

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Last week we thought about God's power over the rampages of nature during the Big Storm. This week we learn about the same power over illness or physical malady and even over the greatest of all hardships, that of the death of a young girl. In all these instances, Jesus speaks of faith and trust in God.

Part of our spiritual journey is to increase our trust in God. Life is filled with uncertainties, confusion, and questions. We do our best to solve problems and find answers but often we have to admit that mystery remains. God is always the Lord of life and death. This fact might prove disheartening but it isn't because we believe that God loves us and would never act in any way to harm us. The Gospels contain wonderful stories of God's power being used to heal the hurt and even bring the dead back to life.

A Gospel Word for the Home Mark 5:21-43

The two stories today are wonderful examples of the concern of Jesus for those in need. Both are a response to parents with great need. First, we meet a woman who has tried every medical procedure available to her and has grown poor because of the doctors' fees that she had to pay. Her condition remains. This story has a contemporary ring to it. Jesus walks by and because of her faith in him, she merely touched the hem of his garment and she is instantly healed. Feeling that power has come from him, Jesus stops to have a genuine personal encounter with her. Jesus wants her and all of us to know that his power is not magical, but personal. It's not about touching the "magic" Jesus and presto, one is healed. It's about faith and confidence in the power of God that flows through Jesus. In a similar way, the touch of Jesus brings the young girl back to life. The story leaves open the possibility that she may not really be dead though the account suggests that she is. Here, it's not the faith of the girl, but that of her parents that moves Jesus to help. In the Gospel according to Mark we are shown that God's power of healing and helping becomes known throughout the land. Eventually, however, we also learn that Jesus is not just a worker of wonders and a doer-of-good-things for people, but he will also become their salvation through his death. Some don't like that part of the story. They want the miracles but not the suffering.

Thought for the Week

Are we really trusting in God or is our "bottom-line thinking" attached to the theory that everything really depends on us? Self-confidence is good, but so, too, is God-confidence. One of the greatest obstacles in our life is too much stress, and stress is often the child of frustration. We try to do everything for our children, and ourselves but often our effort falls short. We often find ourselves like the frustrated woman with the blood condition or like the worried Jairus. What can we do when all our resources are spent? Must we give up? Must we wring our hands in frustration that all is lost? Or can we open ourselves to the power of God and allow God to help. The prayer of surrender is found in many religious traditions. It is a prayer with great power. This week reflect on your own life and ask whether you allow God a place in your life.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Parent Survival

Years ago someone coined the phrase "super mom." This was the mother who did it all: parenting, career, housework, gourmet meals every night, and a spotless home to welcome every visitor. There is probably a similar portrait for a super dad. Dads can cook! What's missing in the above is that practically no one can be that super and the field are filled with fallen, frustrated parents who have attempted (unsuccessfully, of course) the impossible.

We need a realistic view of what we can do and what we cannot do. Also, in the spiritual arena, we need to allow room for God's help, however obscure that might be. God wants to help. God showed that willingness in the life of Jesus, especially in stories like the ones in this week's Gospel reading. All we need to do is ask.

Car or Meal Talk

Let's each name one area in our lives where we will ask for God's help.

One-Line Prayer

Faithful Father, help us when we are most in need. Amen.