

Great love and great faith go together hand in hand, which is what allows us to have great hope for what is to come.

When we have deep love for someone, our spouse or partner, our children, our families or friends or communities, we feel and pray and hope with them on a different level, especially when healing of any kind is needed.

Whether someone is sick physically or mentally, or some sort of conflict has grown, or some other type of division or hurt has happened, the love we have for our fellow people leads us to have hope for life that is new.

Because of the miracles of healing we have heard of and seen in the scriptures and in our own lives, we know things can be different when healing comes, which gives us great faith in the power of the one who heals, Jesus Christ.

All of the people in need of Jesus and his healing in our stories today lived out this intimate and powerful connection of love, faith, and hope, and give us hope for healing of many kinds in our world today.

One of my professors Dr. Alan Padgett proclaims the idea of “miracles as signs of the inbreaking reign and realm of God.” That the miracles of healing are signs of God breaking in and working in our world, but this does not eradicate all disease. That Jesus raises people from death, truly and certainly, but does not do away with dying entirely. Death does not have the sting it once did, but the pain and hurt and grief of life is still incredibly real. It’s these times of hurting that we lean on God, are desperate for the presence of Jesus in our lives, and indeed serve as times to show up for one another in community, in friendship, in relationship, as God certainly does for us by the power of the Holy Spirit in every time and place.

It’s in this space where we are desperate for the assurance of God, for the incredible healing power of Jesus, where we find both Jairus, the father of the little girl who is dying, desperate to keep her alive, and the woman who powered her way through the crowd, empowered by her faith, to try this very last thing for her own healing by Jesus, the Messiah. They both needed the sure miracle that is healing by the power of Jesus Christ.

We meet Jairus in this place of deep emotional and spiritual distress because of his daughter's illness. He has done everything he can to keep her alive and has come to nearly the end, desperate for her to stay alive, and begs Jesus to come and bring the healing she desperately needs. So Jesus makes his way through the crowd, and it's in the middle of that crowd of people that we see Jesus is different. Though he is human, his divine power and ability to heal is clearly evident too.

This first woman who is physically healed in today's Gospel did so at great personal risk, and was absolutely desperate for something to change in her life, to make this pain and these symptoms go away. She was exhausted by the hustling for healing that she had done up to this point. She exhausted her funds, her body, the skills of the people around her in this city, and yet after so many years of this hustling, trying, giving absolutely everything she could to get better, she actually got worse. All these burdens she carried with her as she rushed to Jesus, just for the chance to touch his cloak and from that touch have a new life going forward. The past has led to suffering and near death, but her great hope for the future comes in these desperate actions. And from that touch of Jesus' cloak, even without his knowing what had happened, this woman knew, in her body, within her very being, that she was healed.

Jesus is so full of divine power, given to him by God, that even just the touching of his cloak can bring about healing powerful enough to stop years and years worth of painful symptoms. And Jesus didn't even know that this healing power had happened initially - he needed to do a double take to realize what had happened, and then met the woman where she was, in her vulnerable humanity, humbly coming forth to explain what happened. Jesus isn't upset, instead he meets her with compassion, and gives her the kind and confident reassurance she needs, that her faith in the God who creates, loves, sustains, and heals, is what made her well, and will continue to keep her well. It's this deep and dear hope for a future filled with faith and free of confining, deeply painful symptoms, that changes this woman from the inside out.

Healing is so much more than just an ending of symptoms. Yes, this woman who touched Jesus' cloak was healed in one important way because her hemorrhages stopped. But what's focused on more than just the bleeding stopping, was that she felt in her body that she was healed. She had wisdom and knowledge in her spirit, in her mind, in her heart. Something changed within her that brought that confidence of healing. And Jesus' conversation with her is not at all about her physical symptoms, but instead that her faith made her well. Faith comes to us in physical moments, of course, especially in moments of physical healing. But it's the deeper reality that faith makes us well, that having the spiritual and mental wherewithal to actually go and touch Jesus' cloak that makes the healing Jesus provides so different and so much more radical than what we previously knew.

We come back to Jairus' story and the journey Jesus is taking through the town, through the crowd, when someone tells them that Jairus' daughter has died. That the journey took too long, and that she was dead back in their home. Understandably, the people who were grieving with Jairus' family, the members of the community who knew this girl, were absolutely distraught, weeping and wailing and grieving like it was their job. When you're in that deep of a state of grief, it's hard to accept anything anyone tells you that does not align with what you believe or where you're at. So naturally, they laughed at Jesus out of pure disbelief when he said she was just sleeping. Without the distraction from these public grievers, Jesus went in the house with a trusted few, and indeed, miraculously, brought this girl back to life. He held her hand and spoke powerful words for her to get up, and by the power of God she did. She had new life, once again. What an incredible, nearly unspeakably miraculous gift. And Jesus, being the compassionate human he is, knew this girl needed something to eat, to tend to her newly-risen body, as soon as possible. If we needed any more evidence that Jesus was fully human too, understanding the need for food and nourishment is a great way to know for sure.

The faithful people in our stories today did not let the pain of the current moment stop them from knowing that through Jesus, new life can certainly

come in the future. We have sure hope in Jesus, that death has lost its sting, that the forces that defy God will be overcome, that the impossible breaking in of God is certainly possible because God is the creator of life and love, and is worthy of our great faith. The miracles we have the gift of witnessing, in scripture and in our own lives alike, give us a foundation for this great faith that truly God is breaking into this world and the kingdom of God is coming nearer each day. The hope we find in miracles like these healings, are possible because of God's great love for us, love that died a human death and rose again in great power and might, a true healing for the sake of the world.

As we ponder and pray, holy Lord God, help us to be open to your breaking into our world. Help us to bear joyful witness to the miracles still happening each day. Comfort us in our grieving, in the places we are in deep need of healing. Strengthen our faith, and give us great hope for what is to come. In Jesus' name, we give you thanks and praise. Amen.