

Sermon June 30, 2024
[Mark 5:21-43]

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Well, good morning again. It is, as I said, just lovely to be here today. I'll say it again: I'm Pastor Chelsea Globe from Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Washington. I've been in this call for almost four years now; I served at a church down in Federal Way before that; but Washington state is my home. I grew up down in Enumclaw, Washington; have lived in Seattle since finishing college – so, since 2009. I lived in Queen Anne after college for the first couple years, when my husband and I first got married, before we bought our house in West Seattle.

No, I've lived here since 2005 – that's when I graduated. Okay, great – I'm older than I think I am! Right? That happens, doesn't it? Yeah... so, so happy to be here – we came to church here quite a few times when we lived in Queen Anne as well. That was almost, that was 20 years ago, almost. So, yeah, a while ago.

But happy to be here with you all today and to tell you about the awesome things that have been going on with Campus Ministry and the time that I've been there. It's been one of my goals to get to all – I made a list when I first started, of all the ELCA churches within five miles of the campus, and this is one of them; so good, I've got another one checked off my list here.

And I don't know if you know this, but this congregation has a long history with this Campus Ministry, right? Many of you have volunteered or donated to Lutheran Campus Ministry, and it worked out great that my Assistant Minister this morning is one of our longest-time volunteers for Lutheran Campus Ministry, Carol Ann, she's a UW and Lutheran Campus Ministry alum herself, and she faithfully brings meals to students, and has for many, many years, and I just wrangled her into joining my board for Lutheran Campus Ministry. So she's all in now with us over there at Lutheran Campus Ministry at UW.

So I know there are many of you who have helped to care for this ministry over the years. And thank you so much for all of you who have done that; we can't do this ministry without you. We are like, like when you listen to KUOW, and they're doing their, fundraising, you know, their drive. And they say, "We are a self supporting station." We have to say that, too. We are a self-supporting ministry of the Northwest Washington Synod. We are our own nonprofit, and we do get funds from the church-wide and from the Synod. But other than that, we have to raise our own funds. So if that's something you'd like to do, see me, and there's lots of ways that you can give. We are always looking for volunteers to bring dinners on Wednesday nights to students, and talk to Carol Ann or myself about that; and we've got a lot of exciting things coming up in the next year.

I don't know how many of you actually visited the building we used to own, Covenant House? Carol Ann and – oh, a couple other hands out there. Yes, great. So, that building was owned by the Campus Ministry for a long time, since the 1960s, and they decided to sell it in 2018-ish, before I started. And we went through a time of not knowing what the future would be, what was going to happen there was some time where the ministry wasn't active. When I came on in November 2020, the tasks ahead were to One: "Find Students," because we didn't have any, since it hadn't been active, and also "Figure out where we were going to meet," because we didn't have a building anymore. And also, "Oh yeah, it's Covid, so you can't actually do any of that in person, so good luck!"

But miraculously, we, you know, with my connections across both Synods, we found students. We met on Zoom, and then we would meet for coffee and ice cream around campus. And then we started partnering with University Lutheran, just north of campus. And so, we meet there now, we rent space. I have an office. I use a wagon to pull all my stuff out to the lounge/narthex area every week.

And right now, we're talking with them about a remodel project that we want to do with them, to create a permanent space for us in their building. And it's really exciting and fun, and I can't wait for this to happen! And so, we're just working on the last pieces of financing, and negotiating what that's going to look like. So, we could really use your help and support now more than ever.

So, talk to me or Carol Ann about that after the service, or if you can't donate now, put your name on our list that's out on the table in the narthex to find out more, as we get more of that going, because it's *happening*. It's coming up soon. It's very exciting.

So, today is also very exciting, because it's Pride Sunday here in Seattle, and this is *your* first Pride Sunday as an RIC congregation, right? Yeah, yes! Congratulations! That is very, very exciting, and that is really, really important. It might not seem so, but because in our Synod, we have a high percentage of RIC – that's Reconciling in Christ, if you don't know – it's a process for Lutherans, it's actually a nonprofit out of the Lutheran church, and a process you can go through as Lutheran congregations, to become designated as "inclusive and open and affirming of LGBTQ+ folks," right?

