

**Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24**

**Psalm 30**

**2 Corinthians 8:7-15**

**Mark 5:21-43**

Good Morning. I would like to start off by having you relax and think back to a time when there was nothing more pleasing than to sit in the lap of your mother, or your father, perhaps it was a grandparent or a favorite aunt or uncle and have them take the time to read you a story. It didn't matter if you had heard the story a thousand times, or in your young mind, a thousand million zillion times, you savored being in the presence of someone who loved you so much as to read a story to you and you could set your imagination free just hearing the words, picturing the scene, feeling the love.

Did you have experiences like that when you were a child? Do you remember those times?

When was the last time you used your imagination? Can only children use their imagination? If you are like me, as an adult, I rarely consciously use my imagination and set it free to roam.

Today's readings, harken us to go beyond mere hearing the words and explore their deeper meaning through imagining.

Do you remember when you were young and listening to someone read to you and how you couldn't wait to "get to the good part"? Our reading from the Wisdom of Solomon is just that — the good part.

*God did not make death... he created all things that they might exist... the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them... for righteousness is immortal.... God created us for incorruption... and made us in the image of his own eternity....*

Let those words sink in for a moment. Let your imagination roam with them for a moment.

What if sin wasn't so much disobeying God's command, as it is acting in a way that ignored or took for granted being made in the image of God's eternity? What if it wasn't so much failing to do what pleases God, as it is not paying attention to the destructive poison we can so easily allow to seep into our thoughts, our words, our actions? What if sin wasn't so much not treating others as you want to be treated; as it is seeking our own incorruption while corrupting and treading upon those who can help us achieve our selfish desires?

We heard from Wisdom, "For righteousness is immortal." Can you imagine righteousness or immortality? or is being self righteous and looking down on others easier to fathom and thus, avoid?

Psalm 30 is one of my favorites, even more so than Psalm 23:

*O Lord, my God, I cried out to you and you healed me...*

*Sing praise to the Lord you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.*

*For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will.*

*At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing....*

Psalm 30:6 is one of the few verses from the Bible that I prefer the translation we just heard from the Revised Common Lectionary over my New American Standard translation I grew up with and quoted above.

*“Weeping may spend the night, but joy, comes in the morning.”*

How many times in your life have those words rang so true? I imagine I am not alone in allowing the worries and concerns of the day to occasionally race through my mind sometimes when I awake in the middle of the night tossing and turning and worrying and fretting over them. Luckily, I eventually find solace in Him and the angels and fall back to sleep, awaking in the morning with a lighter burden on my mind.

*“Weeping may spend the night, but joy, comes in the morning.”*

At first glance it sounds like Paul is being his typical party-pooper-Paul in this lesson. N. T. Wright in his 2 Corinthians bible study book helps us put it all into perspective, “Paul’s overall purpose is to make sure that by the time he arrives in Corinth they will have put aside the full amount of money they are going to contribute for the impoverished

Jerusalem church.... he wants them to share in the great project he has in hand: demonstrating to the Gentile churches that they are part of the same family as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and demonstrating to the Jerusalem Christians that the strange, uncircumcised Gentiles are fellow members with them in God's renewed people." (2 Corinthians, N.T. Wright Loc 223)

So, like many who will follow after him and preach on stewardship and financial giving, he is using his imagination here on how exactly to address the subject of their initial failure to financially support the Jerusalem church but he hopes that they will have completely set the funds aside by the time he arrives.

Can you imagine where the Church would be today had Paul failed at such a great task of gathering the Gentile churches in to feel just as Christian as their Jewish counterparts in Jerusalem? Or, more alarmingly, If he had failed to pull off the great accomplishment of having the Jewish Christians want to be part of God's renewed people with the Gentile Christians? Gratefully, he succeeded and God transformed these Gentile Christians and these Jewish Christians into God's renewed people made one in Christ.

In our gospel reading from Mark we hear about Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter and that of the woman suffering from hemorrhages. Sometimes when reading scripture a clue as to how to spark your imagination with the deeper meaning of the text is to look at place names or the named people in the text. The name Jairus comes from the

Hebrew word ja-ir (yay ear), which according to McKenzie's Dictionary of the Bible, means "may he (God) enlighten".

God uses this president of the synagogue in the region of Capernaum to enlighten the world as to who Jesus is and was.

One of the things I remember Mom telling me over and over as I grew up was, "Your great grandmother always said, 'believe none of what you hear and only half of what you see.'"

