

“He Looked for Her”

Sermon by Dan Harrison, pastor, Church of the Covenant, 5/9/2021

Luke 8:43-44

The hidden suffering is the worst. It is the suffering that goes on deep inside us, away from anyone’s prying eyes that kills us little by little. It is this secret pain that robs us of our joy.

And the lady hidden in the crowd was no exception. She had suffered for many, many years, alone and desperate, bleeding to death. She had used all of her resources to find a cure for her painful condition and could find none. Then Jesus, the healer, was passing by. She mustered what she had left of strength not to speak to this man, not to plead her case to this country rabbi, not to demand justice to a representative of God. No. She dared only touch the hem of his garment.

She hadn’t shared her story with him, but when she touched him, Scripture says “she was healed.” However, I have a feeling that Jesus was transformed as well. One might even say in that same instant, Jesus was healed too. Let me share how. The back story of the woman is clear in the Scripture, surprisingly detailed. That means her story, once hidden in secret, somehow became known to the writers. Her encounter with Jesus was obviously significant enough to memorialize in the sacred texts. The irony is that Jesus was on his way to heal the daughter of community leader. Yet, this woman whose name is not known but whose story is, finds healing while he is on his way. And why is this significant?

Because Jesus stops and looks for her. The woman who had been invisible, suddenly becomes the most important thing to Jesus. Even though the daughter of the other man is dying, whose mission is obviously urgent, Jesus stops everything and asks “Who touched me?” There he was, in the crowd, but stops to look for her. For some reason she became the most important person in the world at that moment. And once he found her, what did he do? He listened to her story. While on a mission to save one person, he stops to save another but perhaps most importantly he looks for this woman and he hears HER story. She had been invisible, unseen, insignificant, but suddenly she is where she should always have been, in the center. Her story is OUR story.

Her story reminds us of the place of women in our lives. We say mother to the trees. Mother to the Earth. Mother to the spirit. Mother to soul. May we stop and be in silence and listen to the stories of our mothers. But just like Jesus, it may be that we must seek those stories out. The stories of the suffering are often hidden. The stories of those in most pain are often unseen. Let us learn to see others. Let us really listen, and may we become channels of healing. For there are many bleeding to death all around us. Their wounds are deep. Perhaps you are even one of those suffering the most right now.

May you not be invisible any more. God knows your suffering. And may we find in our being together a moment of sharing in that pain together, and also share in the healing together. Thank you for surviving. Thank you for fighting to live. Thank you for enduring all that you have. You are the warriors in this life and the next. Your strength will carry us there, but you do not need to do it alone. We are with you.