So, you had that process. You had those conversations. You said, "Yes, we are going to be openly affirming and proclaim that to the world that this is part of who we are," right. Overall, in the ELCA, the percentage of RICs we, as we call ourselves, our campus ministries – also RIC – it's about 10% of our churches that are RIC. That's much better than it used to be. It's grown a lot in the last few years. That's about 1100 churches out of about 10,000. So it's growing, but it's still small. So congratulations. Good work.

It's really important, and more and more churches are doing it. They're having these hard conversations. And a lot of churches, even ones like this church, that have those

inclusive values, they sometimes get stuck at the point of saying, “Well, why do we need to talk about this?” Right? “Why do we need to say it; isn’t saying, ‘all are welcome’ enough?” And I think you’ve probably had this conversation, right?

But you know that “all are welcome” is not enough, because *every* church says, “All are welcome.” *Every* church has that on their banners somewhere – and we know that *that is not true* in every church. Sure, you can come in, right? You can come in the door to every church. But are you *truly welcome* in every church, to be your queer self, or family, or gender expression, and stay that way in that church. Not a lot of Christian churches that’s true for, right?

So, it’s really important to actually *say* it and to be really clear about it, and clear about who you are and who you believe, and what you believe in, who you welcome. And it’s really important for young people. As I’m working with these young people, it’s just a given for them. It’s just a no-brainer. They didn’t have, you know, this, this wrestling with this question, like myself and older generations have had to do. It’s just *not even a question*. It’s like, “Yeah, of course. Of course we welcome people who are queer. That’s part of who they are, and it’s part of who God made them to be, and we don’t even need to wrestle with that.”

So, I love that about this younger generation. And I love how much they have to teach us about that, too. And so that’s another important piece of, if you want to be a church that is welcoming to, not just queer folks, but younger people, too, is to have that there, and to be very clear about it. So, thank you. Thank you for that.

So, is anybody going to the Pride Parade today after service? Yes, excellent! I volunteered to help with the Lutheran contingent of the Pride Parade, and then got put in charge of, like, checking everyone in. So (this is what happens, right, when you volunteer for things.) So, I’ll hang out after service for a little bit, and then I’ve got to scoot out of here to get downtown somehow in the madness of all this. So, if you see me making a beeline out of here after service, that’s why, and why I’m wearing colorful leggings and purple shoes and everything today. I’m ready to go to the parade.

Okay, so in our Gospel reading today, we had some great scripture readings today, and in our Gospel reading from Mark, we have these two wonderful stories, kind of a “story sandwich.” We have this story embedded within a story:

First, Jesus is asked to heal the daughter of Jairus, who is a leader in the synagogue. Now, remember, a little context here, Jesus and the religious leaders of his tradition – they aren’t on the best of terms at this point. Some of them have accused him of being in league with demons, that kind of thing... They’re probably not really supposed to be talking to each other. So Jairus, in seeking out Jesus and coming to him and asking him for help, he’s definitely taking a risk here. He’s crossing the aisle, so to say, to ask Jesus for help. He’s a parent, doing whatever it takes to help his kid.

And of course, Jesus says, “Yes.” He goes. No questions asked. He doesn’t take sides. He doesn’t care which party Jairus is with; who’s he going to vote for. He just sees that there is a girl who needs help, and a man who trusts him to do something about it.

And then on the way, he is stopped by this woman who has been bleeding, hemorrhaging, basically, having a period for *12 years*, yikes, and no one has been able to help her figure out what’s going on with her. So she, too, has heard about Jesus, and she, too, believes that he can help her, and she thinks, “If he is that powerful, I only need to touch him. I only need to touch his clothes, and I’ll be healed.” And that’s what happens, what we hear in the story; she touches his cloak, and she’s healed.

And they have this nice exchange about it. He says, “Your faith has made you well.”

The stop, however, in this story has been disastrous for Jairus and his daughter. We hear that she dies while they are on the way. But does Jesus let that stop him? No way. He still goes to the house. He even tells him she was “just sleeping.” I mean, they definitely know that she died. These are first-century people. They’re very familiar with life and death processes. It’s not done in a hospital or somewhere else, right? They know.

He brings her back to life. It’s like Lazarus, right? He brings her back to life.

