a smile on your face, regardless of how you're feeling, and come to church-like this is NOT your choice. And we can't forget about "the CALLING" that God has for you that will impact the rest of your life. Your parents tell you very sternly once you hit the teen/young adult years: You are to get married, then have kids, and not the other way around. Oh, I'm not done. People who liked the same-sex and were "sinners" in the eyes of the church were horrible, and unless you were trying to convert them from homosexuality to "the American dream", you were to leave them well enough alone, hoping and praying that you would not end up like "them". If you're new with us, you might not even know what I'm talking about and may think that Christians are just people who can't swear and say "Oh my God", and have to follow all of these rules to get to a heavenly place after this life-which from the outside looking in might seem like it has nothing to do with this life. It's 2021, and this is the picture that Christians have painted of the church. I don't know about you, but if I was from the outside looking in, I'd be confused about Jesus, God, Christians, and everything in between. Once again, Jesus Loves ALL, even you.

But don't worry, I'm ready to explore a new idea today, that Jesus demonstrates in the Gospel we just read.

To start this radical message, Jesus had just crossed to the other side of the water in a boat and was probably tired after his long ride. He probably wanted to stretch his legs a little bit like we all do after our bodies have been in the same position for a while. But as soon as he gets out of the boat, there's this great crowd right in front of him. I like to imagine this crowd like the press, taking pictures, asking questions, broadcasting the news to everyone else. There were probably people of all ages present just to see and learn about this cool guy they heard about named Jesus. As Jesus is standing by the sea, a high official, well-known religious leader, practically a ruler in the synagogue named Jairus comes to Jesus and humbles himself saying that his twelve-year-old daughter is dying and he needs Jesus to lay his hands on his daughter so that she would live-which is a way of healing. Just in case some of my fellow friends from Sunday school are wondering, Jairus' name means "he will illuminate", so we'll have to see if he lives up to his name. Illuminate means to clarify something or make something clear. So the question I'd like for you all to think about is: What is Jairus clarifying in this passage? Well, Jesus Loves ALL, even you.

Anyways, Jesus follows Jairus so that he can heal this little girl, which is a "Jesus-ey" thing to do. Like he was vibing. But, we know that wherever Jesus goes, here comes the crowd, the press, whatever you want to call it, continuing to bump into him and talk to him and get photos of him. Jairus is probably frustrated because this crowd could be slowing down the only hope of his daughter living. As if this wasn't enough for Jesus and Jairus, there is someone else. This "someone else" is a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She's been bleeding on the inside for not once a month, but twelve years. The reason I am emphasizing this point is that Jewish Law stated that anytime a woman bled, she was deemed "unclean" until she stopped bleeding. So, just like if you have COVID-19 you are contagious for a while, the woman is "contagious" until she stops bleeding. She had to stay in isolation and she could not touch anyone. In today's world, she would be online shopping, cleaning up behind herself, and sanitizing anything she touches. I don't know about you, but this sounds a little bit familiar to me.

This woman has visited many doctors, the best and the worst. She's probably traveled and has done anything she can to be healed. Yet, here back in Bible times, there was no medication available to this woman who was deemed

different for twelve years, and Jesus was her only hope. So, we know so far that this woman was unclean. Jesus loves ALL, even you.

Here is the different woman, who is “unclean”, “gentile”, “unnamed”, who spent all her money, whose condition is getting worse, who was abused by the healthcare system, which people of different nationalities who are not “white” fear because they may be treated like they are less than human. They may go to the doctor hopelessly and know that they aren’t going to get a personalized dosage of medication because there is an assumption that they can endure more pain. This woman who has dealt with the healthcare system for twelve years has finally found a new cure. She caught a thought, she started with what she knew, then made an effort to change her life for the better and she found a man named Jesus. Jesus loves ALL, even you.

So imagine this dramatic moment in time where this woman reaches out to Jesus, grasping his cloak, knowing her condition, knowing that she is not to touch anything because she is unclean, and she touches him. Immediately she feels it throughout her body that she has been healed from this disease. That she would no longer be unclean because Jesus healed her.

Now, Jesus, who felt it in his body that someone was healed, stopped in the middle of the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” His disciples were obviously very impatient and annoyed as Jesus stopped in the middle of nowhere to figure out who this person was. **However, Jesus wanted to make this public.** Perhaps so that the people would see that this radical love has no boundaries so that people were aware that Jesus would save whoever wanted to be saved. This woman told Jesus the truth. The difficult truth that she had made him unclean, and anyone else she had touched in the crowd trying to get to Jesus. I can imagine the crowd gasping and turning away from this woman as she broke the traditions, everyone there angry and confused because they could be “unclean”. Now, the crowd has a choice. Does the crowd believe in the practices of purity or Jesus? Jesus, a Jewish man, offered a different understanding of Jewish traditions emphasizing the idea of justice and mercy. Therefore, Jesus ignored the disciples’ annoyance and looked all around for this different woman. And she was trembling and scared. Jesus looked at her and said, “Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.” Jesus gave us the power to change the “laws” and challenge them because Jesus loves ALL, even you.

