

Sunday Thought

27th June 2021 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

2 Samuel 1:1, 17 - 27

Psalm 130

2 Corinthians 8: 7 - 15

Mark 5: 21 - 43

The Challenge of Patience



This past year of pandemic disruption has challenged us about many things. Not least the art of patience. Life for many has slowed down – working from home and reduced office staff; fewer face to face medical appointments; extended delays for elective surgery; postponed holidays and longer waits to be reunited with family..... We have found ourselves living on different timetables and learning to be patient!

I had this in mind when I read today's Gospel story. It's the well-known account of Jesus healing the daughter of Jairus. It had not occurred to me before just how patient Jairus must have been. He was a man of some importance in Capernaum. He held the position of ruler – like senior steward – in the synagogue, a role which entailed responsibility for organising Sabbath worship and 'making the preaching plan!' I imagine him as a man of some presence who did not expect to be kept waiting. This time circumstances were different ... his daughter was seriously ill. Jairus was informed that Jesus was back in town, teaching and healing again. A crowd had gathered at the lakeside. It was an opportune moment. Jairus hurried to join the crowd who would respectfully make way for him. Jesus was on his list of preachers and Jairus obviously knew him well enough to be confident that the peripatetic preacher could and would help him by coming to his house, laying hands on the child and healing her. Encouraged by Jesus' response they set out straight away with a considerable portion of the crowd in tow, many of them looking for healing thrills.

Then things falter. New patients are arriving all the time wanting Jesus' attention and most feeling they should be priority cases. Jairus pauses, looking towards home, his whole being saying, *Come on! Hurry! She may be in even greater danger by now!* Patience is being stretched and only made worse when a woman in the crowd touches Jesus and is healed from her chronic malady. This requires questions and conversation. Jairus hops from one foot to another, running on a little way and coming back as though attempting to move proceedings onward.

Now, messengers arrive with news that it's too late – *'Your daughter is at the point of death. Come home now. Don't bother the teacher anymore.'* Hearing this, Jesus breaks in with a reassuring word – *'I'm still coming Jairus. Don't be afraid. Just keep believing. Trust me!'* Patience! Further patience is required of Jairus when at home, the synagogue ruler must wait again. An inquisitive – and caring – assembly of pre-mourners – has to be dispersed to allow Jesus, Jairus and his wife and three other disciples, Peter, James and John, to enter and pray with the child. After all the impatient anxiety the child's healing seems a simple anti-climax. *'Little girl, get up!'* And then. *'Get her something to eat.'*

A real lesson here is the link between patience and faith. That is, the challenge to go on trusting when life loses its regular balance for whatever reason, when prayers are not answered as and when we have the audacity to ask and expect. Rewarded patience occurs too in the story of the woman who caused the delay for Jairus. She had suffered for twelve years, trying every kind of advice about a cure, waiting, learning patience until the answer is simply reaching out to Jesus – trusting him. It seemed to me that learning patience is key to deeper faith and to realising the greatest thing – *'the love of God for us which never gives up because its faith, hope and patience never fail.'* (1 Cor.13.7)

There are other lessons from the pandemic here today. We shall be hearing about financial difficulties facing the churches because of loss of income. In the passage from Paul's letter to Corinth he has some advice about giving. He says it should be done out of gratitude for all God has given to us, out of care for others, and above all, as an expression of our real love for Jesus who so generously gave up all riches, becoming poor in order to make us the richest people alive! More about that another time I expect.

A Prayer [with Psalm 130 in mind]

*Lord, in desperate times, when we turn to you for help,
and find ourselves waiting for answers to our prayers;
give us patience.
While we wait, bring us closer to you,
to learn
to trust you with a firmer faith;
to be grateful for all you have already given to us,
and to discover more of your amazing love which never fails us.*



Patience