

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, June 11th, 2023, Second Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 12:1-9; Psalm 33:1-12; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

What do the three stories in the gospel today, what do they have in common? This may be reading too much into this story and maybe I'm taking too many liberties with the text but here are my thoughts beginning with Matthew the tax collector.

I pictured the scene. Jesus coming up to Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. And I thought how bored Matthew must have looked to Jesus, sitting there recording the money people were coming to give. Jesus offering him an alternative to sitting there all day doing the same boring thing over and over again if he followed Jesus. Jesus getting Matthew to give up his old life for a new one, one that seems more creative and inspired.

And the woman bleeding for 12 years. I can't imagine what it would be like for 12 years. Having been in isolation for a week because of covid feels like enough of an eternity. Feeling my world becoming small. Being freed and able to look beyond.

The woman showing initiative and taking it upon herself to touch the fringe of his cloak. I get the feeling this would have been a courageous act on the part of the woman to step out and actually decide to touch, Jesus breaking all the rules. She was not supposed to even get close to him in the state that she was in never mind touching him. The risk she took, because how humiliated she would have been if she'd been recognized before she got to Jesus and called out and sent home.

And the little girl. It is interesting that Jesus says she's not dead but is sleeping. I am reminded of Jesus healing the 10 lepers, and only one of them returns to give thanks. Presumably the other nine went to the priest to be declared healed and to get on with their lives they were living previous to being sick. It was only the Samaritan who came back to give thanks to Jesus and realize that his life had changed that he couldn't go back.

The Mystics talk about being aware being awake. This got me thinking the idea that healing is getting us in touch with possibilities with freeing us and opening up the world to us.

There are both similarities and differences in Jesus' interaction with the three in today's gospel. The differences are in the past. One is a tax collector sitting at a table

collecting taxes, one's been sick for 12 years and the other is dead or presumed dead. In all three Jesus moves them from their present situation to a new situation, with creativity and freedom and hope for the future. Yes, this may move us out of our comfort zone, but into hope and care and a sense of belonging for all.

You may still be thinking I'm reading too much into this text, this passage and yet Jesus says *'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.'*¹⁸ *Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."*

Those who understand that they don't have it altogether may be more sympathetic and understanding of those in need. This may say something about the different kinds of healing and our understanding of weakness and need in self and others and for there to be a connection between compassion and understanding. Calling us to relate to others and realize how much we may have in common.

That may not seem to help either because the question arises how can our weakness be of benefit to others and bring about the hoped for result?

Maybe because in all we do in our relationship with God and each other it is about faithfulness, being there and that the success belongs to God. Don't we get into trouble when we take credit for the success, and for striving so much to bring about success that we get in the way, our ego gets in the way of God's healing for us and others we are in relationship with.

I heard a story about a mother who thanked the surgeon for performing life saving surgery on her son. The surgeon's answer was something like this, all I did was move some stuff around and sew up a hole. It was God who did the healing.

Amen.

Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing ...