

Title: "Cultivating the Outward Dimension"

Text: Mark 5:21-43

We are continuing today in our series of sermons on "Living Faith in 3D,"

-as we seek to grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ really is.

The past two Sundays our focus has been on cultivating the upward and then the inward dimensions of a 3 dimensional faith.

-Today we turn to the outward dimension of a 3D faith.

And the question is quite simply, how do we learn to love well?

-This multidimensional love of God is given to us in Christ,

-and we are meant to not only receive it and allow it to transform our lives;

-we are also meant to allow it to flow through us and out of us into the world around us.

Other people are supposed to be able to somehow sense the love of Jesus in us.

-Like the apostles in the earlier reading today from Acts.

-The Jewish leaders saw that Peter and John were "unschooled, ordinary men,"

-but they could tell that these men had been with Jesus.

-They could see the power and love of God manifesting itself in these men's lives.

Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

So how do we cultivate this outward dimension of a living faith? How do we love well?

Let's take a look for a moment at a typical day in the life of Jesus, and see how he did it himself.

-Turn with me to the Gospel of Mark 5:21-43.

This is a passage I have preached on multiple times over the course of many years here at Forestdale.

- The beautiful painting of the raising of Jairus' daughter is an image we have used already in this series,
 - to display how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is.
- The multidimensional love of God is poured out in Christ to raise us all from the dead.
 - It's why he came....to restore us, to redeem us.

Now in the past when preaching on this passage, I have mostly turned our attention to the two women in the story.

- They are both called "daughters" in the story,
 - though the one woman older and has been experiencing bleeding for twelve years;
 - and the other is younger, and has only been alive for 12 years, but has now died of some sickness or disease.

But both of them experience how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is,

- as he heals and resurrects them and restores them to life.

Today I want to focus on Jesus, and what he's doing here.

- This passage displays for us how the "upward" love of God is flowing "in and through" Jesus,
 - and then "outwardly" into the world in ways that transform the lives of real people in that world.

The question for us is: how do we do that?

- Well first let me emphasize that the outward dimension of a living faith is intimately connected to the upward and inward dimension.
- It doesn't exist all by itself, and what is happening through Jesus here is because of his intimate connection to the Father, and the power of the Holy Spirit working through him.

So when it comes to us, we do not want to go out and try to love the world around us on our own strength and resources.

- You and I do not have it in us to love the world very well.
- We have a hard enough time loving our family and friends.
- We have a hard time loving other Christians right here in our own church.
 - Some of them drive us crazy.
- And we certainly don't have the power or love in ourselves to bring healing and restoration to people's lives around us.
- You and I are not God!

-We are not anybody's savior. We can hardly get our own lives right.

But! when we come to faith in the true Savior, and he cleanses us of our sin, and fills us with his Holy Spirit,
-we get connected to whole new dimension of life!
-We are given a "living faith in 3D!"

And as we cultivate that new "upward dimension" of a relationship with God,
-He begins transforming the inward dimension of our lives,
-and He also begins to use us to touch the lives of others in the world around us.

My friends, this is simply what happens when the Holy Spirit begins working in our lives.
-Upward, inward, and outward dimensions all begin to function in our lives.

So our focus today is on the outward dimension, but remember that the outward flow of God's love is dependent on us actually having the love of God flowing inwardly.
-We can't give away what we don't have.

So the flow of this "living faith" always begins by us practicing the presence of God, and receiving His love for ourselves.
-But it is meant to then flow out of us into what we might call "practicing the presence of people."

This is what we see Jesus doing right here in Mark 5.
-He is going about his daily life, and people come along and "interrupt him."

On this particular day, he has just come back from a boat trip across the Sea of Galilee,
-and so he is down by the shore of the lake.
-And first it is a whole crowd of people who heard he was coming and so have gathered around him as soon as he gets out of the boat.

Mark doesn't say so, but Jesus is presumably teaching the people who have crowded around him,

-and perhaps healing those in need of healing, because this is what he always did when crowds gathered around him.

But on this particular day even his teaching ministry is interrupted.

-A well known man from the town named Jairus,
-who was in fact one of the leaders at the synagogue,
-comes rushing through the crowd and throws himself at Jesus feet and pleads with him to come and heal his daughter who is at his home on the verge of death.

So Jesus stops what he is doing and goes with Jairus.

-And the crowd follows along to see what Jesus will do.

But as they make their way to Jairus' house, another interruption comes along.

-Someone touches Jesus cloak.

And Jesus somehow realizes that this was not just an accidental bump from someone in the crowd.

-Mark says Jesus realized that power had gone out from him.

