



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

“PROUD CHRISTIANS ”
PROPER 8B

WISDOM 1:13-15,2:23-24

PSALM 30

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-15

MARK 5:21-43

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY
JUNE 27, 2021

Today is PRIDE Sunday. The gospel is even more inclusive than the message of PRIDE, and I invite us to think today about being proud and being a Christian. What does it mean for any of us – LGBTQA and allies – all of us – what does it mean to be a “proud” Christian?

Today’s gospel stories are a good place to start. Mark offers us two intersecting stories of healing. There is the daughter of the powerful synagogue leader, Jairus. (Notice that we know Jairus’ name because he is “important”, but not the name of his little daughter). We also never learn the name of the woman who touches Jesus and is healed of her hemorrhage.

We do know that this woman has been living in the shadows for 12 long years. She is in fear and trembling of being noticed. She knows that she is unclean and that by touching Jesus she is also making him ritually unclean. By her demeanor and behavior, she reveals how she is treated. She shows the attitudes of her community towards her. It is painful to imagine what her life is like and it must have been hell for her for the past 12 years. She is apologizing for taking up space, for being present in the crowd. Jesus puts the credit for her healing on her.

Your faith has healed you. Your faith gave you courage to come up and touch me. Your faith gives your confidence that there is more to your existence than one big apology. Your faith teaches you that who you are is not a mistake.

Long before Jesus is crucified, he too has his outsider experiences. His family doesn't understand him.¹ He experiences rejection and persecution from the religious leaders; the "you will never be one of us" from the Sadducees and Pharisees. The crowd chatter: *Isn't this the carpenter's son [Joseph's boy]?*² Today, when Jesus goes to Jairus' home, and says the child is only sleeping, the crowd "laugh" at Jesus. The Greek means: "laugh him to scorn" - meaning, ridiculed him. Jesus too is an outsider, even as he releases the power of Divine healing.

I expect many of us can locate that place in our experience where we felt so small, so worthless that we felt like apologizing for existing. If you have never had that experience you may be a straight white man of European descent or you may have successfully passed yourself off as such through other modes of privilege, like education. It is a hallmark of privilege

¹ Mt. 12:47; Mk.3:31

² Mark 6:3f.; Matthew 13:55-57; Luke 4:22-30

to feel that we belong. That we deserve our place in this world and in whatever community we are part of. A core message of PRIDE is: No apologies necessary. No screening necessary. You are embraced as you are.

But what comes next? For a Christian, PRIDE doesn't end with marches and new laws and celebrations. Those are stages along the way. But we know that we are not close to done with the struggle for God's version of equal justice and respect when statues of George Floyd are vandalized as soon as they are put up.³ PRIDE for a Christian is rooted in Jesus, in our identity in Christ. We respect the dignity of every human being because Jesus does and when we are baptized we promise to follow him. The struggles and milestones in civil rights are grounded in our larger understanding of the gospel call.

I have often been inspired by Paul's encouraging words about God's subversive ways. When I left England in 1986 because the church would not ordain women to the priesthood, I remember thinking: "God is going to change this". Paul says in his first letter to the church in Corinth: *God chose*

³ Statues in Flatbush Junction, Brooklyn 6/23/21 and City Hall in Newark, New Jersey: 6/23/21;

what is weak is the world to shame the strong...God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are."⁴ One way of understanding progress in LGBTQ rights, marriage, women's rights, anti-racism work, is exactly this. God chooses things that were once not accepted or even imagined to humble the powers that be, to bring to nothing power structures that once seemed absolute. God calls people once in the shadows forward into the light, silencing prejudice and overturning condemnations. This is what God does. There is still plenty of hateful speech and action, but there is movement. The Divine reversal is always in progress, and always will be, because the Holy Spirit is always at work transforming this world.

The choices we make either amplify or restrict the Holy Spirit's work. "Hospitality" and "hospital" come from the same Latin root and they are connected. Hospitality is: *the friendly and generous reception of guests or strangers.*⁵ Hospitality is what Jesus shows: the welcoming and generous reception of strangers. Hospitality heals the receiver.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:27-28

⁵ Oxford American Dictionary

Hospitality can also heal the giver. Hospitality makes us more complete too. Welcoming people just as they are into our community increases diversity because there is no way everyone who is welcomed is going to be just like us. And that is a great thing.

When we welcome others we claim our worth and identity in Christ. We own it, we stand on it. We say: I belong here and so do you. Christ has invited me and Christ invites you to be part of God's community. It can be tempting to wait for others to show initiative. To think: others are more qualified. But God equips the called. *You* are here. Christ has already called you. Let us be proud of our belovedness in Christ. Let us extend to others the same grace-full generosity that God has shown us in Christ, wherever we go. How can we show even more of the hospitality that heals in the days ahead?

AMEN

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