

I have never understood the appeal of someone having a “stiff upper lip”. This idea that we need to keep our feelings entirely to ourselves, even amidst friends and family, is so counter to what seems like natural human behavior to me that it’s hard to comprehend. We’ve been taught that we need to keep our feelings in and to ourselves, that we just need to get over them and deal with them and move on.

But why would we have big feelings and just normal human emotions if we weren’t meant to use them somehow? If we weren’t meant to have them, learn from them, even live in a way that nurtures and supports them? It can be scary to get in touch with your feelings if you’ve ignored or denied them for a long time. It can be overwhelming to feel emotions especially when they’re activated during a really stressful time, like grieving or intense stress or even real joy after a challenging season. It’s certainly vulnerable to be so open about such a tender part of being human.

One thing I am sure of though, dear friends, is that your feelings are never too big for Jesus to handle. Jesus walks with you, knows the pain and joy of what it is to be human, and God can certainly handle whatever it is you are carrying. Through God miraculous and healing things happen all the time - they are certainly possible and real. And we simply have to trust that as the united body of Christ in the world, God’s faithful people joined together as one community, that we can hold each other’s feelings too. Knowing God is bigger than anything that may make us uncomfortable or overwhelmed or any other human thing is a sure gift and joy that we can find in following Him throughout our lives.

The man who cried out for Jesus in today’s Gospel lesson does so from a place of great emotion and knows that Jesus can handle what he needs. He goes against the norms of the time, calling loudly in the midst of a big crowd, desperate for Jesus to see him and show him mercy and ultimately, make him well.

So let’s think about the situation that this man, who is described here as a blind beggar, is in. It makes complete sense that he shouted for Jesus to have mercy on him, that he let the raw humanness within him and in his

situation dictate his actions. Being blind and being forced to beg because of the harsh and unfair systems created by humans is unbelievably challenging in any time and place, but the ancient Greco-Roman world was certainly harsh for him and all people who needed support or help beyond a nearly impossible norm and standard. This would have been a hard, painful existence where he often would go without what he needed.

And in the midst of this hurting, this pain and hardship, all the people around him do is tell him to shut up. They don't listen and they are uncomfortable by the racket he is making, disturbing their actions of following Jesus. The crowd believes following Jesus and faith as a whole needs to look and behave in one certain way.

The crowd kept telling this man to keep quiet, to keep his struggles to himself. But he is so truly convinced of the healing power of Jesus Christ that he cannot help but continue to shout and ask for Jesus to have mercy on him. To help him, heal him, make him well.

The man's faith has ultimately made him well. And the key part of the miracle is his sure conviction that Jesus was the one who had the power to give him sight and indeed change his life by his mercy and actions. He calls Jesus the Son of David, acknowledging the power of Jesus, descended from Israel's kings, and the promised, foretold Messiah who had come to heal and save and bring new life to all of God's chosen people. And this power, this trust and faith in Jesus himself, led him not only to call on Jesus for his sight, a seemingly impossible feat, but to begin a new life after he regains his sight, of following Jesus. His faith and his encounter with Christ indeed gave him a new life of discipleship and perspective and participation in the world.

It's easy to think that restoring the man's sight after being blind is the miracle. And truly being able to see after the difficult life of being a blind beggar is absolutely miraculous. But where does this leave folks who aren't able to regain their sight or be healed in the ways they ask for? Are they not blessed or the recipients of miracles?

This is why Jesus does not explicitly say things like, “now that you can see, you are well. You are blessed because now you can see.” This is not how Jesus works. He instead says, “go, your faith has made you well.” What makes one person well may very well be different from what wellness is for someone else. Not everyone desires the same outcomes or needs the same steps to get to a particular place or state of being. Not everyone experiences their emotions in the same way or expresses them perfectly, in the way that others will immediately understand and know what to do. And that’s simply part of being in human relationship with one another. Rather than striving for perfection in the ways we seek out being well for ourselves, it is our faith that makes us well. It is the way we live our lives, conduct ourselves, care for our minds, bodies, spirits in the light and life of Jesus that makes us well. It’s the fact that when we are at our worst or in our most difficult times that we cannot help but cry out for Jesus, our dearly beloved Savior and Lord. It’s the fact that we say, “thank God!” when we are relieved or receive good news in our life. Jesus is that good news. Jesus is the one who has the power to change our lives, not make us perfect, but to make us well, make us human, make us loved. And our faith that his goodness, his healing, his incredible love is for us is ultimately what makes us well.

When you are in need, dear friends, do not be afraid to speak up. Ask for help. Lean on your faith, that we as the body of Christ in the world, united by the Holy Spirit, will help and make you well. There is so much goodness and healing to be found by leaning on one another as the one body of Christ. We are meant for community, dear friends, and it’s in these relationships with love as our foundation that we are truly well. Let’s meet each other in our humanness, in our feelings, with kindness, grace, and love, which all have the power to bring life anew. I pray that you find the help and healing you need. And I pray that indeed your faith in the God through whom all things are possible and in Christ who heals, redeems, and gives us new life will continue to make you well. Thanks be to God, Amen.