



4th Sunday after Trinity | Sermon – Revd Canon Stan Evans

‘Do not fear, only believe’

In this Gospel passage, there is a large cast of *dramatis personae*

.....of people who receive the gentle, caring, loving pastoral attention of Christ in equal measure, each within the list of people we are told should be our priority if we truly are going to be ambassadors of Christ.

The crowd who gather around Jesus by the lake are not going to learn what the Kingdom of God is like through another sermon or another lecture, but **by seeing what Jesus does.**

After the episodes in this Gospel reading, would each and every one of them been happy to wear one of those wristbands with the initials ‘WWJD’ – What would Jesus Do?

We hear about Jesus replacing the negative thing fear with the positive thing faith because those people – the Synagogue leader Jairus as well as the poor old woman without a name, trust him – against all odds.

If they looked at our actions over these past weeks and months for an example of Christian lifestyle, would they know what Jesus does? Have we demonstrated that we are doing as Jesus wants us to do? Have we been faithful and did we trust? I truly wonder.

Jairus is a respected provincial leader of the day. He shows what true worship is when he throws himself at the feet of Jesus.

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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

He prays, entreats, begs, not on behalf of himself, but on behalf of a sick and dying girl.

If we were to look at ourselves today, would we see ourselves placing our lives at the feet of Christ and making our first priorities the needs of others who cannot speak for themselves?

But now the large crowd are pressing in on Jesus.

They really want to see what this Jesus is all about, what the Christian lifestyle is all about. And who becomes the focus of attention within this crowd?

Too often in a crowd, it is those who get to the front first, who have the loudest voices, who are heard, whose demands are met.

But in this case, it is not the loud and the proud, the rich or the famous, who grab the attention of Christ – it is a weak, timid, neglected, impoverished, exploited and sick woman. An untouchable for 12 years. Not allowed in worship. All her money has gone on so called doctors, and she has no man to stand up for her.

But look at what Christ does for her. Without knowing it, he heals her.

And when he realises what has happened, he calls her 'Daughter'.

In a society where men had the only voices, where to have a full place in society was to be known as a Son of Israel, she is called 'Daughter'. She too has a full and equal place in society, she is commended for her faith, she is restored personally and communally, she is offered healing, and she is also offered peace. From now on she can be one with herself, with her society, with the world and with her God.

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But can you imagine her 12 years of waiting and praying for that moment....

And not losing faith?

But perhaps there was a danger that all of this could become a sideshow for the crowd. Poor Jairus appears to have been forgotten. His household – perhaps religious and community leaders too – tell him to give up on Christ.

The girl is dead. Was Christ only worth what he could do for his inner circle?

If so, why bother with him any further?

Christ does not want to put on a show, either impress the pressing crowd or to prove wrong the inner circle around Jairus.

Instead, with just three closest friends – Peter, James and John – he goes directly to the house of the dying girl, where her family and friends are in the greatest distress.

What is rather shocking is that when she dies – the first reaction of some of the key local figures is to criticise the father for not securing more help for his daughter – instead of offering him sympathy and comfort. We can see that in his despair this man was finding no hope from his own community.

The lack of compassion and sympathy contrasts sharply with the compassion Christ shows to the woman who has been suffering for 12 years. She has spent all of her money with doctors and specialists. None of them has been able to offer a cure, and now that all of her money has run out.



She must have been tired of hoping for her life to change. All compounded by the fact that she is ritually uncleanno man should come near her.

Even as he was being told not to bother coming, even when he was being laughed at, Christ keeps focussed on the woman who is important here – not those who shout the loudest and who press their demands.

‘With signs of faith and words of hope he touched untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.’

Twelve-year-olds have no say and no voice and no power. But Jesus now offers her new life, new hope, a new future, a full place in society. Just remember, when Jesus was her age, he was in the Temple reading the scrolls; now at this tender age she was walking with her God.

The Gospel is Good News for the two women. They are at the opposite ends of the scale in terms of both social status and age.

Yet one “daughter” does not come before the other.

Christ has equal compassion for both, and restores them to full life, physically, spiritually and socially, despite objections from men on the scene – the privileged men who have access to the house of Jairus, or the men around Christ who find that a poor, old sick woman is embarrassing.

The girl is 12 years old, the woman had she been sick for 12 years. There's an echo through both of these stories pointing us to the same thing:

this girl who is just coming of age is given new life just as the bleeding woman who had been sick for so long is given new life.

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This week I had the heart-breaking news of the death of Laura, a dear daughter of a member of our 'virtual congregation'. Someone for whom we have prayed for many months; a devoted mother and father grieving beyond all understanding. They could easily cry '*Where was our God of love, where was the healing hand of Christ on our beloved daughter?*'.

As God sees it, it is a sleep **from which there is to be an awakening.**

Our knowledge of the world to come is limited, but it is within easy reach of the Saviour's voice and those who are dead are safe in His keeping. Jesus has power even over death.

Those people back then – they had no idea, no imagination of resurrection.

Their knowledge of the world to come was far more limited than ours is.

Jesus was only beginning to reveal more of himself, the healing of the bleeding woman took place in public as many other healings before, but bringing the child back from the dead happened behind closed doors.

Maybe at that time, he was not ready for that word to get out.

Remember his words: The child is only sleeping.

His authority extends beyond the grave – and the real comfort is that whatever happens, let us remember that when Jesus went to the cross, he made even death itself a place of hope....

Do not fear, only believe.