Jairus and this woman are so lucky they never met my mom nor my great grandmother Celia. If they had, Jairus would have suffered the death of his beloved daughter and that woman would have continued to suffer in her affliction.

This story is about a man, a woman, and a child and the events that occurred roughly 12 years prior to where our gospel reading picks up.

For the man, it was a wonderful turn of events for he and his wife as they were blessed with a daughter. This birth did something he never imagined would ever happen to him, without noticing or even being aware of it, as their life unfolded, the birth of his child sparked a love in him so great he would one day risk everything he had worked for to save her life.

The woman was not so lucky. We learn that her affliction started twelve years ago, the same time as the girl was born. Then she had money, she was an accepted member of the community until one day her body betrayed her and her health began to fall. Not only that, her affliction made her ritually unclean and as an observant Jewish woman, she knew any bed she lay on became unclean, any chair she sat on became unclean, basically anything or anyone she touched became ritually unclean.

While Jairus' world was filled with joy and love as each day passed and brought us to this day 12 years later, this woman's world was falling apart as it was filled with suffering, continued illness, continued expenses for medical treatment to find a cure, continued ostracism as she continued to be unclean and everything around her became unclean.

Jairus had everything to lose by approaching Jesus in this manner — his position at the synagogue, his family, his whole life as he knew it. This woman had nothing to lose except the hopelessness that grew within her day by day while being afflicted with hemorrhages.

*“Believe none of what you hear and only half of what you see.”*

Jairus and this woman definitely weren't raised with those words to guide their formation. How did Jairus know to go to Jesus? Jesus' public ministry had only begun. How did word get around so quick about this carpenter's son from Nazareth? What

drove Jairus to seek Jesus to come and lay hands on his daughter couldn't have been a belief based on the ascent of intellect to a rational solution as we do today. It was faith as an unearned gift from God. But it couldn't have been a creedal faith like we proclaim today because this was way before the Church adopted any creed.

In order for Jairus to have been driven in such a manner, it had to be beyond mere faith but with an imagination that knew no bounds and knew that Jesus was indeed the one who could lay hands on his daughter and heal her. Living in a life that involved the death of his daughter was so unimaginable and he would stop at nothing to have Jesus come and lay hands on his daughter, to heal her, even if it risked his position at the synagogue.

What made this woman believe? What courage built up so strongly in her that she could only imagine, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well?" If she believed in the rules that governed her faith she knew that she would be the cause of not only Jesus' own ritual impurity but the ritual impurity of all those she elbowed her way through to touch Jesus' cloak. Living another day being so afflicted was that unimaginable. Her faith built such a fire of courage in her that she was driven to accomplish her greatest hope and imagination of being healed by touching Jesus' cloak.

Both would fall at his feet and beg for his healing assistance.

Jesus would be the first man in years to look her in the eye.

*“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”*

For Jairus, his hope and imagination risked being shattered as he heard the words of his friends coming from his house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?”

Jesus assured him and continued on. They laughed at Jesus when he said she was not dead but only sleeping. *“Talitha cum.” “Little girl arise, get up.”* And she did.

Everyone was amazed and every time we hear this story, Jesus’ direction that *“no one should know about this”* perplexes me.

Over 2,000 years later we don’t have to fall at Jesus’ feet and beg Jesus. We don’t have to risk everything to seek his healing touch. We get to experience Jesus every time we gather together to worship — be it a morning prayer service like today or a Eucharist. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am.* We not only get to touch and experience Jesus as a gathered community but when we receive the Eucharist we get to physically touch, consume and become Him to the world.

Perhaps Jesus wanted no one *“to know about this”* because he knew these events that occurred would never be believed by someone seeking a rational understanding. Perhaps, he was encouraging the witnesses of these events to be like Jairus and the

unnamed woman with hemorrhages and let their imagination free to be co-creative with God in manifesting the Kingdom of God and enlightening all to the wondrous power of God.

What is *your* greatest desire? *Your* greatest hope? Do you ever *imagine it* as you take it to God in prayer?

Jairus and this woman didn't stifle their imagination with logic and reason and rational thought, rather, they imagined the healing and wholeness they longed for and became great examples of God's Divine work in humanity. Their longing hope, their longing desire that they imagined and sought from God, enlightened the earliest followers as to exactly who Jesus was.

*Cum.* Arise. Imagine. May we too be active participants in manifesting God's Divine work and healing around us.

*In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.*

*Donald Knight*