



From the Beach to the Table

6/27/21 - Holy Eucharist Rite II and Baptism for the Sixth Sunday after
Pentecost

The Reverend Nick Morris-Kliment
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Oh Lord: May your Word only be spoken, and may your Word only be heard: in the Name of Jesus Christ, the living Word. Amen.

First, let me say again how delighted we are to welcome Emma Ruth into the waters of Baptism today. How wonderful it is to be celebrating this sacrament together again on Sunday morning as part of our regathered in-person worship. Congratulations, Stephanie, and John, and to your whole extended family, and congratulations to us, the family of Christ Church, and the wider body of Christ.

Our Gospel this morning begins in water and ends with a meal. In between are shown heartaches and heartbreaks, interruptions, and moments of deep grace. What could be a better description of the rhythms and patterns of lives of our life in Christ?

Jesus has just made a return boat trip from the east side of the Sea of Galilee, a place populated by gentiles, non-Jews, where he had cast out demons from a man possessed by unclean spirits. No sooner are his feet in the wet sand making his way toward dry land when the desperate father of a 12-year-old girl near death throws himself at Jesus' feet. "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." Jairus is the father's name. He is a man of high status, leader of a nearby synagogue. Jesus was a controversial character, and it is a measure of the father's anguish that he risks his reputation in abasing himself before Jesus, in front of a large crowd.

One can imagine Jesus in his compassion setting a hasty course for the home of Jairus, despite the large and curious crowd pressing on him. No sooner had he gotten up a head of steam, however, when a hand in the crowd, the hand of a chronically ill woman with a bleeding disorder, touches the hem of Jesus' garment; and Jesus feels power go out of him. Mark gives a bit of her back story: years of chronic bleeding, ineffective treatment, and finally, bankruptcy. Despite her fear of being caught crossing the clean/unclean boundary of their common religious heritage, but in confirmation of her trust in Jesus' healing power, her hemorrhaging ceases. Jesus stops, interrupted in his initial mission of healing, to establish a relationship and to affirm the profound faith of this courageous woman. No longer isolated in her infirmity, Jesus calls her "daughter."

Meanwhile, Jairus, who has apparently been in the crowd watching the delay, is waiting for Jesus to move on to his daughter. How difficult that must have been for the anguished father! And yet Jesus, determined also to meet his need, sets aside the doubters, and heads to Jairus' home where, despite the mocking unbelief of the crowd, Jesus brings the girl back to life.

A great many things are happening here.

I note first that as I look at these linked stories, I think of lives of parents, particularly the lives of parents with younger children. Life can feel like one continual interruption. Oh, for the days when we could count on a morning nap *and* an afternoon nap to get something done, or to simply have some time



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oneself! And yet those interruptions are often to tend to real and immediate, life-giving needs, just as Jesus is taking care of. And then there is the identification with a father who will do absolutely anything to save the life of his child.

Second, note that Jesus willingly crosses boundaries of isolation and taboo. When the hemorrhaging woman reaches out to touch Jesus, he wants to establish a relationship with her. He wants to know who has touched him. An unaccompanied woman in a crowd, with the condition such as hers, would have been viewed as unclean and untouchable. And yet, in response to her courageous faith, Jesus calls her daughter. A term of simple endearment, to be sure, but deeply symbolic of the inclusion that his followers are to imitate.

Likewise, despite conventions that made touching a dead body an unclean ritual act, Jesus has no hesitation in moving close to the little girl (whom her family thinks is dead) take her by the hand and raise her up. And then, he directs those who were with him – mother, father, James, John, and Peter—to give her something to eat.

Jesus crosses boundaries, as he brings new life, and restores to community those whom he heals.

I return to my opening thought. Our Gospel this morning begins in water and ends with a meal. In between, is a series of what seem like interruptions and are in fact moments of deep grace. What could a better description of the rhythm and pattern of life in Christ?

Just as Jesus begins this stretch of ministry in the water, so do we begin our life following Jesus from the waters of baptism. Emma today begins this life.

And just as we make our way through lives that are complex and demanding, joyous and life-giving, full of what seem like interruptions and detours, as we suffer through deaths both real and imagined, so do we have the opportunity to imitate Jesus in the ways that he heals, includes, restores, encourages, resists ridicule and doubt, builds a new family. This morning, Emma dies and is reborn with Christ in the water of baptism. In addition to being the daughter of Stephanie and John, Emma now becomes a daughter in the family of Jesus, the Body of Christ, and is sustained by the love of her family and our community. And just as Jairus' daughter's rebirth and new life is sealed with a meal ordered by Jesus, so do we continue, with Emma, to feed on the love of God in the Eucharist and in our community life of worship, prayer, fellowship, and mission, as sustenance for our journeys with Jesus.

Amen.