

Your Faith Is Embarrassing
Mark 5:21-43
First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota
July 1, 2018
Rev. Glen Bell
Sermon Notes

I come in praise of Dave Cress and wonderful car mechanics. Dave was a deacon – quiet, unassuming, completely trustworthy. He would always tell me, without fail, what needed repair now, what could wait a bit later – and what was okay (even if I heard a funny noise or something strange).

Who do *we* trust? This question comes up over and over – at every level of our lives – it may be the
new friends on the playground
classmates in the school play
roommate at college
our partner in our first business enterprise
attorneys, doctors, elected representatives,
auto mechanics, pastors, plumbers and electricians

Who do we trust?

I was faced with two examples from this week: Our daughter, Meredith, was in the hospital unexpectedly for two days in Orlando. There was test after test after test – blood work, cultures, CT scan -- it's not this, it's not that, it's not the other. What is it? What is causing this pain? Dr. Mora thought it could be a kidney stone . . . but that may not be it. I trusted him more when he shared his lack of certainty.

Trust doesn't always grow in the light of certainty. Jairus, one of the leaders of the synagogue in our scripture lesson today, came to Jesus on behalf of his dying daughter. He begged Jesus, "Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."

Another person emerges out of the crowd pressing in on Jesus—a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She came up behind Jesus and touched his cloak believing, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

We are invited to learn who and what is trustworthy. This is what we discover: God in Christ is trustworthy, dependable, loving and powerful, desiring to heal us and able to heal us.

Let me share with you another example: I was sitting in the hospital with a church member whose mother was in surgery. She was deciding to get married. Her first marriage had not ended well. But she was deciding to love, love, love – taking the leap of faith. Trust demands that leap.

It reminds me of the occasion when I asked Anne, the Most Beautiful Nurse in North America, to marry me. We had dated for a year. I had discovered over and over again that she was not only lovely but also faithful, reliable, conscientious, helpful at every turn. But when the moment came, when it was time to ask her, I had to ask: Is it right, is it wise, to trust that much, that deeply, that completely? the answer was yes!

There is something right and good and human and holy about trust. We are made for trust. It helps us become who we are.

Like so many Bible stories, this one is multi-layered, with meanings we sometimes overlook and miss. Mark Edington, former chaplain at Harvard College, points out there is something of key importance about Jairus and the woman. In God's kingdom, the need of the marginalized and vulnerable woman is addressed before the need of the celebrated and powerful Jairus.

Trust, even though it is sometimes supremely difficult in this age of contempt and anger and as I shared last week, this cantankerous present moment, trust tames our fears, trust teaches us there is more than our disappointment, our anxiety.

Michael Lindvall tells this story: "I have a friend, a man of deep faith, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease when he was still in his fifties. He and his wife prayed that he might be healed. Twenty years later, he is in the last debilitating stages of the disease. Nevertheless, he once told me that his prayers had been answered. He said in all sincerity, 'I HAVE been healed, not of Parkinson's disease, but of my fear of Parkinson's disease.'"

"This biblical story in which two people turn to Jesus for healing raises the question in our hearts and minds, 'Does prayer work?' If by this we mean, 'Do you get what you pray for?' the honest answer is 'Sometimes, but not always.' But more profoundly, to ask something of God is to edge into deeper relationship with God. God's mind may or may not be changed, but I – my mind and heart – may be.

One last thought: Through God's goodness, we discover the people around us we can trust. This is what we are doing today as we as a church family share a meal together, as we welcome Zoey and Carter (being baptized today) into our family, we celebrate our spiritual family.

Once we have discovered who is trustworthy, trust brings us home, trust centers us, heart and soul, trust brings us to ourselves. Once we have discovered God is trustworthy, we are invited to trust the Lord with all our hearts, with every ounce of our being, in every circumstance.

It may sometimes feel like a strange journey, but it is the path that leads to peace – and joy.