Now, stories like this, I think, can be really difficult for us to digest today. I think our modern brains can have a hard time knowing what to do with them. There’s lots of points where we get stuck. We know that people don’t usually just spontaneously heal, right? We’re very skeptical of people who claim to have been healed by faith.

And we have all known people, we have all known people of faith who have prayed and prayed for healing and relief, people who have the strongest faith of anyone we know, and they still die, right?

So maybe we, in our day and age, get a little uncomfortable with stories like this. Maybe we aren’t content to say things like “faith in Jesus heals us,” or whatever; simple, trite things these stories might lend some Christians to say, because we have also seen that that isn’t quite always true, and because in our tradition, we are not Biblical literalists, we have permission to use our imaginations and our knowledge, and all the things we’ve learned, and the experiences we’ve had in our lives, when it comes to interpreting these stories of Jesus.

Today, this one is striking me a little more metaphorical than usual. Maybe that’s a way we can trick our post-modern brains into getting under the story and finding something closer to the meaning of what’s going on here. So, what if – I offer this for us today – what if the healing that Jesus offers in these stories is a metaphor for his love and salvation, his peace, his acceptance, and his grace? Imagine *that’s* what he is giving out, what is flowing out of his very self in that crowd.

Doesn't that help you let go a little bit of the "real, not real, literal, not literal," where all the parts of our brains like to latch onto and get stuck in.

Now don't worry, I'm not just making this up. We do see these elements in the stories. These stories of healing show Jesus going to these people. They have come to him. But these are people who are on the margins, people who are unimportant, powerless, excluded – a woman who is bleeding, a little girl – and literally giving them life, bringing them back into community, giving them love and grace and salvation and peace, just as they are.

So, if we focus on that as a message of these stories, that can help us discover a couple of new things. It tells us that Jesus's love and grace is *abundant*. It can't be contained, and it can't be limited. Nothing can stop it; not even death.

And it is *for everyone*. I knew a pastor at the UCC church on Capitol Hill, All Pilgrims. And he used to start every service by saying, "God loves you, and there's nothing you can do about it!"

And that's what these stories show us. Jesus's healing, his love and grace and acceptance, it isn't just for important people, or perfect people, or people already accepted and in the community; it's for the outcast and the outsider, for the powerless and the ostracized, for the hurt and the hurting – as well as powerful men talking to people they shouldn't be talking to.

Through Jesus, God's love and grace and acceptance *is* there for all. We already have it. God loves you, and there is nothing you can do about it.

We just don't already all know that.

So *that* is what I hope we, as the Lutheran contingent, will be doing today, down at the Pride Parade. We will be letting people know that *God loves them already*. God loves them, and there's nothing they can do about that. It just is. It is a fact. They don't have to do anything to earn it. They don't have to say yes, or no. It just is. It is there.

That's grace, right? That is the whole point of this Protestant Reformation thing. We will be letting people, who perhaps have been harmed by the church, know, know that we are sorry, that as a church, we have done wrong for a long time, and that God's love has never, ever left them, even when the church failed them. And we will be letting them know that that love and that healing, known in community, gathered around Jesus, is alive and here for all.

And just maybe, maybe, that might be the tiny sliver of hope that someone out there in the crowd, or maybe someone who visits your church, or drives by and sees a rainbow sign, maybe that is the tiny sliver of hope that they need. Like in that reading from Lamentations we had today. When things are bad, when you are strapped to the yoke,

or when your face is in the dirt – there’s one line in there that has parentheses around it, and it says, “Yet there is still hope.”

And I just love that; it’s like, all these things are happening to me, and I don’t like it, and it’s bad, “yet there is still hope.”

God doesn’t do these bad things to us. And I hope that *that* is what people see from us today, as ELCA Lutherans in the Pride Parade; I hope that is what people see from you, as a new Reconciling Christ congregation here on Queen Anne. I hope that is what people see from you individually, as you’re out in the world, and they say, “Oh, you’re a Christian. Oh, and your church believes this. Oh, and you, you like me as a queer person. How does that all go together?” And they see that little sliver of hope. It says, “Oh, maybe I, too, am loved and accepted and known, and maybe I, too, can be known and loved in a community like that.

May we all cling to that hope, that hope that we have in Christ’s abundant and never-ending love, and then joyfully share that with our friends and neighbors, this day and always.

Amen.