The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity
St. Matthew 9:18-26
15 November, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved of God,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It's a shame that we don't hear the texts before us this morning every year. In my meditation on these texts, I was struck by the depth of comfort the Holy Spirit offers here to all who struggle and suffer under the bitter afflictions of sin and death. In our Lord's interactions with both the ruler (who St. Mark tells us is Jairus) and the woman, we see two incredible examples of faith and the character of God that can truly only be seen in the crucible of suffering. May God the Holy Spirit open our ears and hearts this day that we would know Christ rightly as He has made Himself known and so approach Him with the utter confidence of His willingness and ability to help in all our needs of body and soul.

Both Jairus and the woman (whose name I look forward to knowing in heaven) had so many reasons to simply give up in hopelessness and despair. Jairus' daughter, at the tender age of only 12, was dead. She was not just sick or near death. She had died. Despite her parents' every effort and unceasing cries to God for help with bitter tears and anxious hearts, this precious child's life was cut short. While the death of the old is painful enough, the death of the young carries with it a particularly wrenching bitterness because a hoped-for future dies with it. It is a uniquely disgusting death because it is so starkly contrary to life. It was no different for Jairus and his wife. The death of their dear daughter certainly not only filled them with the deepest sadness but also flooded their minds with the ugly face of their own sin and the terror that God was punishing them taking their daughter. I don't think it much of a stretch to say that any parent who has had to see their child suffer and even consider the possibility of their child's death is immediately plagued by the remembrance of their own sin and the thought "God is punishing me by taking my child and there is nothing I can do about it." I would rather suffer death a thousand times over than see my children die and even more so plagued by the thought that they died because of my wrongs.

And what is our instinct in that moment? Is it to run to God? No. It is to curse Him and run from Him. Our flesh imagines that God has forsaken us, that He has forsaken mercy. We know His judgment is true. The Law rightly accuses us of all

manner of sin. We are unclean. We are impure. We are unholy. We deserve God's wrath and both temporal and eternal punishment. No, our instinct is to mourn as those who have no hope, to play the funeral dirges and let our hearts sink into despair. This happens often as those who have lost loved ones struggle to come back to church to receive Christ's comfort because church is too painful. The pain and sorrow of death threatens to rob them of the very help they need, Christ's word of life and hope.

The same was true of the woman who had suffered the terrible flow of blood for twelve years. She was literally being drained of life. She would have been terribly weak and sick and pale. This had grown to a sickness of supernatural proportions. Money had flowed out of her hands to doctors who were powerless to help her. God Himself had commanded His people that such a woman was unclean and had to be set apart. (Lev. 15:25-30) That meant that she could not go to the temple until the bleeding had stopped. She could not come into contact with others because she would then make them unclean. No one likely would be willing to have her as a wife and so, like the little girl, she was deprived of the highest vocations women can be blessed with by God - wife and mother. It was a daily torment and the threat of death was a constant presence. Surely God was angry with her! Surely He was punishing her for her sin! Why else would He have afflicted her in this way?

How then could she possibly approach our Lord? She had at least heard of and maybe even seen for herself the gracious working of Jesus in healing others. But they probably deserved His help. They were good people and, besides, the Law was clear, in her uncleanness she could not come into contact with others and certainly couldn't approach the holy God.

Both Jairus and the woman had every reason to despair of God's help and so stay away from Him. And as I know for certain my own heart has been filled with the same guilt and fear and hopelessness, I think I can safely say that yours have all been as well. That is the work of the Law. It reveals that we are filled with death; that we are unclean and unholy sinners who are separated from God and cannot possibly hope to stand before the holy and righteous God who judges the living and the dead. The sicknesses of our bodies, the fact that we will one day die and be laid in the grave, are but foretastes of the eternal death and separation from God that we deserve because of our unrighteousness and rebellion against God.

We need God to do this. It is necessary for our salvation that He exposes our idolatry, our pride, our covetousness, our angry and adulterous thoughts, our slanderous words, our dishonoring of our parents and other authorities, our comfort with not

gathering with Christ people around Christ to hear His Word and receive the sacrament of His Body and Blood through which He imparts life and salvation, our greedy robbing of God by withholding our tithes so that we have more for ourselves, and the host of other sins that flow out of our sin-sick hearts day and night. Through our afflictions God shows us that there is nothing in us that makes us acceptable to God that we should dare to ask Him for a crumb of bread, let alone help in our needs and certainly not eternal life.

