

Pentecost 4B, Proper 13, June 28, 2009

Lectio: 2 Samuel 1:1; 17-27; Ps.130; 2 Corin. 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

Take a moment to think back over your week to see where your hands and heart have been; this is the connection that I believe ties things together for today's lessons.

My hands and heart this week have been:

Choosing fruit and vegetables at a farmer's market and making a favourite summer soup

Blessing and anointing the heads of 25 folks at Medex Nursing Home

Receiving a key to look after a friend's beloved cat named Nigal

Turning the pages of a mystery book

Lifting bread and wine on Wednesday and Friday mornings

Making notes at a diocesan meeting that lasted until almost 10 PM

Patting the head of a dog (Labradoodle!)

Using the computer to ask for prayers

Touching the bare feet of a two year old in his father's arms

Drafting my own evaluation of ministry for this first year

Holding the phone late at night listening to my oldest daughter's anxiety about her child

Squeezing the shoulder of a colleague who was in a car accident

Writing the check for my monthly pledge to the parish

Where our hearts and hands have been this week is one way of looking at our faith, our ministries and our connections. In our first lesson we hear David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. We remember his hand and heart stretched out in friendship, in loyalty, even with sword in hand in battle alongside these two. Now his hand is open and filled with grief. Now he has written a tribute prayer so that we could know his sorrow.

The psalmist's heart is waiting for God to touch him. He is confident that God will respond to the depth of despair prayer he has uttered. Paul, in his appeal to the church in Corinth, also expects a response of hand and heart to the church in Macedonia experiencing affliction and serious testing. He maintains that

even if one has little, it will not be too little if hands are opened in generosity to others. In community each could look to the other for help when the relationship is one of faith, of one heart.

I imagine circles of connection, with places and people far and near, drawing a circle within the larger circle of God's love. Intertwining circles with maps of connection allowing the hearts and hands to be drawn together in new ways.

Jairus came to Jesus empty-handed. As one of the leaders of the synagogue his life would have been probably pretty good. But all of the means at his disposal, money or wealth or opportunity, mean nothing in the face of the impending death of his daughter. I imagine him throwing his heart at Jesus' feet, handing over the path and pattern his faith and worship had known to this itinerant rabbi. Jairus lets go of pride and past to plead, with hands outstretched, to "lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live."

There is a delay on the way to the house, much like the delay that kept Jesus from arriving at Lazarus' side in time. There is a woman who has spend as many years suffering from bleeding as the young girl on the edge of her adulthood had spent in life (12 years). Life appears to be draining out of both of them. Both called daughter, their lives are connected, circle within circle, intertwined with each other. Usually we imagine a child's life contained within a woman; here, with the device known as a "Markan sandwich" where a story is contained within two halves, the woman's life story is within the child's story.

The woman put out her hand and touched the hem of his garment; the child was taken by the hand and raised from a death bed. Both were released into new life. Curiously, the voices surrounding Jesus said, "don't go; it doesn't matter, she's already gone; don't touch her – you'll be defiled" or something like that. Had they come to a point in their spiritual journeys where being safe and not extending themselves was a virtue? Have they decided they can't go there, wherever the brokenness is? That it doesn't concern them or should take care of their own first? Who touched David's grief? Who reached out to the financial strain of a struggling church not in the neighbourhood? Who companioned the psalmist as he waited and watched all night for God? Who can we count on who really cares?

There is a story on the web this week that speaks of a man who was church shopping on a Sunday. The following week he met with the pastor and said this, "everything's marvellous here but on a Sunday morning, you would never believe these people are bleeding." I found that an interesting comment. Was the worship so lovely and full of praise that no suffering was allowed? I thought he must not have visited an Anglican church because our prayers of the people do highlight the bleeding places in the world, the nation, the church, the local community and in ourselves. The visitor had found no tears or blood shed for the pains he knew were a part of human life. I believe our hands and hearts are the church's life blood and that generosity toward all of it, the mess and sadness, is what we do here.

You will notice that the blankets and the sacred medicines and the Innuksuk from last Sunday's Aboriginal Day of Prayer are still here, signs that healing and reconciliation are ongoing and still cause

for our concerns in Canada. We continue to stretch ourselves in understanding, in prayers of confession and petition. Our hearts, our very selves reach out to God, and to each other, for change and for blessing.

Take a look this coming week at where your hands and your hearts are occupied. See if they aren't open wide to others; see if you aren't somebody's lifeline. See too, how God might be touching you. Amen+

The Rev. Dr. Linda Privitera

PS.. five phone calls on the answering machine this morning....one from a church needing a worship space, one from someone who wants to visit, one from a friend in trouble in Montreal, two calls from a nursing home making sure we won't forget them during the summer...does God go on vacation??