

# 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Year

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Today St Mark gives us two healing stories, one wrapped up inside the other. Framed by the story of a young girl at death's door, is that of an adult woman, one of life's walking wounded. Everyone knows the situation of Jairus's daughter, and when Jesus arrives at the house, there is a throng of people loudly weeping and wailing. No one knows of the woman's medical problem – not even Jesus in his human nature. He asks, "Who touched me?" Both stories show how Christ has come to bring life.

Jesus is **not** a magician, a physician, a wonder-worker or a counsellor. He **is** God made Man. In the story of the young girl healing and life itself come in response to Our Lord's words, "Little girl, I tell you to get up." But with the woman, Our Lord's words – "My daughter, your faith has restored you to health" – merely state what has already happened without his uttering a word.

While Our Lord is aware that power has gone out from him he does not seem surprised. St Mark does not seem surprised either in telling the story. The crowd may well have been amazed and astonished by some of Our Lord's healings, but to Our Lord Himself and to the early Christian community they are **absolutely normal**. The Gospels do not present healing, whether in body or mind, as a surprising new development, but rather as the restoration of something that has been lost. The modern view is that miracles, if and when they occur, are startling because they break the laws of nature. The Scriptural view is that they are wonderful glimpses of the Kingdom of God breaking in to our fallen and broken world. They are signs of the divine order in the midst of human chaos. If you have ever been on pilgrimage to Lourdes, you may have sensed this expectancy - that God is close and that healings and peace are in the air.

God created everything for existence, for life. This is the message of our first reading from the Book of Wisdom. For human beings God's chosen destiny is greater still, eternal life. We are made in his image and likeness. However, the reality of human sin, as an integral part of human nature inherited from our first ancestors, means that we can attain this only by God's grace. It also means that to be human is to experience illness, stress, the effects of aging, even death are unavoidable, even for Our Lord and his Blessed Mother but in the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse Our Lord says, "Fear not. I am the first and the last and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Some people might see Our Lord as unfair. Why does he help this woman and Jairus's daughter, but not everyone who is sick? We do not know why God allows some people to suffer from ill health or disability, while others never have day's illness. We do know that every single life is precious to him, and that he has a special purpose for each one of us whether long or short, pain free or filled with suffering. We matter just as much to him as the people in today's Gospel, but we, too, are unique, and he will bring us fullness of life in the way that he knows will be best for us. We commend to God's grace and healing all those who are sick whether in mind or body, whether their sickness is known to us or hidden from our sight.

The healing miracles in the New Testament are not just wonders, or temporary remedies, but intended to point to this greater reality. This is why St John likes to call them 'signs'. In Heaven, death, sin, and sickness have no place. Wholeness and life are restored by God's gift. Our potential is fulfilled. We do not know exactly how we shall appear in the Resurrection, but the Risen Lord gives us a clue. He was recognisably himself. He still bore the wounds, but they were not a source of pain. Theologians tell us that whatever our age at death, whether in old age, or as children, we shall be as in the prime of life.