

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

This morning, I want to make two preliminary points regarding today's gospel reading and then based on these two points I want to expand on the healing of the woman who was bleeding for 12 years and the little girl aged 12 years who appears dead.

Pray

Point one. The key thing in today's reading and all of Jesus' miracles is that He is God. We have seen over recent weeks that He has control over nature. He can calm the sea and the wind, 'even the wind and the waves obey Him'. Mark details, but we did not use it in our lectionary, that He has control over the demons. So even though the religious leaders think that He is controlled by Beelzebub, it is Jesus who has control over Satan and the underworld. We learn in today's readings that He has control over sickness and finally, He has control over death. All of these demonstrate His divinity. Jesus is God. This is the key point we should be learning in the miracles. Jesus is God. But it also points to God's love for us. Here are some of the new mercies, the great compassion of God that is new every morning.

Point two. When we think about these miracles, we have to think about them in light of the cross. The pinnacle of Jesus' work is on the cross and in bursting out of the tomb. In these miracles, and even in the miracles of the Old Testament, we have to look at a timeline where the cross is reflected backwards. Even though Jesus is yet to suffer and die according to human history as He heals this woman and this little girl, it is His work on the cross that achieves that healing for them. This is the cross reflecting backwards. But we also need to consider that the cross overshadows us and so the cross is shining forwards on us. With these two points in mind, let us consider our two different healings. The woman who was bleeding for 12 years and the little girl who is dead.

We begin with the woman. First, we have to consider her faith. She says to herself, if only I just touch his clothes, I will be well. This woman has heard about Jesus. She has heard about God and what God can do for her. She knows that to get what she needs; she needs to go to God. She has faith and trust that only God can do it for her.

She has experienced that others can't do it. She has seen all the doctors and taken all of their remedies and none of them have helped. They have made her worse. You may be able to relate to this. You may have tried doctors and other remedies that have made your suffering worse. This should help us learn that humanity does not have all the knowledge and all the control, but only God does. She has faith that Jesus will heal her.

We have to know that the ending of this story should be very different. We should be shocked by how this story unfolds. But unfortunately, we're not shocked because we are missing some of the background. We need to understand the background. This woman has been bleeding for 12 years. We should assume that this is some sort of uterine bleeding. Perhaps it has to do with

menopause. Perhaps it has to do with postpartum, as in after a birth. Either way, we must assume that this bleeding is related to the fact that she is a woman. This is not just a cut on her arm. This is a bleeding that for others is unnoticeable. For her, it is excruciating and has caused her great suffering. The reason to tell you what kind of bleeding she is experiencing is so that we can make the connection to the Old Testament and to Leviticus, where we find out that women who have an unusual menstrual flow, and unusual bleeding, are unclean and therefore unable to go to the Temple. For our dear woman she has suffered this way for 12 years, 12 years of bleeding is very unusual. This leaves this woman outside of the faith, family and nation. She's not able to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and access God. She's not able to go to the Temple in Jerusalem and participate in the sacrifices and therefore be forgiven her sins. She's not even able to go to Jerusalem to become clean, which is where you would go after the blood has stopped, because she's just not able to go there. (We should not see these rules as barbaric and old-fashioned, they have a useful place in Jewish society, that is to protect the people from an unprotected encounter with a Holy God.) Because she is unclean, she should also not be in public without telling other people that she is unclean. For if you touch someone unclean, you also become unclean. We have to consider the great risk this woman has taken to even be outside, and then in a crowd.

For the ending of the story, the reason why she is so reticent to speak up should be that when Jesus finds out that he's been touched by an unclean woman, and all the people around who were crushing in on him have also touched this unclean woman, that they also realize, 'oh I am unclean also, I need to now go through the rites of purity to become clean'. But this is where the surprise comes in our story. The woman's blood does not make Jesus unclean. Instead, Jesus makes the woman clean. This is crucial to the story. Jesus makes the woman clean. Her blood does not make him unclean, but Jesus makes the woman clean.

We should also connect this to Jesus' blood. And this is why I began by talking about the cross reflecting backwards. For it is Jesus' blood that saved this woman. The blood that he shed for her on the cross. Even though she is the one who was bleeding, she is no longer bleeding, her suffering is finished, because Jesus' blood reflects back to her from the cross, makes her clean, and makes her well. It is Jesus' blood that saves this woman. She trusted that he could do it for her, that it would be his blood that would save her, and she received the benefits that she trusted. This woman is healed by faith alone.

Not only is she healed from her bleeding, but she's also healed from all of her suffering, and her sins are forgiven. She is sent to go in peace. Jesus is not angry with her that she has made him unclean, nor those other people around him. He is pleased with her, at peace with her, her sins are forgiven, and she is sent and returned to her life that she lost 12 years prior.

