

Reflection MUC Rev Dev Anandarajan

Text: Luke 8: 40-56

There are times we have experienced disappointments with God. God seems to not fit into our hopes, dreams, and plans. God seems to have a mind of God's own and operates on a different timeline. We all may have our own stories and still have questions that we want to ask God why God allowed things to happen contrary to our hopes and plans.

In the reading we had we have a story of a father who was in such a dilemma and Luke gives us a glimpse into how his journey with Jesus helped him to find hope again.

According to Luke, Jesus had returned to Galilee from Gerasene where he freed a man of a legion of demons. Upon arrival Jesus is thronged by crowds. But his visit is hijacked by a man – a father who is in a desperate situation. He comes in desperation and pleads with Jesus to come and save his daughter from dying. This is how urgent it is—it is a matter of life and death. The main difference lies with the arrival of Jesus in time to heal his daughter. Fully grasping the urgency of time without any word or question, he began to journey with Jairus towards the dying child. Basically, Jesus has received an emergency call. Every second and minute counts here.

But as the saying goes in such moments, “all that can go wrong, will go wrong,” the urgent time is arrested. The journey is disrupted. A woman comes from behind. She is a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years, and she has sought out many doctors, who seemingly took her money, but did not deliver healing to her anemic body. This woman interrupts the journey, by inserting her story into the story of Jairus and his dying daughter. In so doing, she does the unimaginable —she slows down and even stops Jesus from his emergency call.

While it is not entirely out of the way to see her as a hijacker, it is quite possible that she may in fact have wished to respect this emergency call on Jesus. It could be that she was also close enough to see the response of Jesus to the plea of Jairus. This woman, who had been searching for healing for twelve years, must have been struck by this sudden appearance of a sign of hope embodied by Jesus' response. That is, Jesus, a man who was only a few meters away from her, is going to heal a girl who is at the point of death. Surely, such a man can heal her too from her long and impoverishing ailment. While acknowledging the urgency in the walk of Jesus, Jairus and the accompanying crowds she also could not let this moment pass. She could have decided, therefore, to try her luck silently and from behind the scene. This could have very well been her way of respecting the emergency journey of Jesus and Jairus.

With that, the bleeding woman began to push her way through towards Jesus. She touches and she is healed. But, if the woman had expected that her act would go unnoticed, she is out of luck. Even more seriously, Jairus and his daughter were now in a worse situation. Jesus is immediately aware that power had gone out of him. He stops; he turns and asks, “Who touched me?” This question rightfully startled his disciples, given the crowd that is surrounding him, but perhaps given the emergency situation.

They respond, “You see the crowd pressing on you”. Basically, they are saying, it is a ridiculous question. If the woman had expected the answer of the disciples to convince Jesus, it did not. The woman realized that she could no longer hide from behind scenes. Much like Jairus, “she came in fear and trembling, fell down before him and told him, the whole story”.

The problem is that the 'story was, most probably, a long 12 years story of her search for her healing. While Jesus is listening to her, we can feel the impatience of Jairus. Time is not on their side. His daughter is at the point of death.

They really did not have time to listen to such a long tale. Jairus' worst fears are confirmed. Messengers from his house arrive and they say to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher any longer?" The girl is now outside the tick of time. The urgency that had so far propelled the plot forward, the journey towards Jairus' house, has been brought to a full stop. It was too late. They had lost all time. Hence, they underline, "Do not trouble the teacher". The readers and the listeners expect the emergency journey to cease, for there is nothing as final as death.

But no, the journey forward continues. Jesus turns to Jairus and says, "Do not fear, only believe" They continue walking towards Jairus' house. At this point of the story, the time setting of urgency is shown to be limited. **It has become clear that it is not the defining factor in the progress of the story. **Now it is not a matter of time but a matter of faith. It was Jairus' faith that moved Jesus to travel with him to save his sick daughter. It was the woman's faith that made Jesus to stop and insist on asking, "Who touched me?" Indeed, in acknowledgement of her move, Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace. And so, at this time, precisely when the story has lost all time to save the dying girl, **Jesus reminds and encourages Jairus to maintain the energy of faith.

We read that Jesus enters where the dead child is and takes her hand and says, "*Child get up,*" and the girl got up. Much, if not all, is meant to highlight the character of Jesus in this story. We see Jesus swamped by a crowd, denoting his fame. **Both Jairus and the bleeding woman demonstrate incredible faith in the healing powers of Jesus. The woman's expectations are fulfilled, but Jairus gets higher than what he had bargained for. **That is, while he believed that Jesus could save his child from dying, Jesus actually returns her from death. What does it really mean for us today? In the journey of faith when life negating events happens God in Christ is able to offer new hope and life. The plot that began running on the time line of urgency came to run solely on faith. Hence in the journey of faith dead arise, lives are transformed, hopes restored, and all things are made well in God's time and within God's purpose.

This story, moves us from the realm of human space of possibilities, where you rush to beat time, to an exceptional space of faith, where not only time is no more, but where the humanly impossible becomes differently possible. In this space the dead rise. For all its powerfulness—death does not have the final word. God does. In this way, the characterization of Jesus moves from powerful to amazing, from human to divine. Here the plot comes to its height, featuring Jesus as the main actor and it naturally follows that everyone, the mourners, the readers and the listeners, are overcome by amazement. They are called to move from living with the human possibilities to the realm of faith, where the impossible is possible.

This story operates at both personal and public levels. At a personal level it invites us to a life of faith – a faith that perseveres against all odds and even human reasoning. Not that it will result in the way we want things to be. It would work at a higher level even when things go blatantly wrong. Faith will see through it and persevere to transform tragedies into life giving experiences.

At a public level it invites us to take this faith into the world in our care and concern for humanity and the created order. **The story of the little girl and the bleeding woman underlines that we the need to arise to life in abundance; to walk with the hopeless and give hope; **it is an invitation to stop and listen to those who are trying to touch us for healing; it is the role of facing death in the eye and giving hope. Their *stories are an invitation to us*; to take up this amazing challenge—the act of actually calling the dying to rise from death to life. Given that we the Church is a movement of Christ followers, when we read the story of Jesus, we identify with the works and values of Jesus. Jesus is the character that embodies the values and acts that we want to identify with. It is for this reason that we call ourselves

Christians—namely, that we are a people who are time and again listening to the story of Jesus and trying as much as possible to walk in his steps.

If we read this story as Christ followers, we realize that Jesus does not travel and depend of emergency situations—he is not moved or scared by emergency situations. Rather he travels on an all-round ticket of faith.

We as the Church, as Christians, when we read this story, we are in fact challenged to stand for what Jesus represented—namely, the role of calling life back against all the forces of death be they globalization, gender inequalities, racial/ethnic discriminations, war/conflicts, hopelessness, or stigma etc. May you be energized by the journey of faith that offers new hope and life so that you may help other to find life and hope.