

HOMILY ON THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE

29 October 2017 - Fr. Dc. Filip Lommaert

We only need to look around the other parishioners in this church to see that we are all different. We are not only different in a physical way, but in many other ways.

We come from different countries and personal backgrounds. We have different jobs and different interests. We think differently on all kinds of subjects and issues.

But, we all gather here in this church for the same reasons. We all gather here to attend church services, to pray, to confess; and to seek the healing mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today, on the Seventh Sunday of Luke, we heard how two completely different people approached Christ.

One was a powerful man, Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a man of high standing in the Jewish community. The other person was a woman, who could not be more different from Jairus. Her name is not even mentioned.

She had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all the money she had on doctors and treatments.

But nothing could help her. Nothing could stop the bleeding. She was very poor and had no means, but because of her medical condition, the flow of blood, she was considered unclean.

For the Jews, contact with blood caused defilement and lead to social and religious isolation. She would have been alone, and nobody would have gone near her or touched her.

It was also forbidden for her to enter the Temple or a synagogue. So for twelve years she had lived in complete isolation, and cut off from God.

Jairus sought out Christ and asked Him to come to his home to heal his daughter, who was around twelve years old, and who was dying. This was something unthinkable for the woman, and something she could never do.

She knew that others viewed her as unclean, and maybe she felt not worthy of getting the attention of our Lord. She was afraid to ask Jesus to touch her as that might make Him unclean too.

Or maybe she thought that He would refuse her request, because she was unclean. But although she knew her predicament very well, she did reach out and touched the hem of His clothing whilst He was standing in the middle of a crowd.

As soon as she touched Him, she was healed. And Christ had not become unclean, nor had he refused or humiliated her; instead, He had made her well.

When Jesus said “Who touched me?” she was utterly terrified. As she was no longer hidden by the crowd, she humbly came forward trembling and fell down before Him. She confessed to our Lord, that she was the one who had touched His hem.

Then He said to her: “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.”

Before her healing, she had not said anything to Christ, she had not even identified herself to Him. She did not ask Him for anything, probably because she was too terrified. But she did one thing: she reached out to Christ in faith.

Christ knew very well who had touched Him. But He wanted the woman to confess her faith.

He wanted her to confess her faith, so that she and everyone present could be convinced that Christ’s healing mercy extended even to an unclean and miserable woman.

He gave her the healing of peace and showed that his mercy is there for all, whatever their situation.

Some of us will recognise ourselves in the example of this poor woman. Some of us might have or have had a long-term struggle, an issue, health problems which have been with us for a long time and of which we are embarrassed, and of which we think we will never be able to overcome them.

We might be in a situation where we feel that we are like this wretched woman, where we have no hope for ourselves.

We might be in a situation where we think that we are unclean and unworthy of the Mercy of God or of healthy relationships with other people. Just like the poor woman, we may feel alone, unworthy, ashamed.

If this is the case, we should follow the example of the woman and touch the hem of His garment, and reach out to Him for help as best as we can. Just like He did not humiliate or reject her, neither will He reject us now.

As with all humble, sincere people who come to Him with love, and repentance, he will respond graciously. And instead of becoming unclean himself He will with the aid of our faith bring us healing, mercy, and strength.

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, approached Christ in a completely different manner. He came straight to our Lord, and openly asked Him to come to his house to heal his dying daughter.

Jesus put the faith of Jairus to the test. Although the girl had died, Christ told Jairus not to fear, only to believe, and He told Jairus and his wife that his daughter was only sleeping. Everyone laughed at our Lord when he said the words: “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.”

It must have been a horrendous moment for Jairus and his wife when they heard the news of their daughter's death. From that moment on they were in mourning, and as they started their mourning, Christ was denying what had just been said.

Although they were being tested to the extreme, they still believed. They all went to the house of Jairus and Jesus our Saviour brought the girl back to life.

For Jairus this must have been the most difficult and testing time of his life. Here was a man, a ruler of a synagogue, who was probably used to get whatever he wanted, when he wanted.

If anyone could expect the help of the Messiah, then Jairus the upstanding ruler of the synagogue was definitely at the head of the line.

But just like the faith of Abraham was tested when he was ordered to sacrifice Isaac, so the faith of Jairus was tested when his daughter did die.

Healing the sick is one thing, raising the dead another. Probably with great fear and desperation, Jairus had really nothing to lose, he still believed, if only a little. He trusted Christ as best he could.

And because of this little bit of faith, the Lord showed his power over the grave and His unfathomable mercy for His suffering sons and daughters.

The differences between Jairus and the bleeding woman in social standing and reputation in the end meant nothing as to how they stood before the Lord.

The crucial point here is that they did not stand; instead, they kneeled before Him in humble faith. Human traits and differences are ultimately irrelevant when it comes to our ability to follow the example of these two people.

Although all of us will do this in a different manner, we can all open the wounds and sorrows of our lives to our Lord and ask Him for healing as best as we can in humble faith.

And even if we may still have doubt, rest assured that He will hear us and respond as is best for our salvation, for the healing of our souls.

But one thing we must not do. We must not judge ourselves or others as though it were up to us to determine who is worthy of Christ's blessing.

And never forget this: None of us is worthy or deserving of anything from Him. Our hope is not in ourselves or what anyone owes us, but in the gracious mercy which He gives to all who reach out to Him from the depths of their souls with even a small bit of humble faith.

If you ever despair of the possibility of being healed and transformed by our merciful Saviour, remember the woman who merely touched the hem of His garment and the man who somehow trusted that Christ could bring his daughter back to life.

If you ever think that sin and death will have the last word over us, then turn to the One Who went to the Cross, the tomb, and Hades in order to bring us into the eternal joy of His resurrection.

If we come to Him in humble faith, presenting all our wounds for His healing as best we can, He will not send us away. Instead, He will heal our souls by His gracious mercy and make us already participants in life eternal.