

Let us pray... Healing God, pour out your Spirit... In times of joy and in times of sorrow, fill us with your hope, even when all else seems hopeless... Amen.

Summer is officially in full swing... And that means one thing is for certain... Road construction... Lots and lots of road work, traffic delays, re-routing of traffic... etc....

Basically, all the things that make getting from point A to point B a challenge...

Especially when traffic is barley at a crawl or has completely stopped ...

And without fail, there are always those people... You know the ones who come flying around in the lane that has been marked closed for the past few blocks or maybe even the last few miles...

And yet they always come, changing lanes at the last second possible...

And then there are the delays not caused by construction, but rather by of an accident.

When police do their best to direct traffic so that the ambulance can get through as fast as possible...

However, sometimes the ambulance gets to the scene before this can happen, so they are left maneuvering on their own, weaving in and out of traffic as best they can...

And I imagine, if in this situation, an ambulance was slightly tapped by another vehicle, that they wouldn't stop and get out of the vehicle... Look around, find out who just barely touched them... And then proceed to have a conversation with them.

I'm guessing they would keep on going, so that they could help the person in need...

And this is the kind of tension we find in our gospel in today...

Our story starts with Jarius, a wealthy synagogue leader, begging Jesus to heal his very sick daughter...

Only problem is, Jesus and Jarius are surrounded by a sea of people and Jarius' daughter is miles away...

They are essentially stuck in traffic, doing their best to maneuver through the sea of people, making their way to the little girl.

When all of a sudden Jesus feels the slightest touch on the hem of his cloak...

But instead of moving on... Instead of making his way to the sick girl... He puts on the breaks... And not just any breaks... He pulls the emergency break...

First, by asking who touched him... Then he asks to hear her story... Then he takes the time to listen to her...

Which is quite counter cultural... So often when you ask someone, how they are... You can pretty much guess their response...

And I'd be willing to bet that one the most common responses are ... How busy people are...

And I get it... Because I also know what it is like to be busy... In fact, yesterday when I was working on this sermon, I had to forgo some of the visits I wanted—because sometimes there are times when things need to get done...

But what if we tried our best to take time for one another?

What if we took the time to ask, how are you, really?

I wonder what life could look like if we all weren't too busy to listen?

Of course this is an idealistic way of thinking, because it would be nearly impossible to have an in-depth conversation with every person you come across each day...

But there is something to be said, about truly taking the time to listen to someone...

And this is something that Jesus wants us to pay attention to.

Especially since Jesus could have kept on walking after the woman touched his cloak... After all, her blood flow had stopped...

And yet, Jesus stops... Because Jesus knows that healing her hemorrhage is just the beginning.

This woman has been bleeding for 12 years... She has endured significant suffering... And she's exhausted every single resource she had on a cure...

Leaving her deep in poverty and an outcast from society...

Meaning this woman needs a lot more healing.

And this is why Jesus asked who touched him...

Of course, Jesus knew who had touched him and what had happened... But everyone else didn't know.

As Dr. Matt Skinner explains, "Touching Jesus' cloak stops the hemorrhage. It cures her ailment. But a more holistic healing, or restoration, comes when Jesus hears her story..."

She enters the scene alone, in secrecy. She departs it having been dignified and praised by Jesus, all while her neighbors witness."

This is the true healing that the woman needed... This is everything she has been hoping for...

For 12 long years... She has gone from having an illness, desperately trying anything for a cure, to the throes of hopelessness...

And yet even in her hopelessness she was able to muster a little bit of faith. Giving her just enough energy to outstretch her hand and graze the hem of Jesus' cloak...

And isn't that a spot-on image for faith sometimes... Especially when we are desperate for a miracle... When you feel hopeless... When you don't understand why something is happening...

When you or your loved ones are struggling with health issues... When all you desire is healing and wholeness, restoration, and some peace...

The energy it can take to have just a little bit of faith day in and day out, can be exhausting...

And Jesus knows this...

Which is why Jesus stopped in the crowd of people...

To show that God notices all kinds of faith... Even when it comes from a sea of people... Even if it is out of desperation... Even if all the faith you have left is holding on by a thread...

Because God knows how deep and complex our world is...

And God fully enters into this world through Jesus... Leading by example, showing us what it can look like when we are fully present with one another...

Jesus shows us that miracles can happen, when we take just a little bit of time for each other.

Because it is so important to not speed past the sea of people... because you never know what someone is going through.

You never know how thin their thread may be.

With Christ, you can provide a ray of hope, when all else seems hopeless.

Even when life seems beyond hope... Like the little girl in the Gospel...

This 12-year-old girl, alive as long as the woman had been bleeding, has just died, and she becomes the ultimate form of hopelessness with her death...

Because Jesus has not yet conquered the forces of death...

Rather Jesus' conquerors the forces of death at the end of Mark's Gospel with his resurrection...

And if we were to read the Gospel of Mark in its original Greek, you would notice something striking...

The Greek word used for Christ's resurrection, is the same word Jesus uses when he tells this little girl to get up.

Because of Christ, this completely hopeless situation, is now bursting with hope.

Which means that there is hope for us all. Hope for those who are desperate and exhausted like the bleeding woman... Hope for those who are on the cusp of death or the brink of hopelessness like the little girl...

And there is even hope for those who are impatient... Like the dad waiting for Jesus to talk to a complete stranger...

Because God continues to meet us, just like Jesus did that day, urging us on in hope...

To take time and notice the people around us... To embrace the journey and not bypass the traffic jams of life... To stop, listen, and lift up...

So, all may see and all may hear this good news... That in Christ there is always hope... Amen.