

Sermon Trinity 24 2021

November 14, 2021

Matthew 9:18-26

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read.

Through the last year and a half with everything that's been going on, I've realized that there are two things that my preaching continually has touched on. That's the coronavirus and issues surrounding racial tensions. As we've experienced this, I'm sure it would be no understatement to say that these have been burdens for us. For the racial tensions, some have felt the burden of the concern for racial injustices and how to aid the circumstances surrounding them. Some have felt a burden of concern for how the approach being taken publicly with things like Critical Theory might negatively affect the relationship between people altogether in the not-so-distant future. Some have felt a burden from both considerations. And with coronavirus, some have been burdened heavily with the worry of getting sick and the possible long-term effects of the virus. Some have been burdened heavily with the worry of not making others sick. Some have experienced the burden of being separated from much needed social interaction and being able to see loved ones. And certainly, there are some who have been burdened with the fear of death.

As we look at the Gospel lesson for today, the account of Jesus being summoned to the home of a ruler whose daughter has just died. We see two people who are burdened. First, there is the woman who has had the bleeding for twelve years. Now, this bleeding likely has been something akin to menstrual bleeding. And I point that out because it's important under the Old Testament Law. Under the Law the monthly bleeding a woman experiences made her ritually unclean. That uncleanness, similar to that of leprosy like we'll talk about with the Ten Lepers next week for Thanksgiving, would be a burden. When one was unclean, they were not allowed to make physical contact with others. They weren't allowed to go to the temple. There were a significant number of ways their life would be challenged by that. And of course, we can ask why this is the case—which from what I've read when it came to menstruation that it had to do with groups nearby the Israelites believing that power was to be had from that blood, something the Lord wanted the Israelites know that they received from Him and Him alone—but in the end, the point for today is just that this would have been a burden. While we have experienced social separation in the midst of this, and for some this has meant staying away from meeting with the Lord in the unique fashion we have

in the Divine Service, the reality is that for this woman this would have been an even heavier burden than what we've known. Yes, what has made this time hard is that we haven't known when the end would come, I think we all recognize that it will most likely come to an end at some point. For this woman there was no end in sight. It appeared that this burden was to be upon her shoulders until her end in this life and its veil of tears.

The second burden we see is that of the father who has lost his daughter. I have pastored people in the midst of that sorrow of losing a child and have seen what a burden that is as well. And it's interesting to see how that burden often falls. For fathers, I've seen the burden in various ways, some wondering what God wants from them, others showing that burden in wanting to carry the rest of the family and be strong. For mothers, it seems that there's always this burden of guilt, the burden of wondering what they could have done, or should have done to keep this from happening. That grief is a burden, and here this man, weighed down by it, comes to Jesus.

In fact, they both come to Jesus and have that burdened lightened. And Jesus does just. It's beautiful, isn't it? You see there this woman relieved now that she no longer has the burden of the Law weighing upon her daily life. She no longer has the burden that tells her she can in no way participate in the worship at the Temple, and she can not hug any children and loved ones she might have. She's now freed from that. And the father doesn't have to wrestle with what God wants or sally forth for the good of his family. He has that relief from the new life his daughter has been given by Jesus.

And as we see that, what a blessing, right?! What a blessing to see that Jesus cares for the burdens these two feel in the midst of this life. What a blessing to see that this Jesus who is God in the flesh cares for His people in their physical and bodily needs. And why is that a blessing for us? Because in seeing that He cares for this ruler and this woman in those bodily needs, then we see His heart for people. We can see His caring for people, and if He cares for people, He cares for us. He cares for you in the midst of your burdens. He cares for you in the midst of the burdens of the injustices of this world and the power struggles that happen. He cares for you in the midst of your hardships and worries about giving and getting sickness. He cares for you and promises He won't leave you or forsake you in the midst of them. Maybe you have had separation, but you were never alone.

And as Christians, when we see that love for us in our lives now, it's a good prompt to remind us of how Jesus calls us to love our neighbor and care for them. I mentioned

looking at First John last week, and that is what's so present there. Love your neighbor. Love because God has first loved you.

However, there's still a problem in the midst of all of this. Yes, all of this comes to bear on people, weighing them under a burden, and Jesus frees them from that burden. But there's still a problem isn't there? Think about it with the woman and the daughter. Yes, they had great joy that day, and rightfully so! Yes, those who had laughed at Jesus became the first who could acknowledge that He had raised this girl that the report about Him could go out in all the land. And yes, it was right that this miracle performing man would gain notoriety for these blessedly good things! That's all right and all good! But what's still the problem?

The problem is that at some point this woman whose life was a slow treading toward death with that bleeding will still wind up at that same end. She would still die someday. The problem is that this girl who had been raised from the dead, she too would ultimately fall back to that final conclusion, just years later. In other words, the problem isn't the burden of the experience of these things, the problem is the burden of death itself. The burden is the curse that has come into this world because of sin.

But thankfully there is in Jesus something far more than merely the healing of earthly ailments—as blessed as that is. And to be clear, I don't want to minimize that blessedness. When one is brought to health from illness, that's a blessing. When one experiences the salvation of God as that woman with the bleeding did—because you see that's what's really said there. The woman said that if she touched Jesus, she would be made well. And Jesus said her faith had made her well. And Matthew tells us she was made well. That making well is in Greek the same word as being saved. This woman was saved. And it's glorious. But we see in Jesus a greater salvation.

When we look upon this Jesus who was crucified, we see the God through whom the universe was created, the One through whom life itself was given, and we see Him stepping under death for us. We see Him bearing the burden that we all bear, and we see Him doing it in a way that is complete. What do I mean by that? I mean that as Jesus suffered whipping and scouring, beating and shame at His death, He suffered more. He experienced not just the literally excruciating agony of the body suffering its expiration there, He suffered the eternal death of hell as well. He suffered the forsaking of the Father. He suffered the separation of His life from the One who is Life itself. And in that sin was paid for. The curse of sin found its satisfaction in this One who willingly

lived a sinless life for us. And in His resurrection He proved that the burden of death was relieved.

If we think about the suffering and burden that this is, we see what Paul means when He says in the Epistle lesson, **“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”** In other words, we can see that the real burden isn’t just difficulties, but ultimately sin and death, but in Jesus is the real solution, is deliverance from that sin and death.

As we hear the Old Testament Lesson, though, we see such a great biblical illustration for this. Listen to the words spoken to the Lord from the book of Isaiah and see if you can figure out what this illustration is: **Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?** Do you hear it? When was God the One who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? In the Exodus, when the Israelites were enslaved under the burden of Pharaoh. There, they were abused and suffering. But the Lord heard their cries, and led them out of that slavery through the waters of the Red Sea using Moses as His mouthpiece and redeeming them.

And that’s what He has done for you. The burden of death, the burden of your sin, the burden of suffering in this life. All of that has been placed upon His shoulders, and He has redeemed you. He has joined you to the resurrection in His freedom in baptism. He has fed you with the foretaste of His eternal feast in the manna of His Holy Supper.

And now when you feel burdened by the things of this world, the burdens of coronaviruses and racial tensions, the burdens of suffering, grief, and death. Even the burden of your own guilt and sorrows, you know that in Christ, you have freedom. You have the unburdening of your heart and conscience before God. Not an unburdening that tells you to do whatever you want, but the true unburdening that gives you hope to live in the light of the love of our Lord Jesus. Love because He has first loved us. Love because He has borne the true burden for us. And He gives that to you as He reaches to you, not merely that you could touch the hem of His garment, which would be more than sufficient, but that might give you His body and blood for your eternal salvation in Him. Amen.