

Pentecost 6, Proper 8-Year B, Track 2

June 27, 2021

All Saints', Littleton, NH

The Rev. Curtis Metzger

Wisdom 1: 13-15, 2: 23-24

Psalm 30

2 Corinthians 8: 7-15

Mark 5: 21-43

Our readings this morning begin with an interesting portion of the Book of The Wisdom of Solomon. As a reminder, this book is in a compilation of books widely known as The Apocrypha. They were written in the period between the last book of the Old Testament and the first writings of the New Testament, commonly referred to as the intertestamental period. The Protestant Churches have generally not accepted these books into the canon of scripture, the Roman Catholic Church does, and of course Anglicans are right in the middle—we do not accept them in the official canon of scripture, but we think they are basically good to read for inspirational purposes, always the *via media*, the middle way.

The writer makes a startling claim that death was not part of God's plan for us, and that there is something essential about our being that is like God's being and is incorruptible and immortal. In Christian thought, this essential part of who we are is, of course, referred to as our 'soul'. One of the often used parts of the book of Wisdom related to this is used as one of the possible readings for the Burial Service, Wisdom 3: " But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them." We rightly take comfort in this, especially recently with the deaths of Dave Stoddard, Rosemary Evans, and last week, Pat Cowles.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians we come upon this middle section where basically he is appealing to them to help the church in Jerusalem where there is some kind of famine and hard times. Paul is still

trying to keep peace between the Jewish church based in Jerusalem and the Gentile churches he has founded, and this would be a good way to impress the elders in Jerusalem. But of course his appeal is couched in terms of Christ's self-offering for us....he became poor, that we might become rich. Well, it's hard to say no to appeal when reminded that they owe everything to God!.....something we are reminded every week in the 8 o'clock service when we say at the offering "All things come of thee O Lord, And of thine own have we given thee." It is good to remember our duty to others in need and our indebtedness to God for all we have.

Now, to what I really want to focus on, if only in brief. This gospel this morning is again a classic Markan gospel with a story inside another story. A synagogue leader, Jairus, comes to Jesus to beg for his help for his ailing 12 year old daughter. He decides to go. On the way there he has this encounter with this woman who had been suffering with hemorrhages for 12 years (notice the 12 years repeated in both stories), and had spent a lot of money trying to get well. So, what do you know about blood, and particularly women and blood in Jewish law and custom? Yes, she was ritually unclean. I've always thought it was incredibly faithful and gracious that this woman tried to do this as surreptitiously as possible to save Jesus from becoming unclean by having been touched by her...and what faith! "If only touch the hem of his garment." The other great thing about this story is that Jesus was so tuned into grace, holiness, the power of the Spirit and around him that he immediately felt something happen. His followers joked with him about how he could tell with the crowd pressing in on him, but he knew nonetheless. He honored her humble approach and confession with healing.

Then as this was happening people came to tell Jesus it was too late for Jairus' daughter, she had already died, and Jairus said not to come because he didn't want to bother Jesus any further. He went anyway and didn't pay attention to the mourners and asked to see the girl alone. Inside he said 'talitha cum' – 'little girl, get up', and she did. The dead old twelve tribes of Israel, uh, I mean the little girl, arose from the dead. And he

ordered her to be fed. Ok, I take a little license, but all through scripture, especially the gospels, there is room for double meaning. Why twelve? Could this have been metaphor and parable about the twelve tribes, the nation of Israel?

It seems hard to love and have faith and be generous these days with all the tension and division in our country, but all these scriptures encourage the risk of love, the joy of generosity, and the faith that ultimately sees life over death. We are called to remember our eternal life with God, and that each one of us is made in God's image. This alone should be a constant reminder of the way we should treat one another. And we are called to give generously out of the generosity that God has given us. And we are called to not lose faith even when we have 'issues' or feel like we are 'hemorrhaging', and to look for Jesus as he calls us 'Talitha cum' -- little one, get up!