

Bennochy 1st July 2012

In the world of modern day science and high tech medicine, what is a miracle? What are possible today, are the miracles of the past, incomprehensible and only understood as the actions of God. What we dream of today will be common place sometime in the future, maybe a world without illness or disease. Can we imagine that? So where does modern medicine end and God begin or in all acts of healing is there the hand of God?

Some of the greatest stories of Jesus were his healing miracles. Stories told without explanation, except in the power of God.

By the time these miracles are taking place, Jesus has a reputation as a healer, and so if you have a family member who is seriously ill, like Jairus, you will do all it takes to find a cure.

This is the modern day equivalent of travelling abroad to a hospital or clinic that does an operation or procedure not offered in your own country. There isn't guarantee of success. It will involve huge sums of time, money and commitment, but in desperation or hope to save a loved one, all options are explored. In 1st century Palestine, you got Jesus involved.

These are primarily stories of faith and it is significant that both stories involve people who are ritually unclean and people of little significance in little Jewish society, a woman with a

bleeding disorder, who as a result could not worship God in the temple, and a child who has died.

Jarius himself was a leading member of the local synagogue, who very publically states his belief that all Jesus had to do was lay his hands on his daughter and she would be well. Is this misplaced hope, the last throw of the dice, or a genuine belief and trust in Jesus? I suspect it might have been a mixture of all these feelings and emotions, of a father for his daughter, anticipated grief almost overwhelming him.

You can imagine him saying; *"Come on Jesus we need to go, we need to hurry"*. There is urgency in his voice. His faith tested to the limit, struggling through the crowd, along with a time consuming interruption. En route, another miracle takes place. A woman gets in the way!

Crowds are gathering. Others are bringing people to Jesus. Did he heal them? Are they crying out, *"Jesus come back, don't forget about us!"* In the midst of this crowd, Jesus feels, senses, a touch. Is he aware of a loss of some kind of power? Is there, in this touch, some sense of Christ taking our infirmities to himself? However we understand it, in that touch on his cloak, in that fleeting moment, a long standing disease is cured.

"Who touched my clothes?" Maybe the crowd goes silent as Jesus looks round. The disciples are possibly getting a bit

irritated with all this attention or fearful at the size of the crowd or the attention, to the authorities, that it might bring.

“Who touched my clothes?” In the realization of what has happened, the woman comes fearfully to Jesus. Why is she not expressing great joy? Think of the situation and the cultural aspect of this encounter. She is an unclean woman, who has made a rabbi unclean by her touch, and to make matters worse, she is in the midst of a crowd of men. For this woman in 1st century Palestine, she has every right to be afraid. However, Jesus is concerned with faith, not ritual purity.

Like Jarius, she had heard about Jesus and in faith believed that only a touch would be required to be healed. In response to such faith, Jesus could not be angry. He breaks down all the ritual barriers between this woman and God and declares, *‘Go in peace, you are healed’*. Feel her joy, now released, not just in healing, but affirmed in the words of Jesus.

Jarius expressed the same faith. It would be the touch of Jesus who would heal his daughter. Another healing story comes to mind, one yet even more remarkable, even to Jesus. The story of the Roman centurion in Matthew 8 who asked Jesus only to speak the words. Not even a touch would be required.

Back to Jarius, who do doubt is champing at the bit to get going, for every moment is precious. The delay of the crowd, that woman, and his worst fears come true. While the woman is

healed, his daughter has died, and the professional mourners are already there! This is no longer a story about healing. Feel his agony. Others say to him, don’t bother Jesus any more, but Jesus says to him, *“Don’t be afraid, only believe.”* Jesus asks for a practical expression of faith, in the midst of grief, and not some form of abstract theology. This journey began in faith, so it will continue in faith. We know the end of the story, the daughter is healed and those who did not believe are excluded from the miracle.

If she had only been asleep, why bother recording the story! These episodes in the life of Jesus go far beyond the miracles themselves and ask us to journey in faith with Christ, to see and understand that these miracles as a foretaste of the greatest miracle to come, that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In these stories is a mirror that we can hold up, look at and see that death is but a sleep. If Jesus could raise this girl to life, he could conquer death himself and offer to each one of us, eternal life, life in all its fullness. Amen.