

SERMON FOR PENTECOST 7  
St David's, Burnside  
30 June 2024

Listening is an art form that many do not learn nor practice very well. It's not because they are deaf. It's often that they jump too quickly in response, believing they know the answer or action that is required even before fully understanding what response is required. We all want to be helpful!

For a number of reasons saving someone in danger is not always successful. A husband and wife were out walking and enjoying the local park when all of a sudden the husband fell over a kerb and gashed himself on a sharp garden border. The injury was serious. The man had severed an artery and was bleeding profusely. His wife could see that it was very serious and called for medical assistance. In the hospital emergency department the medicos asked her what his blood type was. She didn't know. They had never discussed it. She searched through his wallet in case he had his blood type written on paper as he repeatedly but quietly muttered something to her. But there was nothing found. He needed a blood transfusion urgently. Realising he was slipping away she began to tell the medicos how loving, thoughtful, and encouraging towards her he had been throughout their marriage. As before, he continued to mutter, but now very quietly. Just before he died from the loss of blood she bent down to catch what he was saying- B positive she heard him say - B positive.

It's fantastic though when strangers leap in to help another person in distress. Someone has fallen over in the street and those around lend a hand to help and comfort the stranger. Call for assistance if need be. The fallen do not have to be old to get the assistance they need. Car crash victims, those in immediate danger of injury or death, we see it on our TV screens, neighbours and strangers trying desperately to prevent injury or death despite of putting themselves in danger.

The reputation of Jesus had grown in such a brief period, he was a draw card. The curious, the disbelievers, the people with desperate needs, all were drawn to him. Mark tells the story of Jesus healing a little girl, "Little girl, get up!" And she got up and began to walk around. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. His care for the girl went beyond healing to instructing that she be fed.

There's a lot to think about in this gospel message today. The account of Jesus healing the girl and the woman were significant moments in Jesus' travels through Galilee. So that nobody would know, the woman joined the crowd that was pressing in so close to him that I suspect she was able to just push her arm forward and touch his clothing. But it didn't go unnoticed. Mark describes her touch being noticed by Jesus, "Who touched my clothes?" She may well have broken the taboos about a woman touching a man not her husband, daring to believe that if she could it would be enough to be healed of her debilitating disease. We don't need much imagination to know that her bleeding with possibly the associated odour and discomfort would have worn her down. Nobody had been able to cure or relieve her of that discomfort and of the isolation she would have suffered. In desperation she reached out to touch the man with the reputation.

This account of the woman being healed may seem more dramatic than the healing of the young girl. That's not true because although very different each healing responded to the faith that can move mountains. You've heard me often speak about desperation prayer. Desperation prayer is

prayer that demonstrates that we are at the end of our searching for answers, knowing that nothing more can be done to change the situation that consumes us. Whether it be like the woman with a never ceasing menstrual problem or the child who appears dead. When there is nothing more that can be done then we choose in desperation to reach out, to break taboos in our search for wholeness and ultimately life in Jesus Christ. "Who touched my clothes?", "The child is not dead but sleeping." he said. There's a suggestion here that Jesus spoke quietly. Fully in control, knowing his own strength and his command of both situations he responded as only he could to the woman's plea and a father's conviction that if Jesus would just lay his hands on his daughter she would live.

Jesus listened. Jesus healed and made it possible for the woman to return to community life unburdened. Jesus listened and restored life to the young girl. Jesus listened and understood what was being asked for and then responded.

We want to help people. It's part of the art of being a Christian, an important part we must learn to do well. We should also learn to listen, don't you think?

If only the wife of the man in mortal danger had listened to him, listened even to his mumbling.

I said there is much to think about in today's gospel. Listening attentively is but one.

Fr John

Saturday 29 June 2024