

Homily notes from Canon Philip Dyson

Sunday 27th June 2021 - 13th Sunday in ordinary time

Readings (Year B): 1st: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24. Psalm: 29. 2nd: 2 Corinthians 8:7. 9. 13-15. Gospel: Mark 5:21-43.

We all know the old saying: there are only 2 certainties in life; death and taxes, we all one day will die. So the opening verses of our 1st reading can seem a little unreal. **‘Death was not God’s doing.** He takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living.’ These verses are a kind of commentary on the stories of the Creation and Fall in *Genesis 1-3*, drawing out their implications in terms of eternal life.

Since everything which God had made was good (*Genesis 1: 31*) death formed no part of his plan. His creation is good and at the service of humanity. Death comes rather from the envy of the devil. Wisdom urges us to look confidently to the Lord. To think well of God is to deny all the false questions that arise; why does God allow evil, death, earthquakes and tragedies. **God wants only life.**

As I often remind you, Jesus said **we are always alive to God, even in death, for he is God of the living, not of the dead.** This theme is picked up in the Psalm, a song of praise which thanks God for rescuing us from death and restoring us to a life of joy and hope.

Last week’s gospel question: “Who can this be? Even the wind and sea obey him,” Mark answers as he illustrates Jesus has power over life and death, sickness and health as well. Such powers can only be found in one who is himself the creator and giver of life, and that life not just physical life here but eternal life as well. This life appropriated by those who have **faith in Jesus.**

So Mark starts to tell the story of the daughter of Jairus, but interrupts his account with the haemorrhaging woman before completing his story. The effect of the delay is to heighten the drama by letting us wait on the outcome. And there are so many similarities between the two miracles that each one helps us to understand the riches of the other.

It is a very homely story. It is full of chatty asides like the gossip about expensive doctors and a fat lot of good they did for the woman! And the

final bit about giving the little lass something to eat. Each concerns a female: a woman whose life-blood was wasting for 12 years, and a little girl whose life apparently ended after 12 years. Note the number 12: Mark's favourite number for events on the Jewish side of the Lake. !2 tribes of Israel & 12 disciples of Jesus.

In each story the approach of Jesus is somewhat indirect, due to the condition of the patients. In both stories Mark stresses that the petitioners were desperate and beyond human aid. Jairus comes on behalf of his daughter: the afflicted woman comes herself, but only in a hidden way, partly because a woman couldn't address a Rabbi in public, and her haemorrhage rendered her and anyone she touched ritually unclean. She is all spent, so all she can do is come up behind Jesus and touch his clothes, though not himself. **But so great is her faith and hope she feels this will be enough.** It is.

But then Jesus wants to meet her. He calls on her to stand up in the full dignity of a person. He calls her 'my daughter' She is one of his family for she is a believer and a true disciple.

Regarding Jairus' daughter, her death has put her so far beyond human help that the messengers think it would only be a waste of Jesus' time going to the house. Human powers alone would have left everybody in their fear and lamentation. But Jesus calls on the people to **let go of fear and step out in faith**: the afflicted woman has done it – see what happened- the child is not dead but sleeping. He who has the power to save a life that was wasting away can also raise up the life which has totally expired.

But the unbelievers scornfully and cynically laugh at his words. **They are outside the family of faith**, so they are turned out of the house. He takes the child by the hand, tells her to get up, and tells them to give the girl something to eat.

For Christians of every age these miracles show the divine power of Jesus and express who he is. In both cases faith precedes their healing, and in neither case does Jesus take the initiative.

So Jesus says to us: **Do not be afraid; only have faith.** The unbeliever only laughs cynically.

Yet if there is one spark of faith left, may it reach out to the Lord as he passes on his way with us. He calls the soul back to life and instructs the family to feed the person with Eucharist and Christian fellowship: and with the psalm we pray “I will praise you Lord, you have rescued me”

Canon Philip Dyson

Holy Family Parish www.penzancecatholicchurch.org