But in God's hands our crosses are so much more than reminders of death! By the crosses God graciously laid upon Jairus and the woman, He made them acutely aware of their need for His help, the life and salvation that only God can bestow, a need that every sinner has though not all are willing to confess it. He showed them that all their idols were helpless because He wanted them to turn to Him, our only help in time of need. God uses our afflictions to humble us before Him and pull forth cries for mercy from our hearts.

Praise God that He did afflict Jairus and the woman because that is exactly why God sent His beloved Son into our flesh - to save us! He saw clearly and perfectly our wretched condition from which we could never hope to extricate ourselves and rather than turning away from us and leaving us to suffer the just and eternal condemnation of our sin, He actually approached us in compassion to rescue us! He sought us out so that He could help us and save us. Our salvation is His glory and greatest joy! He so plainly tells us that He takes absolutely no pleasure in the death of sinners. It gives Him no joy to see us get exactly what our sins deserve. Our Lord knew that the only way we could be spared the fires of His wrath was if He endures those fires for us in our place. And that is exactly what Jesus gladly and willingly did. He was crushed for our iniquities. he suffered His own wrath against our sin on the cross for the joy that was set before Him - you, with Him, for all of eternity.

This is God's character that is revealed to us with all clarity in Jesus - that He is merciful and kind and patient and forgiving and wants us to draw near to Him. It's not that the accusations of His Law aren't true. They most certainly are. We are to fear God's wrath and judgment. We are to fall down before Jesus in humble contrition and confess our unworthiness and sin and not seek to excuse it or hide it or pass it off on someone else. But our Lord has drawn near to us precisely to save us from those sins, not destroy us. The Son of God was incarnate, shared in our weakness and suffered our temptations, drew near to us so that because through our afflictions we had been made aware of our sin and uncleanness, we would be emboldened to draw near to Him and seek the salvation He brings, be cleansed of all

our sins, be made holy and restored to God forever.

Jairus and the woman didn't go to Jesus because they trusted in their own righteousness. In fact, if they had trusted in their own righteousness, if they felt no hunger or need for God's mercy and help, they wouldn't have gone to Jesus in the first place. This is why the Pharisees and so many others despised Jesus and still do today. They don't think they are unclean and need to be saved. They have hardened their hearts to the Law's accusations and even celebrate their wickedness as righteousness. The true Jesus is folly to them. He is offensive because He dares to suggest that they are not good and stand under God's strict judgment unless they cling to His righteousness.

Jairus and the woman dared to approach Jesus, not because they believed they were worthy, but because they needed Jesus' worthiness and fully believed that He would give it to them. And why would they ever believe such a thing? Because that was God's promise from the beginning - that He would crush the head of the serpent and save us from the death of sin, that He would help us and rescue us. They believed the Holy Scriptures through which God Himself, the same God who judges sin, also promised that He would provide help and deliverance from sin through the Messiah. They took comfort in the countless examples of God's faithfulness and deliverance - from leading His people out of Egypt to the sending of the ravens to feed Elijah. The Law showed them that they were and should be separated from God because of their unrighteousness. But the Gospel pointed them to God's own promise that He would restore them to Himself. In faith, they would not allow the thundering of Mt. Sinai to keep them from the God who said "I, I am He who comforts you. I am the Lord your God and you are My people." (Is. 51:12, 15, 16)

That is why God in His mercy caused the Holy Scriptures to be written down. The Scriptures are God's self-revelation of His mercy and love for sinners. Throughout the Bible and culminating in Jesus nailed to the cross, God is making Himself known to you as the God who created you and more wondrously redeemed you. To believe what God has said in the Bible is to stare at His face, to know Him rightly. Through Holy Scripture we today still get to see Jesus, to stare into God's face and know Him who sees our afflictions and the dark shadow of death that hangs over us and has come, not to condemn us but to save us.

