

Proper 8B  
Mark 5:21-43  
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Jesus is on his way. We're not told where he's going, but clearly he is on the move. He has crossed the lake once again. Remember, in last week's gospel, we were told he was crossing the lake, we assume to rest after a day of preaching and teaching. On that crossing he stilled the wind and the waves. We're told he crossed to a place of tombs. In a story we don't here in this year's lectionary, he exorcises a demon while he's there, sending it into a herd of swine and granting life to a young man.

In today's gospel, Jesus crosses back from the place of death. This crossing of boundaries, life to death, death to life – there's a lot of that going on here. As Jesus comes from the tombs, his journeying is interrupted by a man named Jairus, who comes and falls at his feet. Now Jairus was a highly respected Jewish official who had apparently exhausted every other avenue, every other choice for a man of his class and stature. And now he falls at the feet of an itinerant preacher and begs his mercy. From the place of death, where seemingly nothing is left, Jairus seeks life.

Such a crossing, such a daring interruption requires courage or heart. That's what courage is; taken from the Latin word "cour", at its root, courage is heart. And Jairus speaks the truth of his heart and begs for mercy. Remember Jesus is travelling – on his way somewhere. For most of us this would be an inconvenient interruption to our plans, yet, we're told, Jesus goes with Jairus without discussion.

And on their way to Jairus' home, there is another interruption, another crossing, another incidence of courage. It is a woman this time, bleeding for 12 years, unclean for 12 years, untouchable for 12 years, probably alone for most of those years. She risks everything and she risks nothing. In her mind, and in the mind of the crowd, she is already dead, for she has nothing and more importantly she has nobody. She is without community. From the place of death, she reaches out, crosses over and discovers life.

Now Jesus knows the difference. He knows the difference between death and life and he knows the moment of grace outpoured. AND HE STOPS. The physical healing of the woman has already occurred in the moment she touched his cloak, yet Jesus seems to believe there is need for more. He asks who has touched him and the woman comes forward and speaks her truth. And what does he call her? "Daughter," he says and with that one word Jesus claims the woman's space in community once again. Even if no one else in the crowd claims her, he has and that makes all the difference. The healing is complete with her full restoration into the community and into the kingdom.

And then, more interruption. They come from the house. The child is dead. No need to go further, nothing more you can do, don't go. And what happens? Jesus goes anyway, crossing once again into the world of death and tombs, and calls the young girl to stand. And the young girl crosses from death to life.

And so the circle is completed time and time again – life to death to life. And what seems to interrupt the circle is actually the completion of the circle. It is the interruption that makes the space for grace: a place where hope lies buried, even while reaching a hand through the limbs of fear for the briefest contact. It is the place of vulnerability and grace, the place of courage and compassion, the place where Good Friday and Easter morning live side by side.

I wonder how many times a day I circumvent grace with myopic vision that refuses to see the presence of the Divine in the inconvenience of the moment. I wonder how many times a day I miss making space for grace and leave another alone to speak their heart to someone else. I wonder how many times a day I miss the miracle of courage and compassion meeting in the middle of the road. I wonder how many times a day I pass up the chance to participate in Easter.