My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Lord of our Bodies, Hearts, Souls, and Spirits, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in Your sight, our strength and our Redeemer, Amen.

Remembering the last few weeks, we’ve been talking about Transformations. We talked about how faith will develop in any variety of ways, depending on the person, but it will develop nonetheless because God put the Holy Spirit within us at creation. Just as a small seed grows day and night, yet we know not how, we can trust that it will grow if we are patient. So it is with our faith. We moved on last week and talked about the Storms on the Sea of Galilee, and how our faith can be beset with fear that we try and over-control our lives and outcomes, leaving no room for God. So we talked about how sleep, both of the farmer and Jesus in the boat, are allegories for trust, so different from our awake and anxious selves we are today.

And today we have another pair of dichotomies. Jairus, the synagogue leader, and the unnamed woman.

Mark sets up these contrasts throughout his Gospel. There are folks who understand that Jesus is going to change the social order and they will kill him to keep it from happening and the people docile and subservient, there are others who will do anything to see him and believe in him. These second folks are who we see today.

For these are the folks who dig through a neighbor’s roof to lower their paralyzed friend to Jesus. The Syrophoenician woman who begs Jesus to heal her daughter even when Jesus dismisses her. Bartemaeus shouts as loud as he can because he can’t see to get to Jesus, but needs to get to him in the only way he can, through his voice. The truest test of faith, in Mark’s Gospel, is whether these folks will let anything stand in its way. Their faith is so true they will do anything to see and raise their voice to God in prayer and supplication.

But Jairus has a reputation to uphold, and he knows it might be better not to be seen talking to Jesus, never mind asking him over to his house, the one who has already forsaken his family and associates with all manner of unclean folk. But Jairus has no strength of pride left—a child, HIS child, is dying. And he will do anything to help her live just one more day.

The hemorrhaging woman is probably someone who suffers from uterine fibroids which cause constant vaginal discharge and render her, under Jewish law, a person who should have no contact with others until the discharges abated. Doctors back then didn’t know what fibroids were or how to treat them, and she had spent all that she had to be healed to no avail—in fact her conditioned worsened, and the Bible suggests as a result of her treatments.

These two individuals come from waaaay different ends of the social, religious, and economic spectrum. Both of them had come to Jesus in desperation, at a time in their lives in which they were at rock bottom, unable to maintain any illusion that they could do anything more for what they needed—new life with new circumstances. The old way of doing things wasn’t working. They needed to re-write their beliefs if things were going to change. It meant repenting all the worldly stuff, and turning around to face their Creator, Savior & Sustainer.

These folks are boundary-crossers, just like Jesus; they don’t give a whit about who thinks what about them anymore. Jesus is willing to bend the rules, heal on Sunday, have dinner with whomever, consider all people no matter who they are his family. He goes against not just convention but sacred interpretation for the sake of the Kingdom of God. There is no purity code too holy or social status too high in the Kingdom of God. He brushes aside gender, class, and economic distinction.

And consequently, so do the folks who come and seek his help.

But society here in 20th century America seems a little more self-reliant, as Ralph Waldo Emerson might say, today. We have all manner of things that make our lives not just comfortable but miraculous, such that here in New Hampshire only 59% of us profess any faith in God, and a much less proportion of that seek out churches to find out more about God’s providence. So where are the boundary crossers today? Where are the folks who won’t take no for an answer, getting close to Jesus and not letting anything stand in their way?

I haven’t noticed them pushing to get into CCCG. Or crowding our online FacebookLive broadcast. We have talked about this, haven’t we? The only way to get folks to church is to talk to them about church. I know I’ve gone looking for them in Greenland, but maybe I’m just not showing up in the right places. Has everyone who wants to find Jesus already found him?

Maybe there are churches which have Jesus’ name on it on the outside, but have decided he’s not there, and so what’s the point? It’s kind of like my Aunt who promised me that if I visited her as a child I could have any kind of breakfast cereal I wanted. And then I arrived, and it was August in hot, humid, Missouri, without air conditioning, and I was told I could have any kind of cereal for sure as long as it was one that she liked too and we could only open one box at a time cuz of the humidity and how it would make the cereal go soggy just from the air, much less the milk. Now, I dunno about you, but when you’re just starting out in life you don’t eat Grape Nuts and All Bran. But that’s all there was. And there’s nothing wrong with those cereals. But that’s not what I was hoping for either. Not at all satisfying.

So I think we can safely say that no one’s going to get out of their routine go get into the Church of All Bran. People are not craving All Bran. And that’s not what Jairus and the woman wanted, either. They want Jesus that is ALIVE, much more than bland fiber that cleans out the colon. I think folks want a Jesus who loves fiercely, who speaks out of turn once in a while, who looks us in the eye and can speak of God’s uncompromising love. I think folks want a Jesus who startles us with forgiveness, more forgiveness than we can handle or expected, and who also challenges us to extend that same forgiveness to everybody else, no matter how loathsome.

I think people want a Jesus who commands us to love our enemies. To serve the poor. To clothe the naked, and feed the hungry. To see ourselves in the stranger, and welcome the alien, because we, too, were once aliens in a strange land, right? RIGHT?

Where are the folks who want to come to touch Jesus cloak? Who do we know who is spiraling toward the bottom and needs God’s touch?

I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

Like our Biblical figures today, I think folks want a Jesus and a God who makes them cry in church, not out of sadness, but something else. After years of trying everything else, they’ve realized that there’s something inside that needs more. A healing. A re-awakening. A love that was there but maybe gone for good, but is there again flickering like a candle in the wind.

What do we, here, have to push through in order to find our way back to that Jesus? What do we have to set aside in order so that people who come into contact with us can sense God’s, and Jesus’, pull on their lives, calling them to joy, and ultimately discipleship?

Maybe we only need to get out of the way so Jesus can get in. Maybe Jesus is waiting for us to throw off our constraints and suppositions of the social order and obey our need for him. Maybe Jesus hopes we’ll refuse to take ‘no’ for an answer, and touch his garment. Oh, what a feeling that might be. And that’s not All Bran, folks, it’s so much better than All Bran. So what’s for breakfast in our souls?

Thanks be to God, Amen.