

Rev Rita Message Nov 21 2021

For the past twelve years, she stood on the outside, hoping to come in. For the past twelve years, she stood in the shadows longing to be free. For twelve years, she lived life on the fringes-- avoiding people, avoiding contact, avoiding crowds, avoiding everything. Her friends disappeared a long time ago. They were lost, along with her money and her pride. For twelve years a flow of blood made her unclean by the religious and cultural standards of the day. And for twelve years, she was the last one at the well, the last one at the marketplace, the last to be noticed, and the first to be turned away. By the time she met Jesus she had been twelve years without a hug; twelve years without the prayers of the synagogue; twelve years filled with rejection. If she had anything-- anything at all left, she would have given it up just to be healed.

Jairus, on the other hand, was a man who lived life right in the centre of it all. After all, he was the head of the synagogue. Everyone who was anyone knew him. 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 his every need. He was always the first to be invited, the first to be served, and the last to leave. By the time he met Jesus, Jairus was a man to be noticed and a man that commanded attention. And yet, he too, would have been willing to give it all up, in order for his daughter to be healed.

I don't know why these stories are placed, one inside the other like a set of Russian nesting dolls. But that's how they are. My hunch is that the writer of Mark's gospel put these two stories together to remind us that no matter who you are that God's help is always available.

Jairus went to Jesus directly. He was sure of his place, and sure of his welcome. He was one of those people who was confident that if he said "Help!" that help is what he would get. The woman wasn't quite so sure and for good reason. Because she had no place, no position, no privilege, no power, her best option might be to somehow just get close to him and, maybe, just maybe, a miracle would happen. The odds were against her. More likely, someone would recognize her and she would be shunned by the crowd and by Jesus.

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 people that he missed any of the people who were on the fringes. His gaze was never so high or so distant that he overlooked any of the people who had been pushed aside.

From time to time, we need God's help. Some of us may need healing of our body or our mind or our soul. Some of us may need guidance to solve a problem or need strength to withstand challenges. Some of us might need help to find forgiveness or to be forgiving. God's help is always available no matter who we are. It does not matter whether or not we consider our faith weak or strong, whether or not we believe we deserve it or we are at the end of our rope and are simply hoping that help might be a remote possibility. This morning's scripture reading is a reminder to give God a chance. Whatever you are facing, share it with God and you will find the help you need.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.