

Coming to Our Senses: Touch  
February 17, 2016  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, IA  
Rev. Amy Larson

Revelation 21: 1-4, Mark 5.22-32

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Jairus' daughter is at the point of death.

- She's about to slip out of his reach, to cross the barrier between life and death.
- He is panicked and desperate,
  - the way we so often feel anytime it feels a loved one is slipping away from us, for whatever reason.

Life can throw up so many barriers between us and those we love, death, illness, addiction, time and physical distance, emotional estrangement, can all draw us apart.

When any of those things threaten, we are often desperate to keep our loved ones in our grasp, to hold on to them, to do something to overcome the separation.

When death threatens Jairus' daughter he seeks Jesus out, falls at his feet and begs Jesus repeatedly to come lay hands on his daughter so that she might be healed.

Jesus goes to do just that.

But on the way he's interrupted by a woman facing barriers of her own.

Her illness, bleeding that will not stop, means she is considered ritually unclean and barred from touching or being touched by others.

So she suffers alone, isolated, experiencing only painful treatments under many physicians. Nothing helps; and, through her ordeal she is barred from the kind of gentle, loving touch that means so much when we are ill.

She has no one hold her hand as she awaits news from a doctor; no one to give her a gentle kiss on the forehead as she faces long hours of pain; no one to rub her shoulders.

Her illness is a barrier to the healing touch we all need.

When she comes across Jesus' path she senses that just touching him could heal her.

She senses that he carries divine healing within his very being.

So defying all that her culture tells her should separate her from this Son of God, her gender, her ritual uncleanness, her suffering, she reaches out to touch him.

This act of reaching out, and the faith that it demonstrates, bring her healing.

But even more than physical healing, she is made well.

She experiences the truth that nothing can separate her from the God who makes us well in mind, body and spirit.

Meanwhile Jairus' daughter has died.

His friends come with the tragic news, telling him not to bother the teacher anymore.

Yet still Jesus goes to the girl, takes her hand and lifts her up to life.

He overcomes the barrier between life and death.

We experience so many barriers to the life God intends for us, so many barriers to health, wellness, relationships and relationship with God.

We so often feel separated from God, especially when illness, hardship or death strikes.

Our struggles, our pain, our questions, our doubts can leave us feeling as isolated as the woman who couldn't be touched for twelve years.

Yet in Jesus God has come to show us that nothing can separate us from God.

In this lifetime we may not experience the kind of physical healing that comes for Jairus' daughter or the courageous woman who touches to Jesus.

One day, mourning and crying and pain will be no more and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

But for now, we still will face suffering.

But in Jesus God has reached out to us, to show us that nothing, not illness or addiction or estrangement or distance or hardship, nothing, not even death, can separate us from God.

Jesus has overcome all barriers, even death.

- So whether we live or die, we belong to God.
- Whether we suffer or experience healing, we belong to God.
- Whether our loved ones or relationships are healed, we are held together in God.
- We can entrust our lives and our loved ones to God.

God has reached out to us in Jesus Christ.

God has also now made us into the living body of Christ and filled us with the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we can touch one another with the love of God.

With our hands, our bodies, and our physical presence we can bring healing and hope to those in need all around us.

God is present in our broken, hurting bodies: drawing us into God, bringing wholeness, and working within us to touch our world.

So tonight let's experience the healing power of touch. Let's come together as the body of Christ and lay our hands on each other's shoulder.

I'll offer prayers for healing and strength from the healing service in the hymnal.

Let us pray.

Living God, through the laying on of hands [and anointing],  
grant comfort in suffering to all who are in need of healing.

When they are afraid, give them courage;

when afflicted, give them patience;

when dejected, give them hope;

and when alone, assure them of the support of your holy people.

We give you thanks for all your gifts of strength and life,

and above all we thank you for the gift of your Son,

through whom we have health and salvation.

As we wait for that day when there will be no more pain,

help us by your Holy Spirit

to be assured of your power in our lives

and to trust in your eternal love;

through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

