

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
June 30, 2024

Today's readings speak of the gift of life, both physical and spiritual, that God has given us. They urge and challenge us to be grateful for our health in body, mind and soul.

Our first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, tells us that God gave us life and health, and that it was the jealousy of Satan that produced illness and death. It also suggests that God's intent for our lives on earth is that we'll be able to know, to love, and to serve God with perfect health in body and soul, and to share His immortal Life forever in heaven.

In the second reading, St. Paul asks the Corinthian Christian community to show to their suffering and starving Jewish brothers and sisters the same generosity and compassion Jesus showed in healing all who came to him. Today's Gospel describes two of our Lord's miracles, the healing of a woman who suffered from a chronic bleeding and the returning of the dead daughter of Jairus to life. These healings show us that Jesus wills life, and wills full life for all God's children. These miracles were worked by Jesus as reward for the trusting Faith of a synagogue ruler and of a woman with a hemorrhage.

One may ask why can't God act like he used to?

Do you ever feel that way? Why can't God act like he used to, performing all kinds of miracles and wonders and awe-inspiring demonstrations and voices from the heavens and all that jaw-dropping kind of stuff? We just saw two examples of God's power in today's Gospel passage from Mark, two healings, Jesus doing what Jesus does best, making people whole once again. Why can't he do that for me? Why can't he do that for you?

After all, I have problems. You have problems. We all have people and things in our lives that need to be healed and mended and "fixed" (for lack of a better word). We all are broken in one way or another, or have

relationships that are wounded in some way, or have circumstances in our lives that are weighing us down and breaking our spirits. Why can't God just take care of all that? We, of course, are not the first people to ask these sorts of questions. Human beings have been asking these tough questions since we first tried to understand our world and wondered if maybe something or someone was behind it all. We have wondered if we were "in charge" so-to-speak, or if we were at the mercy of something or someone beyond our control, someone who was responsible for everything.

In one sense, we can't really answer the question, for the question presumes that God doesn't act like he used to, that God doesn't do life-changing things anymore, that God has somehow "checked out" and is simply watching on the sidelines. Yet, for us gathered here today (and for believers everywhere) we are invited to embrace a much different perspective, invited to accept a much different reality. Does God act like he used to? Does he? Really? For people such as ourselves, for you and for me, and for people all over this world who profess their trust in a loving God, there really is only one answer - "Of course he does."

But at times it can be so hard to believe that. But if we take a look at our Gospel stories today, we might just gain some insight into a tough issue, might get a little better understanding of what it takes to accept something that might not always be that evident. And if these stories tell us anything, they show us the importance of something we talk about a lot but often struggle to understand, the importance of faith.

There's that word again - faith. It sounds so simple, yet it is anything but. Faith is a pure gift from God, and yet it can be (and needs to be) strengthened and nurtured and cared for through our own efforts and intention and attention, by prayer and contemplation and reflection, by participation in the life of the Church and the Sacraments, through God's Holy Word, and through embracing a certain kind of humility, an openness and sincerity and willingness to accept whatever God is trying to communicate to us or is asking of us. Faith is a pure gift and yet

something that will remain dormant within us unless we accept the responsibility for caring for it, for treasuring it, for allowing it to grow through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith is on display in two ways in the stories we just heard. In one case, a man (Jairus) turns to Jesus pleading for help, not for himself, but for someone else (his daughter). And in the second case, a woman turns to Jesus for help regarding her own illness. These two stories show that our faith sometimes brings about good things for others, and sometimes brings about good things for ourselves. That's what faith does. It changes everything.

Yet, there is something we need to ask ourselves, or maybe simply need to think about. What if the two people in the story had been healed without Jairus and the woman seeking out Jesus? What if each sick person had gotten better "on their own"? What then? How would we see such a healing? And that's really the key to the whole matter.

You see, for a person of faith, deep and authentic faith, every good thing comes from God (sometimes with and sometimes without our cooperation). Every good thing. And so, had the two individuals been healed, they wouldn't have been healed "on their own". There's no such thing. God would have been behind those healings too, God would have been right in the middle of it all, loving, showing compassion and simply caring for people who were hurting.

Do we feel the same way? Does our faith help us to see and acknowledge all the good things God is doing and pouring out upon this world each and every day? And on the flip side, can our faith somehow allow us to still experience the loving hand of God, still feel that we are in his compassionate embrace, even when we are facing difficulties, even when life isn't going our way, even when we are filled with sorrow or disappointment or grief? It can be so difficult to believe that everything good comes from God, and that no bad thing comes from him. And yet, that is what we are asked to embrace. Those are the lenses through

which we are asked to see our lives and the world around us. The truth is, so often we want to give God the blame for the bad stuff and take credit for the good stuff. Imagine that.

My dear friends, God didn't stop being God two thousand years ago. He continues to heal and forgive and inspire and guide and comfort and even perform "miracles". And he asks of us simply what he has always asked, that we do what we can to make this world a better place, and at the same time turn to him - Father, Son, and Spirit, for help every step on the way.

May we, at the end of each and every day, be able to look back and see all the wonderful things God has done. It's there. He's there. We just have to see it.