



Thirteenth Sunday Ordinary Time 2006

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2: 23-24 2Corinthians 8:7,9, 13-15 Mark 5:21-43

If we begin with the passages from Wisdom we discover that the theme is Justice: The key to Life. With this in mind we can see some connection with Mark's story of the two women who are raised.

We are told in verse 12, "Court not death..." It then says, "God did not make death." It was an early belief that humans, made in the image of God were not to die. This was one of the reasons for the fall story. If we die it is because of something we did. This is a common human response to bad things that happen to us or others. The big difference, in the thinking of the scripture writers, is that God is not to blame.

Wisdom links death and Justice and in so doing paves the way for a moving from a literal understanding of immortality, to a belief through the story of Jesus, to a transformation through resurrection. The just person will not die.

What do we learn from the two stories that Mark presents today? As in all stories there are many symbols and allusions to help us discover the author's intention.

The story begins by siting it "on the other side". We recall Exodus and the symbol of crossing from the death of slavery to the freedom of the promised land. This story happens in *transformation time* in other words we are asked to hear this story through the lens of resurrection.

There is a neat symmetry between the main characters, Jairus and his daughter; Jesus and his *daughter*. Jairus comes to petition Jesus on behalf of his daughter who is near death. Jesus acts on behalf of his daughter who has no life. The daughter of Jarius is about to be cut off at the beginning her adult life. She will not become a mother. The woman has suffered vaginal bleeding for twelve years, this was enough to ensure both spiritual and physical death. She has not been able to conceive and as a result has probably been divorced. This would account for her having money to spend on cures, and that she was out on the streets by herself. What each woman suffers is a loss of fruitfulness.

Jairus asks for the touch of Jesus upon his daughter, Jesus experiences the touch of the woman. Jesus, we are told sets out on his journey of healing. The journey is to bring healing in unexpected ways. In his encounter with the woman who bleeds Jesus experiences a touch which should have rendered him unclean but recognises that a reversal has taken place. The *unclean* gesture, in faith, has become a conduit of healing and wholeness.

At the healing of the woman comes the news of the death of the daughter of Jairus. Jesus overhears the words of discouragement that are offer to Jairus and offers the

classical words that herald a revelation. "Fear not." Jesus continues on his journey taking Peter, James and John the companions of the transfiguration story.

Jesus takes the dead girl by the hand and says "Talitha koum" which means "Little lamb I say to you, rise up." This use of *rise up* is also used in the passion predictions.

Jesus uses the euphemism of sleep to speak of the girl's death and later it is used to signify the death of a Christian whose death is but a sleep before the awakening of resurrection.

Paul's words come in the exhortation to be generous in contributing to the collection for the church in Macedonia. For Paul this collection is a matter of justice. The people of Corinth have experienced the generosity of God so they must be generous towards others.

Paul says, "The relief of others ought not to impoverish you."

We can read this at two levels. It does not make sense to give away so much that you have nothing. All you have achieved is a reversal of fortune. At the spiritual level there is also an important message for us as disciples. Being fit for ministry is not a luxury but a matter of justice. It is part of our discernment to judge what we need for ourselves to participate in the mission of Jesus as well as we possibly can.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.