What beautiful and praiseworthy faith the promises of God brought forth in these two saints as their faith was forged and tested in the fire of affliction! It was precisely the affliction that not only made the true need clear but also drew their hearts

to abandon all reason and even ignore the Law's threats and curses to reach for Jesus and say with confidence "Yes, my daughter has died, but she will live Jesus if you come and lay your hand her. Yes, Lord, I am unclean and shouldn't be anywhere near you, but I will be healed if even I touch only the fringe of Your garment." That his daughter was already dead did not change God's promises. To the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob death was nothing. He is the God who promised to swallow up death and rob it of its victory. Jesus **would** help. The fact that God in His Law had declared her unclean, didn't take from the woman God's promise to hear her cries and restore her to Himself by pouring out His own Blood to cleanse her and save her. Jesus **would** save her. And this was the desire of her heart - "If only I grasp hold of his garment, I will be saved!" Yes! Yes! Take hold of His righteousness which He comes to give and you will be saved, not just from your sickness but from eternal death! That is exactly true. That is what He wants you to do! That is what He has come to do for you! That is the good and gracious will of God for all sinners. This faith is what God praises. The faith that not only is Jesus able to save but with all certainty that He **will**. He confirms this to the woman saying "Your faith has saved you." And the apostle then adds that she was saved from that very hour. It was not presumption that drove these two dear saints but God's own Word. That is why Jesus came and why He has come to you this day - to save you.

Both the woman and Jairus dared to believe that Jesus is the true revelation of God. To know Jesus is to know God. To believe in Jesus is to believe that He wants sinners to not only desire mercy and forgiveness but to be fully confident that He will give it because that is what He said He would do. That is true and saving faith. It will not be convinced of anything about God other than what is sees and hears in Jesus. God loves such faith! He loves such boldness and confidence that is founded upon His Word and promises. Boldness and confidence founded on our own righteousness and worthiness is foolishness and will crumble. That is why the Lutheran Confessions rightly say that trust in God's Word, i.e. faith, is the purest and highest form of worship. Such faith gives all glory and praise to God alone who has been faithful to His promises, whose righteousness is His mercy toward sinners. To believe God's Word, to confess His Word, to call upon Him in every need of body and soul, having no doubt that He will help because that is what He has promised, to cling to the promises of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and treasure these gifts above gold by receiving them, to seek from Him all of the good that He has offered from daily bread to the gift of the Holy Spirit, to believe that Jesus is the full and true revelation of God's character and His will - that is faith. God wants you to be certain that He has accomplished your salvation in full through the cross of Jesus. That is why He sent His Son. That is why He has given you the Bible, His

Word. That is why He has attached His Word to the water of Holy Baptism and to the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He wants to remove all doubt from your mind. Where does He leave room for doubt when He says "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"? Or when He says "This cup is the new testament in My Blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins"? To doubt God's complete and full forgiveness of all your sins, to not be sure that you will be gathered into eternal life because you're still not sure you've done enough, to pray to your heavenly Father as though you are bothering Him and pretend as though it is humility - these God hates because they accuse Him of lying. God has prepared a feast of rich food and the finest wine and invites you to eat it. The greatest insult and offense you could pay Him would be ask for peanut butter and jelly instead or turn down His invitation all together.

Children of God, your Father sends you afflictions and trials because He loves you and wants you to grab hold of His righteousness in Christ and cling to it with every last fiber of your being. Do not think that Jesus is anything less than exactly who God is or that He only begrudgingly helps sinners or that His forgiveness of your sins is anything less than fully accomplished. He has given you Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion so that you can be absolutely certain of these very things. He is not too good to be true. Jesus really is the way things actually work. He **has** conquered all your foes. He **has** fully forgiven all your sins. He **has** given you His Holy Spirit. He most certainly **will** give you your daily bread. He **will** give you strength to overcome any temptation. He **will** bring forth good from your crosses and trials. He **will** bless you when in faith you walk according to the Ten Commandments. And being certain of these promises, march boldly up to your heavenly Father and seek His help fully assured that you will receive it because that is the promise He made to you and seals to you again this day with the Blood of His Son.

May God grant us His Holy Spirit so that with all confidence we may believe His gracious promises and boldly seek from Christ all the treasures of His kingdom which He has obtained for us by His Blood.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.