

“THAT NONE BE LEFT BEHIND”

MARK 5:21-43, PROPER 8-B, JULY 1, 2018

Here we are once again, citizens of the United States of America, poised to celebrate this coming Wednesday the **242nd Birthday of our Nation!** It's a day for us to remember the great amount of courage and the deep sense of commitment to the joint-cause of freedom and justice, each of those founding fathers must have had, that led them to sign the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

Someone has said that life is full of setbacks and this was certainly true for those American colonists too. The Revolutionary War that began April 19, 1775, would last another 7 years.

Yes, life is full of setbacks. So much so that someone else has said, “Whatever doesn't kill you will only serve to make you stronger!” And it was our 36th President, John Kennedy, who speaking out of his own experience once said: **“A good sailor was never born on smooth seas!**

But to lighten our mood, just a little, did you hear about that milk cow who did her best one day to jump over a barbed-wire fence? Unfortunately, it turned out to be an **“udder” disaster.** Or maybe you heard about that man in NC who backed into a furniture-upholstering machine. Injured seriously at first, he is now **fully-recovered.** Or maybe you heard about the **butcher** who backed into a **meat-grinder.** He got a **“little behind”** in his work.

Life is full of challenges. Life is full of problems. Life is full of setbacks and yet aren't we grateful to be able to join in as people of faith with **King Solomon** in the words of our Old Testament lesson today, taken from **Lamentations 3:** *“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases! His mercies never come to end. They are new every morning: Great is your faithfulness” (Vv. 22-23)!*

YES, LIFE IS FULL OF SETBACKS, BUT THERE IS PROBABLY NOTHING THAT CAN GRAB THE ATTENTION OF PEOPLE MORE QUICKLY THAN THE STORY OF A CHILD IN DISTRESS!

And therefore, our whole nation was rejoicing this past Wednesday evening, when it was reported in the national news across the USA, that a little 2-year old girl named Kamiyah Vicks, who had wandered off into the some **“alligator and snake-infested”** woods, near her home, was found alive, 15 hours after she had been separated by her parents; spending the whole night in the woods by herself. It's probably impossible for us to realize just how frightened this little girl was! When the authorities found her, there were **“crocodile”** tears streaming down her little cheeks!

Yes, there is nothing that can grab the attention of people more quickly than the **news of a child in distress and that's why we shouldn't be surprised** when we see **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF rushing through a very large crowd of people**, accompanying a man named **Jairus**, who a respected ruler of the synagogue and a prominent citizen of Capernaum; although he was a Gentile, who had become Jewish and not "Jewish" from the time of his birth!

Some Bible commentators like to point out to us that this incident took place very early in our Lord and Savior's public ministry, when there were large crowds of people that formed immediately wherever our Lord went!

It's possible that **Jesus woke up that day, planning on going out** there into the streets of Capernaum, and **preaching** another one of his **highly-stimulating, "barn-burning"** type of sermons; when Jesus own planned schedule for the day was greatly interrupted!

Someone else has said: **"LIFE IS WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU WHEN YOU ARE MAKING OTHER PLANS!"** Often, we find out, however, that the **INTERRUPTION IS OF GREATER CONSEQUENCE** that what we had initially set out to do!"

Here this very respectable man comes; a man who so loves his little daughter back at home and man who somehow was able to discern, either from a physician's diagnosis, or from his own evaluation--that his little **daughter was on the point of death.**

He ran to Jesus. He fell, down on his knees, before Jesus. He begged Jesus for his help, and Jesus responded favorably to the man's invitation.

JESUS RESPONDED TO THIS MAN'S FERVENT PLEA, BECAUSE JESUS HAD COME INTO OUR WORLD NOT SIMPLY TO MINISTER TO PEOPLE AS A CORPORATE MASS OF PEOPLE TOGETHER, but Jesus also came to MINISTER TO EVERY ONE OF US AS INDIVIDUALS.

And Jesus often stressed the importance of our taking our time, not only to minister to other people as a group, but to take time, occasionally also to minister to other people as individuals. Remember how he said one day: "Truly, truly, I say to you that *whoever gives even a cup of cold water to a thirsty person, because that giver of that cup of water is one of my disciples--he will surely not lose his reward!*"?

Jesus reminds us that his faithful followers will **be surprised on the last day to hear him say to them: "I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was sick and imprisoned, and you came and visited me! Naked and you clothed me!"** And the faithful followers of Jesus will ask him: **"Lord, WHEN did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you drink, sick and imprisoned and visited you? And naked and we clothed you?"**

Then the King will reply: *“For as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers and sisters you have done it unto me!”*

JESUS OFTEN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL THAT NONE BE LEFT BEHIND! He told his parable about the man with **100 sheep**. One went astray! What does the good shepherd do? Does he say to himself: **“No problem, I still have 99 other sheep!”**? **“No, he goes out and searches diligently for that sheep until he finds it! And then he brings it home, upon his shoulders, rejoicing! Then he invites his friends over to celebrate that sheep’s return with a party!”**

Jesus knows, that when we take time to personalize our ministry to others as individuals, that we are also **shoring up the confidence of others that when they are in need, we will minister to them as individuals too!**

HENRI NOUWEN WAS A GREAT CHRISTIAN AUTHOR, who was born in the Netherlands in 1932, who lived to the age of 64 years old, and who died in 1996. He had acquired at Th.D. and was given tenure as a professor for many years at that great **IVY LEAGUE INSTITUTION**, Notre Dame University near South Bend, Indiana.

