**Text**: **Mark 5: 21-43**

 **The Bethel Pulpit**

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What do you know about ‘interruptions’? Do you LIKE to be interrupted when you are focused on a certain project and someone taps on your shoulder, asking you to REFOCUS your attention?

Years (eons?) ago, I interviewed for a job as a personnel manager at the then-newly built Sears store in St. Paul, MN. When the interviewer read on my resume that I had been a junior high teacher, she practically hired me on the spot because she said “Anyone who has been a teacher knows how to deal with interruptions…and a personnel director is ALWAYS being interrupted.” She was right. One acquires skills in dealing with interruptions in certain jobs. Pastoring, too, demands enough flexibility in order to handle the frequent interruptions.

In our Mark text today, we learn how Jesus dealt with interruptions. Jesus has been approached by Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue. Jairus tells him that his 12-year old daughter is at the point of death and, literally falling on his knees, begging, he implores Jesus to come immediately. And so, with no delay, Jesus goes with Jairus. The text says that a large crowd of curiosity-seekers follow along. Jesus is truly on an important mission, and one would hope for no interruptions.

Yet, even for Jesus, life intrudes when we least expect it. A woman, bleeding for 12 years, came behind Jesus in the crowd. She, too, like Jairus, was at the end of her rope. Seeing doctor after doctor, with no good results, she has spent all her money and her bleeding only continued to get worse. She has heard about this Jesus and his healing powers, so, in her desperation, she says to herself: “ If only I could just touch the edge of his coat, maybe…just maybe…his healing power would cure me. “

**PRESTO-CHANGE-O !**

Her bleeding stops. Jesus senses that power has gone out of him and he asks: “Who touched me?” Sort of a silly question, being bumped and jostled about in such a large crowd. The woman probably could have remained anonymous and quietly disappeared. But the healing was so amazing, and then followed by Jesus’ question, she fearfully made herself known and told him her story. And Jesus says: Wow ! with faith like that…you have been healed ! He calls her ‘daughter’…claiming her as someone in close relationship to himself.

Maybe that doesn’t seem like such a big deal, to be interrupted for a few minutes when the healing happened seemingly instantaneously. One might say the woman was ‘stealing a healing’. Jesus didn’t have to do anything, so why would it matter that she ‘interrupted’ him on the way to lay his hands on the dying daughter of Jairus?

 When we remember that this event happened over 2000 years ago, and people some interesting understandings of healing powers. ‘Stealing a healing’ was exactly what the people in the crowd…and even Jairus…probably worried about. Healing powers were thought to be sort of like cell phones: they had a limited ‘charge’…each healer only had so many healing powers at any given time, and those powers could get ‘used up’…what if Jesus, because of this interruption, didn’t have enough healing powers for his first job…that of healing that 12 year old little girl?

Jesus’ powers for healing do not operate on a battery charge…and interruptions are not a problem for Jesus. Jesus’ powers for healing have not run out, even in these 2,000+ years.

Our first lesson was a reading from Lamentations 3:22-33. And that, too, is a story about interruption.

The entire book of Lamentations is 5 chapters long. The poet is ‘lamenting’ throughout the entire book about the destruction of Jerusalem.

I have only preached on Lamentations once in my ministry: Sept. 16, 2001. 9-11 had just happened on Tuesday…and for me, as our country stumbled over the reality of 9-11, which was just the past Tuesday, we all were ‘lamenting’. And so I read: “How lonely sits the city that once was full of people…she weeps bitterly in the night…no one to comfort her…no one to help her…what can I say to you, O Jerusalem…for vast as the sea is your ruin…who can heal you?”

The Lamentations’ text we heard today is an interruption inside that letter of despair. I like that this text is paired with the two desperate people in our Jesus’ story. Jairus…and the bleeding woman…both lamenting that they had no where to turn for help…except to Jesus.

You and I know what that feels like. Times in our lives…the storms that we talked about last week… times of desperation come to each one of us. Lamentations offers us an ‘interruption’ of grace and hope. Listen again to those words: God’s loyal love couldn’t run out. God’s merciful love could not have dried up. God’s stockpiles of loyal love are immense…the Master won’t ever walk out and fail to return…I’m sticking with God…it’s a good thing to quietly hope for help from God.

Our young people at the ELCA youth gathering have been singing about it all week:

When the walls around me crumble, when the ground beneath me shakes, when the skies above me rumble or when my heart breaks…You are there with me, O God, You never leave…Your love changes everything !