He is then interrupted by the people in Jairus' house, panicking because they think Jairus' daughter is dead and Jesus said to them, "Do not fear, only believe." At this point, Jesus has made the decision to leave the crowd behind and only took his favorite three, James and John (the brothers of their time), and Peter as he walked into the house of this high official Jairus. When he got there, it was a mess. **Oh, people were weeping and wailing, making a public commotion-just think like in today's world we rebel, march, and protest for what we believe is the right way- the people who wanted this girl to live made a public commotion.** When Jesus tells them that this child is sleeping, everyone laughed at him and mocked him for it because they know it all. They thought that Jesus was actually serious. What if by "sleeping" he meant that this situation is only temporary? **What if he meant, wait a minute I have to challenge this woman's assumption that she is not worthy of being my daughter because that is what the "tradition" says?** So, Jesus, still tired from his boat ride, and the disciples, and now the pressing crowd, has sent everybody away except for his three favorites and the mother and father of this little girl. He took this girl by the hand, told her to get up, and this twelve-year-old stood up. Everyone was amazed. Since Jesus knew that she was hungry, he told them to give her something to eat and not to tell anyone-probably so that he would not be prematurely killed.

Phew. This was the Gospel that was a part of today's lectionary texts- one of them including the 2 Corinthians passage that was much shorter. Why were these stories, out of all the stories in the Bible on the schedule for June 27th, smooshed together for someone to preach on? Why am I leading you through this story slowly so that we can understand every little detail of what's going on? Because Jesus loves ALL, even you.

This story that we just explored together exhibits two characters that are opposites on the social spectrum. Jesus, instead of continuing his journey to Jairus' house, brings everything to a halt and seeks to see the face of the poor. This woman implied that she and Jairus were equals, and she told him the whole truth. Jesus then acknowledges this woman that sought him out as "daughter" and as soon as people come and interrupt Jesus because they think this twelve-year-old girl is going to die, he then looks at the synagogue leader and tells him to believe, almost looking at this woman as a role model, and then continues the journey. Jesus' healing journey took an essential detour, one that stops to listen to the pain of the excluded. Only when the outcast woman is restored to "daughterhood" can the daughter of the synagogue also be restored to life. That is

the faith the privileged must learn from the poor. That is the faith that the church must learn, despite our “laws”, it’s okay to bring things to a halt and make sure we all share the same message as the church.

Jesus made it very clear to us what his new idea of the church is. A place where all are welcomed. A place where no one is turned away. A place where we question and feel and learn together, despite our differences. A place where people who don’t believe what we believe, are not automatically going to hell. A place where salvation may mean being made whole with one another in relationship and that maybe salvation isn’t achieved until justice is done for all. It doesn’t *just* have to be a ticket out of hell. A place where you don’t have to dress up or say the right words to worship. A place where lightning is not going to strike if you say “Oh my God”, but rather if you use God’s name to support your personal beliefs that have nothing to do with this radical message of Jesus. A place where you are led to make a dangerous inclusive public statement so that all know that they can come to Jesus who will make them whole. A place where BIPOC and others feel safe as we embrace a place where there is no intentional racism, that instead we embrace our diversity.

Sometimes the world is a place where a certain group of people rules over everyone, and when others try to get far, it is difficult because something is holding them back, whether that is the color of their skin, their age, or ability. The church is a place where people should be allowed to explore who they are and what they came for. It’s for the people who have been abused by many, the ones who feel they’ve tried everything, and can’t just be a Jairus to automatically go to the head man are welcome here because sometimes we search and search until we find the right place. Like I said, Jairus represented privilege in the society in Jesus’ time. He knew who the manager was! Those people who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community can come to church and know that they are welcomed and AFFIRMED here- and that no one will tell them that they are to repent or die or use slurs to condemn their relationship and their happiness. A place where LGBTQ folks CAN LEAD and reconcile too! A place where women CAN LEAD and preach too! It’s such an amazing message - Jesus says I welcome you-as queer as you may be, as unclean as you may be, as much of a survivor as you may be, regardless of how many people you’ve abused, married or single, young and old, baptized and new to Jesus, gay and straight, I welcome you. Yes, even you. Jesus loves ALL, Jesus loves you, even you.

Friends, we have a mission statement that says we are safe and welcoming. Meaning that ANYONE who walks through those doors, or drives into our parking lot is welcome here. It says that our goal is to reconcile divisions and connect people with the power of God- even if that means taking a risk and doing something a little radical that might not impress the crowd. If Jesus was still walking on this earth, he would not only be ministering to the lost, but he would be preaching to the ones that the church would not welcome or allow to walk through those doors because ***that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.***

So this morning, I came to remind you that Jesus stands with us, dies with us, and rises with us. To remind you that ALL means EVERYONE. If Jesus was still walking on this earth what do you think he would be doing? Protesting? Creating new laws? Healing? Raising people from the dead? Serving Holy Communion? Welcoming new people into his ministry? He would be doing all these things! As a church, we are supposed to be at the heart of peace. So this week my request is for you to get yourself into some good trouble. Go out and make a change. Help us with dinner for a dollar on Saturday so that there will be no more people going hungry. Welcome ALL into the church. Let's show everyone the way the church should be TOGETHER just as Jesus did. Just as love does. Love fights for justice. Love fights for peace. Love walked among us. Jesus loves ALL, even you. Amen.