

We all need help at times in life. The Beatles used to sing: “I get by with a little help from my friends.” The commercial for Lifeline products carries the tagline: “Help! I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!” Where do you go when you need help? Do you call on family? Friends? Dial 911?

It was Ben Franklin who said, “God helps those who help themselves.” But the Bible teaches us that God helps those who seek God’s help. The scripture reading from the gospel of Mark tells the stories of two different people in two different ways seek and find help from Jesus.

For the past twelve years, the unnamed woman in our scripture reading looked for help.

For twelve years a flow of blood made her unclean by the religious and cultural standards of the day. And for twelve years, she lived in isolation.... fearful to go out... never welcomed anywhere... the last to be noticed and the first to be turned away.

For twelve years, she lived life on the fringes—forced to avoid family and friends. She could not attend worship in the synagogue. By the time she encountered Jesus, she had endured year after year of hopelessness and despair because each attempt to be healed had failed.

Jairus, on the other hand, was a man who lived life right in the center of it all. Everyone who was anyone knew him as a prominent leader of the synagogue. He was a man with influence and power. Everyone who was anyone wanted to be his friend.

For the past twelve years, he had been surrounded by servants and family and people who cared about what he thought and what he did. He was always the first to be invited and the first to be served.

By the time he encountered Jesus, Jairus was ready to give it all up in order for his daughter to be healed

The gospel of Mark places these two people inside of each other’s stories. I think that we are invited to watch and see how these two very different people in two different ways find the help they needed from Jesus.

Jairus took the direct approach. He was one of those people who was used to getting what he wanted when he wanted. And so, he tells Jesus quite clearly what he needed.

For many good reasons, the woman was inconspicuous as possible. She had no place, no position, no privilege, no power, and so she assumed that she would have not be welcome. However, Jesus never allowed the person standing directly in front of him—to block his view of the person hidden in the crowd. His eyes were never so focused on the obvious that he missed any of the people who lived along the fringes, just out of view. His gaze was never so high or so distant that he overlooked any of the people who had stumbled or fallen.

These two stories are a reminder that we can always come to God just as we are. All of us at one time or another need divine help.

We might need healing of our body or mind or of soul. Perhaps we need some guidance to solve a problem or some extra strength to cope with the tensions and pressures in our lives. Sometimes we need forgiveness because of the mistakes we have made and we need help to make amends. Whatever we are need of, God’s help and healing is always available. It doesn’t matter if we take a direct approach like Jairus or an indirect approach like the unnamed woman. God will always pay attention and there is always enough time, power, compassion, and grace to go round so that no one needs be written off.

A little child walked down the street, clutching the parent's hand. Along the way, the child slipped, lost the grip, and fell. The parent picked up the child and they continued along. It wasn't long before it happened again. The parent picked up the child again, but the next time, the child said to the parent: "Instead of me holding your hand, you should hold my hand."

The parent took the child by the hand. The child did not fall again.

God is waiting to take us by the hand. We need only to reach out. Just as Jesus helped the unnamed woman and Jairus, when we seek God in the hard times, no matter for what reason we are in those hard times, help will be there and healing will happen.

Thanks be to God. Amen.