It is Jesus' blood that reflects forward from the cross and makes us clean. The theme of blood looms large throughout the whole Bible. For it is the blood of the sacrifices that cleanse people. It is blood that consecrates things such as clothes, altars, temples, and tabernacles. It is the blood that makes things clean. When we are covered in Christ's blood we are made

clean. Here we should make the connection to baptism, Katharina has been washed in Jesus' blood shed for her on the cross. This is what makes her clean, Jesus' blood is what brings her into the family of God.

Further to this, it is his blood shed on the cross that we receive in the sacrament that makes us clean, forgives our sins, gives us life and salvation, and puts us at peace with God and with one another. Blood reflecting forward from the cross.

We come to our little girl, and we need to be reminded here that it is faith alone that saves this little girl. The synagogue leader, Jairus, in this small town on the edge of the lake, has faith that Jesus can heal his little girl who is sick and nearly dead. But the distraction of the healing of the woman means that by the time Jesus is traversing to the synagogue leader's house, it is advertised that the child is already dead. What does Jesus tell Jairus? Just believe. (We need a note on our Greek translations from Greek. Faith, trust, and belief are all the same words in Greek. We translate it differently, just to make our English sentences make sense or to fit the context of the English sentence.) Jesus tells Jairus, to just have faith. Jairus, we know, already has faith that Jesus can do it. But that was faith to heal a girl that was nearly dead. Now she is dead. He is encouraged by Jesus to believe that Jesus can raise the dead.

We should know that there's more to the story, a background to the story because touching a dead body also makes you unclean. Yet Jesus goes out of his way to go to this young girl, this little girl, and touch her, even though she is advertised as dead. The ending of this story should be very different. The ending of this story should be that Jesus went and touched her, and now Jesus is unclean, and so is the mum, and so is the dad as are Peter, James and John. Because the father Jairus is the synagogue leader, that means that he needs to go through the purity rites, although he is probably the one to administer the purity rite at the synagogue. He has to wait until he becomes clean before he can go there. And if they go in public, they have to advertise that they are unclean. The ending of Jesus' stories is always different from what people expect. This is why when we read biblical narratives, we need to consider the background and think about what is the surprise here. There are surprises all over this text.

Even in the house, before Jesus goes up to the little girl, we see a surprise that Jesus says she is not dead, but she is asleep. After Jesus, it is not unusual to consider that sleep and death are very closely related, especially in biblical parlance. Paul tells us that many have fallen asleep when he writes to the Corinthians. He tells the Thessalonians; I do not want you to be uninformed about those who have fallen asleep. Sleep and death are connected. What Jesus means regarding this little girl, is that you think she is dead, something that is permanent, but she is only asleep, something that is temporary. Here is another surprise, Jesus is going to wake her up. Although he doesn't use such words, that is what we should consider. The people laughing at Jesus think her death is permanent, and Jesus knows that it is temporary, for he is about to wake her up. Jesus touching the dead little girl should make Jesus unclean, but instead, Jesus makes her clean. Jesus does wake up the little girl, 'little girl get up', and returns her to her mother and father.

No one is unclean. Everyone has been made clean by their faith in Jesus. Everyone has been made clean by Jesus and his work. The thing that would make people unclean in these two stories, bleeding and death has been removed by Christ. This is the cross and the grave reflecting backwards. This is a reflection that Jesus' death and his sleeping in the tomb changes death. It makes death temporary. Jesus slept in the tomb, and then he came and returned to life. Jesus conquered death. Not only does he have control over his creation, over the demons, over sickness, he now has control over death.

We must see the connection for us because Jesus' death makes us clean and acceptable to God. Jesus' death brings us into his presence. His death brings us new life. As Paul writes to the Romans, in Romans 6, 'Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him, in order that we may live a new life with him.' Here the cross and the grave shine forward to us. Today Katharina has been united with Christ in death. She has had a sleep with Jesus in his tomb. She has been buried with him. She has died with him. And she has risen to new life with him.

This too is your new life with Christ. For you have also been baptised into his death and baptised into his new life. When Paul writes to the Romans, there in Romans 6, he is emphasizing how that new life should look. We should not go looking for sin to commit. Instead, we should run from sin. We should be horrified by our sin, and live in the new life that Christ has given us. Confessing these sins and receiving God's forgiveness.

Katie Claire, as you have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, and brought into his new life, as the cross and the grave have shone on you today, the cross and the grave continue to shine on you. Your baptism is not a one-off event. Your baptism covers you for your whole life. For Jesus' death is what makes us clean. Jesus' blood is what makes us clean. It does bring us forgiveness of sins, and new life.

Katie Clare, children of God, Jesus says to the little girl, little girl, get up. Today, as you have been united with Christ, and people of God, as you live in your baptism, Jesus says to you, get up. Live in your new life that Christ has given to you. Run from your sin and run to Christ, who gives you that new life, and replenishes you, refreshes you in that new life, both by his death, by his blood, and in his grave. Live at peace with God. Trust in Jesus' blood, and Jesus' death that makes you well.

This is the new mercies that God has to give you each day. New life as you arise from your sleep, stand on your feet and live as his child. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.