



What Do You Need?  
Sermon by Pastor Paisley Le Roy  
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My New Testament professor called a story like the one we have today, an Markan oreo. Because Mark's Jesus is always on the move, there often is interruptions that break up the narrative. The two stories typically have many parallels, like today's two characters we encounter:

- Jairus, whose young daughter is sick, and the unnamed woman who has suffered for twelve years with bleeding.
- The daughter of a religious leader with privilege and wealth and a woman who has spent every dime she has to be healed of her suffering
- A man who upholds the laws of cleanliness of the Temple and a woman whose constant bleeding barred her from access to the synagogue or even in the town.
- A daughter whose home is filled with people tending to her and grieving her and a woman who has no one, is no one.
- A daughter who has her father to advocate for her, a woman who has begged for understanding.

Despite their differences, though, we know the things they have in common: a profession of faith, a touch, and a miraculous healing. But it's important to note that the definition of healing is very different in these scenarios. Healing, in the case of Jairus' daughter, was not healing at all but rather resurrection. Where there was death there was now life. At first glance, healing in the case of the

unnamed bleeding woman, is that she is healed of her disease. This is the translation we receive today.

But in another translation, it says she was healed of her suffering. Healed of her suffering.

Her suffering was no doubt in part cause by her disease, but I think even more than that, her suffering was because of the implications of that disease. That it had taken her out of community, it had stolen her money, it had essentially erased her. She was only defined by that which she suffered from instead of her whole truth.

Yes, the healing that takes place upon her touching Jesus' cloak is miraculous. But, even more, was Jesus stopping, seeking who reached out, and extending the invitation to speak.

Each time I had read this passage before, I thought of how quick this encounter was. Because the Markan Jesus is a Jesus on the move and because surely Jesus had better things to do because he is on his way to heal the daughter of a privileged religious leader. But there wasn't anything in the text to indicate this was a brief encounter. I know picture time slowing down for an intimate conversation where a woman for the first time in at least twelve years has been given the opportunity to speak her truth and to be heard. Just think about this for a second. This ritually unclean woman, outcast from society, who should never have reached out to anyone, much less a prominent religious *man*, was given the space to speak her *whole truth* and to be listened to. This woman who has spent all she has and has begged physicians to listen to her, is finally heard and healed.

The healing power of sharing your whole truth.

The year after I graduated college, I did Lutheran Volunteer Corps. I was placed in Omaha, NE serving a senior living community. The values of LVC were simple, sustainable living (where I learned my passion for composting), social justice, intentional community, and exploring spirituality. This meant that multiple times a month, my house of nine people from all over the country – and one from Germany – gathered together for meal, for tough conversations, and for “spirituality night.” And spirituality night was my least favorite. Well, at least the first time.

Our spirituality mentor, Carol, a free-spirited, gentle, 65-year-old woman, would carve out intentional space by lighting a candle, ringing a meditation bowl, reading a text – sometimes scriptural other times secular – and then a person was given a chance to share. She kept the time – ten minutes without interruption and without prompt, except perhaps whatever struck you in the reading. Ten minutes to wrestle with your thoughts, to stop sentences short and not have anyone try to fill in the words for you. Ten minutes to share as little or as much of yourself as you wanted. If you didn’t fill the time, the remainder was spent in silence.

When your time was up, each member of my house, along with Carol, were given an index card where they could write any question they would like. This question, though, had to be one that couldn’t be answered with just “yes” or “no.” Neither could it be a question to gain factual information. They were questions asked to help you dive deeper into your story, to tell your whole truth.

Once all were written, the person sharing that evening would have another 10 minutes to look over the questions and ponder them aloud, again uninterrupted. When time was up or the sharer was finished answering, the cards

were wrapped together and secured with a bow, a gift of curiosity and reflection so that the sharer could revisit the questions and dive deeper.

I say they were my least favorite because, at first, it was so uncomfortable. Ten minutes to talk uninterrupted about whatever topic of my choosing. Ten minutes while people looked and listened only to me. That doesn't happen often in our world today – the opportunity to speak your truth free of interruption. And, conversely, to *listen* to someone for ten minutes without speaking at all, without interjecting our stories, without trying to fix.

As months passed by and I grew to know my housemates better, we all began to open up and these conversations became the most holy encounters. The gift of speaking and being heard, the gift of listening. The holy ground of stories. We each found ourselves sharing parts of ourselves with one another that we had never dared to share before. By the time the year was up, we had poured our hearts out, telling our whole truth.

Pastor Sarah shared last week about the healing that Hannah experienced when Eli listened to her in the Temple. Though her situation had not changed, she was able to find some strength for the journey because she had experienced the power of accompaniment. A power that I very much experienced in those spirituality nights and a power the unnamed woman surely experienced when given the space to share her whole truth.

And yet, this week I've had several conversations with family, friends, and BLC disciples, about the reality that our stories may not always have space to be heard. That there are times where we desperately seek out for others to accompany us in our whole truths and we come up empty handed. We spoke of

the pain that comes when you've risked vulnerability and gained nothing in return.

For those who may, like me, have experienced that, I wish I had something better to say than I am sorry. I am sorry you put yourself out there and was not met with love and compassion. I am sorry you're searching for someone to bear the burden with you and you have not yet found that person. I am sorry for the ways your story has not been heard. Because I know that the only thing more painful than bearing your suffering alone is when you do share and you're not met with understanding.

If these words speak to you I pray you find the resiliency to reach out once more. I pray you hear me – and those beside you – as those who can and will bear your burdens alongside you. But, even more, I pray you find comfort in knowing that the one who perfectly shares your story – your suffering, your pain, your silencing – is our God. A God who this day and always wants to hear your whole truth.

A God who challenges us, church, to be God's ears, hands, and hearts in this world. And so my prayer for those who may not be feeling that same sense of helplessness, is that you live with your ears wide open, listening to those in your midst who are in need of a person to share their whole truth with. That you reach out by being present, asking questions, saying prayers, and sending cards. We cannot overstate the impact that simply providing the space makes for those who are struggling.

Even now, five years later, I look fondly at the time where space was made for my whole truth. I look back at those index cards with scribbles from my

beloved housemates and remember the healing that took place at the hands of those who wrote them.

Because sharing my whole truth with my housemates was an act of healing.

And not only to share my whole truth and but also have them *accept* it, to bear it alongside me...it was truly a miracle.

If our call is to be like Christ to one another, then our call is to make space for the whole truth. Make space to listen. To participate in the healing power of presence, of telling our stories, and of being heard. That is the call for us as Christian community. That is how we be Christ to one another.