-Something redemptive had just happened.

And so Jesus stops dead in his tracks, and turns to the crowd and says, "Who touched me?"

-And you know the story.

-The disciples say, "What?! There's a whole bunch of people all around you who might have bumped against you, and you are wondering about who might have touched you?"

-And Jairus is getting antsy and frustrated at this delay in the process.

-He wants to get Jesus to his daughter as quickly as possible, and this interruption is killing him.

-The crowd is wondering what's going on, and why no one is moving.

And the woman who touched Jesus' cloak is mortified.

-She has been bleeding for 12 years, and so by Jewish law is ritually unclean.

-And she really shouldn't even be out in that crowd, and certainly has no business touching a rabbi of all people.

But she was desperate, and thought, “If I can only just touch his cloak I will be healed.”

-And so she snuck up and touched him, bumping into others in the crowd along the way.

-And she wanted the whole thing to be done in secret so that no one would know.

-And now Jesus is holding up the whole procession, and he’s going to make the whole thing public.

-She’s mortified.

But she gives herself up, and falls at his feet, “trembling in fear” Mark tells us.

-And she told him the whole truth.

-She is expecting the wrath of God to fall on her, and to be stoned by the crowd.

But Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be freed from your suffering.”

And she is healed.

-Jesus would then go on to Jairus’ house, too late for the young girl to be healed,

-but not too late to raise her from the dead.

The healings are both amazing, and a display of the power and love of God flowing in and through Jesus to transform the world around him.

But what I want us to notice today, is simply Jesus “practicing the presence of people.”

Or maybe I can say it like this: the “interruptions” in Jesus’ life were the essence of his ministry.”

-He didn’t treat people as “interruptions.”

-No. He paid attention to them, and lived his life as though the people around him really mattered.

That is what we might call, “practicing the presence of people.”

-And it is how you and I, all these years later, can cooperate with the Holy Spirit in cultivating the outward dimension of our faith lives.

We simply begin treating the people around us as though they really matter.

It's really as simple as that, and honestly, as difficult as that.

- Because the reality is, most of us don't like to be interrupted by other people during the day.
- We have our own agendas, our own time schedule, our own list of priorities of what we need or want to be doing.
- And other people are a bother.
- We don't want to stop what we are doing to pay attention to them.
- We don't want to slow down and look at them, and listen to them.

We quite often treat people as though they are a nuisance.

- And in terms of our agenda and time schedule and priorities, they are a nuisance.
- For Jairus that day, this woman who touched Jesus was a nuisance, and so was Jesus for stopping for her.

But Jesus was somehow secure in his trust in God,

- and secure in his own soul,
- and he didn't see the crowd, or Jairus, or the woman, as an interruption: he saw them all as the reason that he came.
- They were his ministry.

And amazingly, he practiced the presence of people no rabbi would ever have practiced the presence of before.

- Women! like here. But also Roman soldiers, Samaritans, beggars, lepers, Pharisees and Saducees, children.
- And he treated them all as though they really mattered.
- Because to him, they did.

And you know what? We all long to be treated like that.

- Everyone hopes for someone to actually look at us, and see us, and invest some time and attention in us.
- We all want someone to "practice our presence" and treat us like we matter.
- To treat us like a "thou," and not an "it," as Martin Buber would say.

But it is not easy to do this for others, is it?

-In fact, it is risky.

-We all have the scars to prove it.

-Dealing with people isn't safe or comfortable or easy.

-And ultimately it wasn't safe for Jesus either.

-We ended up nailing him to a cross.

And on this particular day, treating the crowd as though they mattered took energy from Jesus,

-and prevented him from resting after a rather trying trip across the lake.

-And treating the woman who touched him as though she mattered ended up making him ritually unclean,

-and made Jairus mad at him,

-and caused him to be late for healing Jairus daughter.

-And treating Jairus and his daughter as though they mattered caused Jesus to cut short his teaching of the crowd,

-and would also cause Jesus to have to leave that town because once word got out that Jesus had raised a girl from the dead,

-he would have been bombarded with a kind of attention and notoriety that he wasn't looking for.

Yet, that's how every day went for Jesus, because people were not a nuisance, but the reason that He came.

-He later says to his disciples, "As the Father sent me, now I am sending you."

-“Go and love others as I have loved you. For by this all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another.”

Go risk treating others as you would want to be treated.

Go risk loving others as you love yourself.

Go risk loving others as I have loved you.

Practice the presence of God, and then resting in his love for you,

-and then, empowered by His Spirit, practice the presence of people.

-For practice is all it takes to become Christ's presence in this world.

Let's pray.