



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday November 10, 2013 Trinity 24

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠

“And when Jesus came into the Ruler’s house, and saw the minstrels and people making a noise, he said unto them, ‘Give place, for the maid is not dead.’ And they laughed him to scorn.”

Matthew 9: 23-4

When I was a child, my Irish grandmother was very involved in politics in her town. I mention that it was my Irish grandmother because in New England, politics are conducted at Irish funerals. To support my grandmother, my mom paraded me to some distant cousin or benefactors funeral four or five times a month.

I remember how shocked and offended I was to watch the people at these funerals. They laughed and joked and gossiped. It seemed as if they did not even know that there was a body and a grieving family in the next room. I was so overwhelmed at the lack of respectful awe for the dead that I developed a nervous laugh that I could not control inside the funeral parlors. It didn’t take long for my grandmother to realize that this nervous tittering little boy was no political benefit, and mercifully, I was relieved of funeral duty.

I think about those days when we read this Gospel. You know that the ruler whose

daughter had died, looked around at the casket and the commotion and the politics, and he could not accept that this was the end and purpose of his daughter’s life. In his desperation, he made a revolutionary act of faith. He confronts this new preacher, Jesus of Nazareth, and begs him to reverse the inevitable, death, the way of history and the world. The ruler was a man of power, resources and influence, all the things that we envy and strive to achieve, and yet, in the face of the ultimate question, he is helpless, and he comes in his grief and travail to Jesus for a miracle.

As they start out, another desperate person, the woman with the issue of blood, makes a similar confession of faith. She was not judged worthy by the disciples to be seen by Jesus and so she reasoned, “if I can but touch the hem of his garment,” though I am not worthy to stand and ask, I will be healed.

And when she touches the garment, when she makes this humble, scared, and desperate act of faith, she not only gets her wish, but she gets the full attention of Jesus Christ. “Stop” he says. Someone touched me, the “virtue has gone out of me.” One of His sheep, lost and afraid and endangered, has called out to Him and Jesus can only respond with the whole of His love. Everything else stops; the crowd, the disciples, the ruler, even the journey to the little girl, and He gives His love and assurance and healing to this scared, lonely and sick woman.

Once He has blessed her, restored her, and saved her, he proceeds to the ruler’s house. It’s hardly the environment we expect to find miracles. The minstrels, the nursemaids, the politicians, the attendants of the dominion of death mock Jesus. They laugh and rebuff Him. But in the face of all this hostility and abuse, He does something stunning. He perseveres for the ruler instead of being offended. He goes in to the girl, and commands that she arise. He overrules death, takes her back into the dominion of life and restores her to her loving father.

These two stories are included in Matthew’s Gospel for our comfort. They are not just proof of the historical Jesus, of His power and His glory, although they do serve that purpose. These stories are His covenant for us, His promise to the lowly and humble and sickly and desperate.

Call to me in your most desperate, scared and grieving hour. Reach out to touch even the smallest part of My glory, in humility and in hope, and you will receive all of Me. I will stop the whole world, put rulers and disciples and creation aside to give you all of my attention, healing, life and Salvation. Though you are surrounded by the nursemaids and

minstrels and politicians of death, though they mock Me, and mock you for your faith in Me, I will say to you, Arise. Awake. Be whole and live, and live in me now and forever. Let me take you by the hand and restore you to the arms of your Father who loves you. Though the world has chosen death by sinfulness, offers indignity, ungratefulness and fear, your Father has sent me to rescue you from this world and bring you back into the light.

We are all like the woman and the ruler. Unable to control the force of the sinful, deadly world, realizing at last that we cannot heal ourselves, we cannot control the world, and we cannot save those that we love if we do it only by our own force of will. However, when we reach out to the hem of Jesus, giving him the tiniest particle of faith, He stops the world and gives us Salvation, comfort, peace and life.

We are like the woman and the ruler, secure in our pride and the façade of our self control, until we are humbled by the power of this world, the power of sickness, and fear, and loneliness and death. Your Father doesn’t want those things for you, but He allows them to happen so that you can learn the Truth, that there is only one Hope, the hope in Christ that we can be restored to life and to our Father.

Come to the altar and accept the gift he offers, His Body and Blood, His attention, grace, blessing and life. Feed on Him in your hearts, by faith, with Thanksgiving and be made whole and return to the loving arms of you Father.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.