**Desperate for Christ**

Based on [Matthew 9:18-26](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt9.18-26)

Preached on November 11, 2018

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Today’s Gospel is about the healing grace of Jesus and about the outcome of faith. In it there are two stories, one sandwiched in another. The first is about a ruler whose daughter died, and who comes and asks Jesus for help. “**My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live**.” We know from Mark and Luke that this man was named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the Synagogue. Jesus obeyed Jairus, rose with his disciples and followed him to his daughter.

On the way, a woman who suffered a discharge of blood for 12 years came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.

Each of these accounts begins with faith. Jairus had faith to believe that Jesus could help his daughter. He even gets specific saying to Jesus, **“Come lay your hands on my daughter and she will live**”. The bleeding woman says to herself, “**If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.**”

Both Jairus and the woman knew that the power and grace to revive and to heal was *in Jesus*. Jesus had already brought back a widow’s son from death, so it’s understandable where Jairus’ faith could have come from. **It is interesting to wonder how the woman figured that if she only touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, she would be made well**. I don’t have the answer, Matthew doesn’t say. But she *believed* it. And the common denominator between her and Jairus is this faith…faith that draws people to Jesus.

Faith in Jesus is a powerful thing. First, as we have said, faith draws people to Jesus. In many cases it is a faith borne of desperation. Jairus’ daughter was dead, the woman was bleeding for 12 years. They had no other hope, the world could afford no help for their problem. Only Jesus.

And learn from this also the desperation out of which their faith grew. 12 years of chronic bleeding, you would think, would make one cynical and hopeless, having exhausted all earthly help. And maybe she was burnt out—but her spirit was rekindled when Jesus arrived. And it’s clear to see here and throughout the Word, that no one comes to Jesus in complacent equanimity. They all come desperate.

We should learn to come to Jesus with our problems as well, seeing that he has authority over everything. **He who, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, literally hung the moon—why should we not turn to him for deliverance from the things that threaten us?** He certainly has power to help and the will to save

When Jesus came to earth the first time, he found faith. He found people desperate for salvation and disillusioned with a world that offers no help. When he comes again will he find faith on the earth? We know what he will find, people behaving like the days of Noah, eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage…not desperate for salvation, but blissfully unaware of their need to deal with the wrath of their creator through the mediation of his son.

But in this woman’s 12 years of desperation, God was preparing her to meet His Son. In the unimaginable anguish of the death of his little daughter, God was preparing Jairus to come to Jesus for help. **The wrath of judgment against sin, through which we have earned all sickness and death here, is God’s way of crushing our hope in the idols of this world, killing our old self—and raising us to live new lives.** He has awaken us to the truth that this world is passing away, and that our only hope in life and in death is to be found in Jesus Christ who is the way and the truth and the life. Who has carried our illnesses and bore our diseases (Matt. 8:17). Desperation leads the worldly minded to drastic measures. Desperation leads God’s elect to faith.

And faith not only draws desperate people to Jesus, it also prepares them to receive his grace. Faith drew the bleeding woman to Jesus, but it also prepared her to receive healing from him. **And faith is what draws desperate people to the Sacrament of the Altar every Lord’s Day. B**ecause Jesus is present, and though we cannot touch the hem of his garment, we have something better. We have a promise, that whoever eats his body and drinks his blood will have something better than earthly health, he will have eternal health.

In order for you to prepare for the Lord’s Supper, we have a powerful illustration in the hemorrhaging woman. First, it is God that makes us desperate and longing for salvation through His law, with which He curses sin. This desperation draws us to Christ in the Sacrament. **There are churches who claim that communion shouldn’t be offered every week because people appreciate it more the less they receive it.** Perhaps, but only God may withhold treatment for illness, because only He in control of all things. Could you imagine a doctor that withholds treatment, so that you’ll become more desperate and appreciate it more when the sickness gets worse? God made the woman wait 12 years for Jesus’ treatment, he is God and He can do that. **But we should never withhold the treatment prescribed by Christ from faith.**

Second, the woman’s story teaches us how only faith can receive the benefits of the sacrament. As Jesus said to the woman, “**Your faith has made you well**”, we can be certain that without faith it is impossible to please God, and be worthy of his blessing. In fact, those who take the sacrament apart from faith are not forgiven, but guilty. As 1 Cor. 1:27 says, “**Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.**”

But those who come forth by faith can be certain that they have touched, tasted, and benefited from contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, every bit as much as the bleeding woman. **She only touched Jesus clothes, but we who are baptized have been clothed with Jesus.**  He only stopped the sickness of her body and shedding of her blood, but we receive the holy body and shed blood of Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Don’t regard this sacrament lightly. Receive it desperately and thankfully, according to the faith which has made you righteous in the sight of God and worthy to be called His children.