He one day said, **“I HAD A VERY HEAVY WORK SCHEDULE AT NOTRE DAME AND I DIDN’T LIKE TO BE DISTURBED, UNTIL ONE DAY IT FINALLY DAWNED ON ME THAT MANY OF THE INTERRUPTIONS THAT CAME MY WAY, WERE ALSO A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF MY GOD-GIVEN WORK AND CALLING!”**

Well, Jesus was on his way with Jairus, to Jairus’ home, to minister to Jairus’ dying daughter, when another person interrupted him; not nearly so **STEALTHILY THIS TIME!**

FROM BEHIND, JESUS FEELS THE PULL OF FINGERS ON THE FRINGE OF HIS OUTER GARMENT. HE STOPPED AND ASKED HIS DISCIPLES, “WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?” The disciples all but laughed and said, *“Jesus, you see this large crowd of people standing all around you and you are asking us who touched you?”*

But Jesus would not be deterred. He looked all around to see who had touched him, and a woman, more than likely--a middle aged **woman, came forward, who fell at Jesus feet and told him the truth.** She had a chronic illness, a debilitating disease and had been suffering from endless hemorrhaging for 12 years now! She had been to every doctor imaginable and spent all the money she had on various doctors, but instead of showing any improvement in the signs of her health at all--**she only grew worse!”**

She would have been declared “unclean” and more than likely her husband would have divorced her because of her sordid illness. Any who knew about her condition would have shunned her! **BUT THE PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD, WHOM THE WORLD IGNORES AND**

THE PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHOM THE WORLD SHUNS, ARE ALL NOTICED BY JESUS; THE SAVIOR WHO CAME INTO THIS WORLD TO LOVE THEM TOO, AND TO DIE ON THE CROSS IN PAYMENT OF THEIR SINS TOO! She had somehow, somewhere, heard the good news about Jesus and she became convinced as she said to herself: ***“If I could just touch the fringe on Jesus’ outer garment, I know that I could be healed!”***

Well, she did get close enough to touch the hem on Jesus’ garment, and she was healed, and she could feel the healing power of **Jesus flowing into her instantly, and Jesus could feel the healing power--flowing out of him into that woman instantly!**

Jesus addresses her, but not to scold her in any way! Jesus assures her that she too will be made a daughter of the King, through his reconciling work for her and for all of us that was still to take place on that old wooden cross!

“Daughter, your faith has made you well! Go in peace and be healed of your disease!”

My brothers and sisters, whoever you are, whoever you are standing among that vast number of people who comprise the kingdom of God, there is no one on earth whom God loves more than you, and there is no one on earth whom God loves less than you!

And Christ’s call -- is that no one -- no one should be left behind. No one should be left out.

There were still a few more interruptions that would come to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on that day!

He would resume his journey with Jairus towards Jairus’ home and some servants from Jairus home would interrupt Jesus and Jairus in their journey and say to them: “No need to come anything father, the little girl has died!”

But Jesus told Jairus to pay no attention to what these men were saying! And when Jesus and Jairus did arrive at Jairus residence, they both heard this same message repeated to them again! And Jesus said, “No worries. This little girl is not dead she is only sleeping!”

Is there anything that will capture the attention of other people more quickly than the news of a child in distress? Having said this, the crowd that had gathered laughed out loud in Jesus’ face!

But Jesus went into the room--took the little girl’s hand and said to her in Aramaic: “Little girl, I say to you arise!” And she stood up and was made alive again, because when Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, death has now been transformed for all of us into little more than a good night’s sleep--especially in the view of eternity!

I want to share with you just some of the vital spiritual lessons I was able to glean for myself out of this Gospel lesson today (Mark 5:21-43).

1. As human beings living in a fallen, sinful world, there are times when we all go through various types of suffering. But God does not abandon us during those times of suffering. He continues to walk alongside of us and strengthens us for the journey along the way!
2. There are some people who say that for Jesus to have any real meaning to make any kind of significant impact upon your life, you have to follow him for a long time and become extremely knowledgeable of the Bible. But this doesn't seem to be the case here at all either. Both Jairus and the woman were "new bees" when it came to their following Jesus Christ.
3. Thirdly, when Jesus interrupts our lives with his divine presence, there is always something, that flows out of him into each one of us every time. Jesus again often noticed the blind man along said of the road, and when Jesus healed him, there was power that went out of Jesus into those men. The same thing was true for that tax-collector who was extremely fearful for his own spiritual health. He went to the temple and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And the forgiveness of sins flowed directly out of Jesus into that man...so that he went home justified. How about the day when Jesus stood next to Lazarus tomb, who had died 4 days before this? And yet Jesus cried aloud: "Jesus, come forth!" And Lazarus came out of the tomb.
4. When we receive the Lord's body and blood today, God will be here and ready to pour into each of us again a fresh supply of his forgiveness, love and mercy and not because I say so, but because he says so. He is the very same Jesus who said one day, "I am the bread of life come down from heaven to give my life for the world. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day!" Amen