

The Whole Truth
Mark 5:21-43
July 4, 2021
First Presbyterian, Luling

I lie on a regular basis, and before you get too shocked, I'll bet you do too. The cashier at HEB asks, "How are you?" and I say, "I'm fine, and you?" That is not true. I'm never 100% fine. There's always something bothering me, or something I'm fretting about. I often even assure the cashier that I found everything I needed, even if I didn't. Telling the cashier the whole truth would take too long, she doesn't really want to hear it, and of the handful of people to whom I might tell the whole truth about how I am, the HEB cashier doesn't make my list. Lately, it's not been the cashier, but the curbside shopping delivery person, as he or she unloads the groceries from the basket into the back of my car, but it's the very same conversation. Basically, yes, I'm fine. I'm functioning well enough to obtain food for myself and my family, have enough money to pay for those groceries, can carry on a conversation of the social niceties without stumbling too much. I'm fine. That is the truth. But it's not the whole truth.

There are way more sinister ways to tell only partial truths. "I bought a new dress" is true, but the whole truth is "I bought a new dress, three pairs of shoes, and expensive jeans." Or, "I stopped by Jim's house after work," which is true, but the whole truth is, "I stopped by Jim's house, picked him up, then we went to the icehouse and the poolhall." That kind of dishonesty will erode the trust in a relationship pretty quick.

And there are way more profound ways to tell the whole truth. When we reveal to another human being the truth of who we are, our true feelings about something, our deepest fears and hopes, that's getting closer to telling the whole truth.

Today's scripture is one of Mark's famous sandwiches, really the clearest example. Jesus is on his way to heal Jairus's daughter, who is very ill—her story is the bread of the sandwich. The peanut butter is the woman that interrupts Jesus's journey across town by reaching out and touching his cloak. She's hoping for healing from a bleeding condition that has plagued her for twelve years—exactly the same length of time that Jairus's daughter has been alive. Not a coincidence.

At our discussion on Thursday of the book we are reading, which is about hope, we discussed the difference between "wishful thinking" and "hoping," which the author describes. "Wishful thinking" is what we do most of the time,

and label it “hope.” It’s future oriented, thinking that somehow, someday, things will get better. That’s what this woman had been holding on to. She had been to doctor after doctor, tried cure after cure, spent all her money, and still she wasn’t cured.

She believes in at least the possibility that touching Jesus’s clothes will cure her disease. She’s obviously heard of him, as have these huge crowds of people that are surrounding him and following him, even as he’s going to Jairus’s house. She knows immediately that she’s been cured, and Jesus knows immediately that power has gone out of him. So he says, “who touched me?”

The disciples think he’s ridiculous. It would be like asking “who touched me?” in the middle of DisneyWorld in the summer. He looks around, and he sees her. And she sees him see her. And she tells him “the whole truth.” But Mark doesn’t bother to tell us what her “whole truth” was, and on balance, I’m glad about that. We can fill in with what we might tell Jesus that would be the whole truth for us.

I imagine she must have confessed right away that she was the one who touched him, and why. She told him about her health condition. I imagine she told him about the family and social difficulties her medical condition had caused. I imagine she told him about how all of that had affected her heart and her spirit. The whole truth was a lot—it would be for anyone.

Now remember she and Jesus both know that her medical condition is already cured—that happened when she touched his garment. After she tells him the whole truth, he says: your faith has made you well; go in peace; be healed of your disease. Wellness and peace come now, after the whole truth, in addition to the physical cure that had already happened.

The woman tells the whole truth and is cured and blessed and restored by Jesus. He then continues on to Jairus’s house, where everyone is horribly—and understandably—upset that he has taken so long, because it is now too late, and Jairus’s daughter has died. Jesus sends the crowd away this time—they were still surrounding him during his conversation with the woman. And with only three of the disciples and Jairus and Mrs. Jairus, he brings the daughter to life. To those who saw it, this was by far more of a miracle, more of a wonder, than what had just happened with the woman in the crowd.

Yet Jesus does not allow anyone to tell the whole truth about Jairus’s daughter. In fact, he strictly orders them not to tell anyone. This happens over and over in Mark, but this time it’s especially odd. Because that whole crowd had just seen him heal a woman. She had just been blessed and commended for

telling the whole truth. And then Jesus won't let people tell the whole truth about this other miracle.

Hm. There are reasons that Jesus wants to keep things quiet—to avoid getting into too much trouble with the religious authorities, too soon. But it maybe something else too. The woman in the crowd told Jesus the whole truth about herself. Her own whole truth. That's a whole different thing than telling what you think is the whole truth about someone else. You can't ever tell the whole truth about someone else, because they are the only ones that know it. You can't define their whole truth with just what you know about them. And the audience for the whole truth is significant, too. The woman tells her whole truth to Jesus, who already knows it. Jesus instructs the people in Jairus's crowd not to tell anyone else.

When Jesus is the recipient of our whole truth, telling it as best we know how will bring healing and wholeness and wellness and restoration and peace.

What is your whole truth? Tell it to Jesus.