

# Head and Heart

30th June 2024

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Readings

2 Samuel 1: 1, 17 - 27

Psalms 130

2 Corinthians 8: 7 - 15

Mark 5: 21 - 43



## Jesus' Healing Team

The state of our Health Service is dominating the country's thoughts at the moment both for politicians, pre-general election day, and for the huge number of patients waiting appointments. Demands for national and personal healing are also at the centre of our bible readings this Sunday. They too raise many questions – especially in relation to *having faith!* The second book of Samuel opens with a lament. David was to write several similar songs. This one follows some of the bloodiest battles in the long history of God's people. The new king-in-waiting grieves for the loss of Saul and his sons, especially David's close friend Jonathan, and not forgetting the thousands of lost comrades-in - arms. The lament is a song of mourning and of hope, not unlike the words and music of our contemporary Remembrance occasions. Here, our poppies of memory could well be substituted with the purple iris of the Gilboa hills where bodies still lay decaying alongside rusting armour and weaponry. *Thank God merges with Don't let it happen again!*

The Mark reading is about Jesus' healing ministry in Galilee and the miracles he performed there, especially for a sick child and a woman with a long-term physical problem. Not unlike aspects of the NHS there are long queues of desperate patients waiting for appointments with Jesus. First in the line is Jairus, an important official of the Capernaum synagogue – a good man, well known by Jesus – his desperation is obvious in his sacrifice of pride as he kneels and pleads for help for his dying daughter. His despair is not dissimilar to that of the woman who has reached the limit of her resources to pay for private consultations and for whom this is a *first and last chance* of a shameless future. Faith, Jesus makes clear, is key to the healings. What may Jairus and the woman have given to buy faith!

I have been privileged to witness some healings said to be *by faith* because there was no obvious human intervention involved in them, but there is much misunderstanding about *healing by faith* which can leave some people very disappointed and disillusioned. The discoveries of the past twenty centuries have given us a much bigger concept of faith's part in the healing processes. I am aware of millions of everyday healing stories, in hospitals and clinics where patients put their trust in the God-given skills of health practitioners. I am personally grateful to God for the gifts of a wonderful, skilled surgeon who stole my heart, repaired it and returned it to me almost as good as new! My faith in God and in her skills proved to

be yet another miracle. I give thanks to God for today's amazing healing skills – from the insight of the local doctor working with colleagues to determine a right course of treatment – to the patient, long-term counselling of many different therapists and, of course, the gentle touch of a dedicated nurse. Faith is integral to every part of the constant healing works surrounding us. However, I believe that healing is God's work, though not always recognised as such or producing our personally desired results. However, I am assured by today's picture of Jesus on the way to Jairus' home-visit. As he goes, he adds God's peace and fearlessness to the situation, directing attention away from criticism of his work and those awful, noisy 'faith-squashers', by providing a much greater experience of deepening, stronger spiritual growth. By doing so he inspires a woman to reach out in the crowd and encourages Jairus to keep trusting even in the face of tragic news. Jesus and his friends together are at the heart of God's work. He knows, he cares, and he's on his way to my need!!

The church's faith role in a multiplicity of healing needs is to join him in the accompanying crowd – like the disciples present then - prayerfully, lovingly offering all the gifts he has given us to be his *healing team*. It is not so much a question of healing *by* faith, but of being close enough to the Healer to be able to trust him, to work with him and prove his loving care which will give us the right and best answers for ourselves and others whom we bring to him – even if it takes a while for those answers to become clear.

Paul, writing to the Christians at Corinth gives another aspect of this working with the Jesus team - a more social healing. For a while now, the church had been supporting the community in Jerusalem during a time of poverty after failed harvests. He encourages them to follow the example of the wealthier Macedonian churches who have given generously to help the need – a faith miracle! The basis of this was again the principle of being in the *Jesus Team*. They first gave themselves to him – considering their wealth to be his now, they wanted to follow his example - *He was rich but for your sakes he became poor so that through his poverty you should become rich in faith and love and all the other gifts of his Spirit*.

There is so much more to be said about faith and healing, but the first step is still to become a member of the Jesus team – working and trusting with him and sometimes seeing miracles beyond our present dreams!

### **A Prayer based on Psalm 130**

Lord, there are times when I am awake in the darkness,  
waiting for the first signs and sounds of the dawn,  
hoping and trusting for your help.

I know you will help because you are God!  
You are forgiving of all my all my confessed failures,  
you have proved the power and strength of your words  
Your love will never fail me  
And in the morning, you are still with me.



