

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, January 4, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“OUCH!”

READING: Mark 5:24-34 – A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came, and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

A couple of Saturdays ago I sat down on the couch after reading the morning paper to watch a little of “Sports Center”. After about 20 minutes I stood up to fetch something, and when I did I immediately felt a muscle spasm on the right side of my lower back. I could not stand upright because the pain was excruciating. You might remember me preaching the sermons that weekend from a semi-seated position on a stool before the altar. I couldn’t stand, sit, walk, or do much of anything for 4 or five days, while I applied heat, stretched, and listened to all manner of “remedies” from those who pitied me because they could see my pain.

As bad as it was, it was not close to the suffering I experienced about 8 or 9 years ago when I burst a disc in my lower back while gardening. That was a whole another level of hurt! For two months I limped around, not able to sleep without pain meds, visiting doctors who sent me for “rehab” that only caused the pain to intensify. My whole world was colored and affected by the pain. You may know exactly what I’m talking about – chronic pain has a way of demanding your full attention and clouding everything you do. When I began to get tingling sensations in my toes, Dr. Doyle, my neuro-surgeon, and I decided surgery was the only relief available.

The surgery was done out-patient at Floyd, just a small incision in my lower back and micro-instruments that cleaned up the “goo” from the burst disc that had been pressuring my sciatic nerve all along. When I awoke, I wasn’t sure what to expect. When I was allowed to get to my feet, there was no pain. When I got out of the car at home, there was no pain. When I lay in the bed and rolled over on my left side (something I had been utterly unable to do for two months because of the sciatica), there *WAS NO PAIN!* I wept from relief and in thanksgiving to God. It was nothing short of a miracle for me, and I still ask God to bless Dr. Doyle whenever I think of him because he (with the Lord’s guidance) gave me my life back.

So when I read the story of the “Syro-Phoenician woman” and it says she suffered much at the hands of doctors, spent all that she had, and it only got worse, I can understand her desperation. I can then also understand her relief, her joy, and her thankfulness when the pain and the bleeding were suddenly and at once removed from her. She was not a Jew. She was a Gentile woman with a constant bleeding problem that made her “unclean” in Jewish law and an outcast wherever she went. But Jesus, far from castigating her for her presumptuousness, praises her for her faith and sends her away with his benediction. Just as I honor the physician who removed my pain, she would forever remember, bless, and trust in the Great Physician who healed not only her body, but gave life and hope to her soul.

Having entered a New Year in His grace, we don't know what troubles and challenges may rear their ugly heads and make our lives difficult in the months ahead. But we do know that the One who came to us as a baby, then grew and suffered and died for us fully human and willing to walk our walk, will be with us through it all. As he helped us in the past, so he will journey with us along the way that leads forward. And, finally, when that walk reaches its conclusion, he'll be waiting for us with a Crown of Life. So, come on 2022! Let's see what you've got – both hardships and joys – and we'll weather them all with faith in the Great Physician who heals both our bodies and gives life and hope to our souls! God be with you all. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) **PASTORS CLASS:** will commence on Sunday, January 9, 1-3:00 PM in the Fireside Room.
This is a confirmation class for adults new to Grace and the Lutheran Church, but it is also a wonderful way to review and refresh your knowledge of the Six Chief Parts of the Christian Faith as well as an opportunity to be a blessing to our "New Folks" as one of the "Old Timers" who have much experience in these things. So give some thought to joining us on the 9th. The class will meet on 8 Sundays through January, February, and March.
- 2) If you had any part in our "Gifts for the Kids" program this year: **THANK YOU!** Once again we served just over 50 children with presents, plus a number of teenagers and a few adults with cash gifts to brighten their Christmas and to cause them to give thanks to God because of us. To my SHOPPERS, WRAPPERS, and to all the DONORS: **God bless you!**