

## **“Persistent Faith”**

Providence United Methodist Church

Message by DD Adams

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The gospel lesson for this week is taken from the book of Mark, chapter 5, verses 21-43. I'll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. Jesus crossed the lake again, and on the other side a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came forward. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded with him, “My daughter is about to die. Please, come and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live.” So Jesus went with him. A swarm of people were following Jesus, crowding in on him.

A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors, and had spent everything she had without getting any better. In fact, she had gotten worse. Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. She was thinking, If I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed. Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed.

At that very moment, Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” His disciples said to him, “Don't you see the crowd pressing against you? Yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus looked around carefully to see who had done it. The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward.

Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth. He responded, “Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease.” While Jesus was still speaking with her, messengers came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, “Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?” But Jesus overheard their

report and said to the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.” He didn’t allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James’ brother.

They came to the synagogue leader’s house, and he saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “What’s all this commotion and crying about? The child isn’t dead. She’s only sleeping.” They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Then, taking the child’s parents and his disciples with him, he went to the room where the child was.

Taking her hand, he said to her, “Talitha koum,” which means, “Young woman, get up.” Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. They were shocked! He gave them strict orders that no one should know what had happened. Then he told them to give her something to eat. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. Let’s pray. God bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word today. Position our hearts rightly as we open our minds. Help us see our own vulnerability and to not avoid it. Give us courage to admit our need, and to not care what others think. Amen.

This story has two healings in one. Mark describes the healing of two daughters of Israel by Jesus. There’s three characters in the story—the nameless woman with the issue of blood, Jairus—a leader in the synagogue and his daughter. All were in a vulnerable and helpless state. They were at the end of their rope. They were desperate, but Jesus left them different at the end than how they were at the beginning. Let’s start by looking at the similarities and the differences.

When Jairus meets Jesus he drops to his knees and pleads for Jesus to heal his daughter who’s dying. The nameless woman is hemorrhaging and is in a weakened state. She’s penniless. She’s spent everything she’s had on her healing for the last 12 years—despite the myriad of doctors and their inability to help her. She’s been treated as an outcast and been isolated from the majority of Jewish

religious and social life. She's taking her life in her hands just by being in a crowd. She's defined as ritually unclean because of her bleeding.

The bleeding woman and Jairus are met with negative pronouncements about their situations. They're beyond help the experts say. The bleeding woman spent all the money she had and no one could help her. So out of fear and desperation she determined to go to Jesus and touch the hem of his garment. When she did, Jesus felt a release of power. The doctors who attempted to treat her show their impotency in comparison. For Jairus, when he confronts the experts, they tell him that his daughter has died, that it's no use. "Why bother?" they say.

Jesus heard their report and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting." I can hear the crowd poking fun at the situation. They giggle behind Jairus' back. They snicker at his hope as they laugh at him and his refusal to accept the *supposed* reality of his daughter's death—the faithless are frequently laughing at someone.

Looking at both, the bleeding woman refused to give up despite the negative pronouncement by the doctors. And Jairus refused to give in and continued to hope against hope as the experts declared his daughter's death to him. Meanwhile, Jesus was healing the bleeding woman. They came with faith regardless of their grim circumstances and what the *supposed* experts had to say.

The woman is healed, so Jesus continued to Jairus' home. He saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "What's all this commotion and crying about? The child isn't dead. She's only sleeping." They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Jesus took the 12 year old and lifted her up, and they gave her something to eat. Both the woman and Jairus showed much vulnerability. Jairus was a Jewish leader, and his fellow Jews were already plotting against Jesus to kill him. But what could be worse than

having a sick child who was dying? Jairus and the woman *kept* acting in faith despite their circumstances.

Jairus shows a marked contrast to the woman who was bleeding. He may have personally kept the woman from entering the synagogue because she was ritually unclean. And in the crowd, Jairus commanded respect and was a religious official. The bleeding woman on the other hand decides she has no other choice except to break the law, enter the crowd, and somehow gain Jesus' attention.

Jesus shows love for everyone. The healing authority of Jesus crosses boundaries of all kinds—ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and politics. Jesus excludes no one. He touches the ritually unclean bleeding woman, who for 12 years has suffered unimaginable rejection. She's given new life because her blood no longer flows out from her.

Jesus then goes to touch a dead 12 year old. She's also ritually unclean, but he touches her, raises her up to new life, and gives her power to one day create new life when she falls in love. One stopped bleeding and it restored her life. The other had her life restored, so that she could continue to "bleed" and eventually produce new life within her body. Persistent faith and trust are showed by Jairus and the unnamed woman. They choose to become vulnerable. They decide their healing and transformation must be the higher goal. They let go of their pride and go to what's more important.

This study brought to the foreground the need for us to become more vulnerable—to show to ourselves, and to others, that we don't have it all together. We're needy. We have things going on in our lives that only Jesus can touch and heal. Some of you think because you've begged God for a physical healing he won't do it. You've given up, but just remember this. "God may not come when you call him, but he'll be there right on time!"

Some here may think your emotional state is so embedded in you it'll never change. So you just do your best to cover up how you really feel most of the time. Others here may think they're just plain old or just too young to ever be spiritually minded enough to become what God has planned.

What about you? What's your need? Will you come to the altar today and ask Christ for healing? Will you be vulnerable? Will you ask for yourself instead of always asking for others? Will you leave in the same condition you came in today or will you leave encouraged and determined to petition God and continue to just believe? . . . . . Or . . . . . today, you *may* be healed when you reach out. Come forward and just believe. God, who heals our deepest need, move in this place. We reach out and petition you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.