

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

Mark 5:21-43

Lamentations 3:21-33

Psalm 30

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

June 27, 2021

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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I want you to think about the worst-case scenario.

To be sure we are on the same page, a worst-case scenario is defined as the most severe possible outcome that can be projected to occur in a given situation.

There's even a book called *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Expert Advice for Extreme Situations*, which covers a slew of bad situations such as...

- How to get out of quicksand
- How to navigate without GPS
- How to deliver a baby in the back of a car
- How to wrestle free from an alligator

Their website blog even covers worst-case situations like how to get your grown child to move out of the house and how to foil a UFO abduction. Of course, these are mostly tongue and cheek. We can laugh from afar because we feel fairly certain, these aren't things we would ever have to deal with. At the same time, we are geared as human beings to consider the worst-case when faced with uncertainty. It's part of our survival mechanism...to judge a situation in its fullest and come up with solutions to help us navigate what we are facing. Researchers have even discovered that our brains can evaluate a situation and make a decision 11 seconds before we are conscious of the decision.

That comes in handy when faced with the worse-case. But what about the worst-case that lingers? Where there doesn't seem to be a resolution? When you find yourself at rock bottom with nowhere to turn. Maybe you are losing hope and losing faith. Maybe you have run out of answers and feel alone in your struggle. What then?

In those moments, I find so much comfort in the story of the woman in our Gospel reading today. The woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years. I saw a piece of art that depicted her on the ground, crawling through the dirt and through the crowds. I thought that image was important. Because this woman has lost everything and has been cast out as unwanted, and undesirable with no one to help her.

By Jewish law as written in Leviticus, she is unable to be among people or go to synagogue because she is considered ritually unclean. She can't touch other people and they can't touch her. Whatever she touches is unclean and whoever touches her or touches anything she has touched is also unclean.

She has seen countless physicians so we can assume at one time, she was someone of means and status. There has been no relief, no cure for her condition. She has been left to suffer and scrap up whatever existence she can.

Take that in for a moment...this has been going on for 12 years. Imagine her loneliness, her brokenness, her embarrassment. She is living her worst-case scenario.

Would you have lost hope by this point? I can imagine that most of us would be experiencing a range of emotions from anger to disillusionment to fear to despair. Surely she has considered every possible solution only to come up empty handed.

And yet, she has not given up. Her faith still has a glimmer of determination. Her resolve is found in that moment she decides to reach out and do the unthinkable, the unallowable. She decides to reach out in her last-ditch effort and not just hope for healing but claim healing. She reaches out for Jesus and touches his cloak.

I want to read to you a poem that highlights this moment so beautifully.

**I Reach** by Steve Garnaas-Holmes

*Jesus, even without knowing,  
you offered your power to her.  
Without justification  
you met her reach.  
Without knowing why,  
you enabled healing.*

*You do not require  
explanation or deserving.  
By the overflowing of your grace  
you can't judge or withhold.  
You don't even know of her  
before you've healed her.  
Such is your love.*

*She reached out.  
And this—this—you call faith:  
not the believing, but the reaching.*

*Jesus, I do not understand.  
I do not know the outcome.  
I only reach out.  
I reach for the hem of your garment.*

Not the believing, but the reaching.

Jesus isn't there for us because we have met some kind of criteria for grace. He is there because he loves us unconditionally. We don't have to understand why or how. We just have to reach.

The woman in our Gospel reaches and she is met with love. After lingering for 12 years in her worst-case scenario, she seeks the one person who can change everything. An act so persistent that it opens space for the inbreaking of God to bring life out of darkness.

Our call is to simply reach. Because God is already reaching for us.

I want to close this morning with a portion of the Canticum: A Song of God's Mercy.

*When I remember this, I have hope: \**  
*by God's kindness, we are not destroyed,*  
*for God's mercies are never-ending \**  
*and are new every morning.*  
*How great is your faithfulness, O God! \**  
*"You are my portion," says my soul, "therefore I hope in you."*  
*You are good to those who wait with patience, \**  
*to every soul that seeks you.*  
*It is good to wait, even in silence \**  
*for the salvation of the Lord.*  
*It is good to bear in youth \**  
*the yoke God imposes,*  
*to sit silent and alone, \**  
*clinging to hope even when tasting the dust.*

To cling to hope even when tasting the dust. My prayer for you is that wherever you may find yourself today, especially if you are struggling through the depths of pain, loneliness, isolation, or despair...just keep reaching. Know in your heart that God is reaching back. God's mercies are never ending. Thanks be to God. Amen.