

## ***SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST***

***2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43***

Today's readings reinforce for us the undeniable reality that suffering is not unique to us, or to our times, and that we know very little about the ultimate meaning of death. Wars, hunger, and economic disasters abound and bring us to despair; personal illness, pain, and loss in our families cause us to lose hope.

Sometimes we feel as if we are alone in our pain; we ask, why me?

And then we read of David's immense sorrow at the death of his friend Jonathan; we read of Paul's urgent call for help for the starving in Jerusalem, and hear Jairus' cry, "O Jesus come touch my daughter so she may be healed," and we recognize that we live in a world that has always contained great tragedy, and that our experiences are not unique. We are also reminded that despite much suffering and destruction, plagues, and starvation, human beings continue to survive and to multiply.

This kind of endurance gives us hope in a world where, in every generation some doomsayer announces that the end of the world is at hand. Some of them do so out of a total misunderstanding of Holy Scripture; others because it suits their purposes. It is astonishing that people of faith hear predictions of a specific time for the destruction of the world, and that there are those who are terribly afraid because of such predictions; they listen to those who have no faith in a loving God, and allow fear to rob them of hope.

In contrast to this, in the words of the psalm 130 we heard:

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.*

These words are the focus of a person of faith: wait on the Lord. Living and faith both require patience. Fear is the result of having no one greater than ourselves to look to. Waiting on the Lord takes away fear.

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians this morning, St. Paul adds another dimension to this waiting - acting in faith. Despite his apparent conviction that the Lord Jesus would return soon, Paul does not hesitate to look after the living. In his great effort to feed the starving in Jerusalem, he does not hesitate to ask for help from all those he had brought to Christ. He is not one to say, "Ignore the poor, ignore the hungry, because soon we all will be taken up." He knows that life is a gift of God, that it is good, and that children and adults must be fed. St. Paul knows what matters, because he compares everything to the ultimate gift, instead of to the end of the world fears when he says: "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, so that by His poverty we might become rich."

Listening to Paul helps things fall into place, his words helps us achieve a mental and spiritual balance when we focus on the salvation work of God through Jesus Christ.

And finally, let us look at Jesus. His two encounters in today's story, one with a sick woman and the other with a dying girl in Capernaum, came at a time when Jesus was at His most popular.

Hundreds of people followed Him wherever He went. Jesus has just arrived by boat, and is immediately surrounded by people who are in need of hearing words of hope, by those who are sick and need to be healed, and by the curious. A man, obviously important in his city and synagogue, runs to Him, falls on his knees and begs for the life of his child. Jesus does not hesitate. He leaves the crowds to go with this father in need.

But as they walk quickly together through the curious crowd, a bent over woman approaches and touches His cloak. Not a big deal. He is surrounded by so many people that she is sure no one will notice; she is convinced that the mere touch of His cloak will heal her, and it does. Simple enough.

What is unusual about this story is that Jesus stops and asks, “Who touched my clothes?” Mark tells us the disciples express amusement and surprise at his question, however, one of the other Gospels tells us that Jesus responded by saying that he felt power going out of him. What a remarkable reaction.

There was something in the woman’s great faith, a total conviction that after years of suffering, she had found the cure in the person of Jesus Christ. One touch of utter faith and healing occurs through the power of God.

While Jesus is rushing to meet another person’s need, all this happens very quickly. The connection of Jesus to the source of life and love, to the one He called Father, is so intense and unbroken that it is like electricity: Jairus plugs into it and receives hope, and the woman plugs into it and receives healing.

Nothing else matters, and nothing interferes with Jesus’ purpose. Fame does not distract Him, physical exhaustion does not hinder Him, and the clamoring of the crowd with its multitude of desires, is shut out. Two people with specific needs have reached out to Him and He knows that He can help them,

and He does.

In the scene that follows, in the little girl's room, death has already arrived and the professional mourners have gathered.

But, as He usually does, Jesus turns it all upside down. He turns to the sad father and says the words that we all need to hear, over and over again, "Do not fear. Only believe."

There is so much fear in this country and in the world today: fear of other races of people, fear of crazy people with guns, so many fears. How do we confront them?

The psalmist's answer is to wait on the Lord; St. Paul's answer is to remember what Jesus did for us; and Jesus' answer is to be focused on Him, to be holy. So, healed like the woman who had been sick for many years, brought to new life like the daughter of Jairus, we get up from our knees, listen when He calls, and approach His table free from fear.

**AMEN.**