

**Attitude makes all the difference**

A sermon by the Reverend Robert Bruce Edson in Emmanuel Episcopal Church, West Roxbury, Massachusetts, on the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, June 28, 2015.

*Jesus said, do not fear, only believe. Mark 5: 36*

There are numerous references in all four gospels of Jesus healing people of both physical and mental infirmities. He was criticized for healing on the Sabbath as if he should tell those who sought healing to wait until the Sabbath was over before he could do anything for them. When Jesus healed people of diseases, plagues and mental disorders, some friends of John the Baptist asked him if he was really the Christ or should they look for another. Jesus told them that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised. That should be proof enough. (Luke 7: 20-22) He tells those who have been healed to show themselves to the priests and give thanks to God for their healing. There are numerous stories in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul and the other disciples healing many of their infirmities. In each and every case, faith is the essential element in healing.

Jesus was in constant demand from those who sought his help. In our gospel story today, Jairus, a prominent leader of the community, pleads with Jesus to save his dying twelve-year old daughter. He has searched in vain for any means of healing for her and refuses to give up. As they approach the home of Jairus they are stopped by a woman asking to be healed of a hemorrhage. She has been suffering from it for twelve years and has been unable to find anyone who can do anything for her. She believes that if she can touch the hem of Jesus' garment she will be healed. Jesus assures her that because of her faith she has been made well and whole.

By the time Jesus arrives at the home of Jairus, they are told that the child is dead and the mourners can be heard weeping and wailing. The people laugh when Jesus assures them that the child is not dead. He then clears the house of all the doubters and skeptics and allows only those who have confidence in God's power to heal. Jesus then takes the young girl by the hand and tells her to get up and then asks for her to be given something to eat. In their astonishment, the unbelievers and skeptics are silenced.

What we learn from this is that giving in to doubt and skepticism makes us victims of our own lack of faith. There is no distinction in the worthiness of Jairus as a man of importance and the unnamed woman. If you have ever been a caretaker of someone suffering a serious illness at home or in hospital, you know the uncertainty and tension mixed with feelings of hope and despair. You want to have faith and hope while at the same time you know you have to face reality and be prepared for the inevitable.

With acceptance comes the desire to make the most of the time left. You might make a bucket list of things you have always wanted to do. It may be a trip that you have always wanted to take or to be with people who mean so much to you. Sickness and misfortune can happen to anyone, regardless of conditions or circumstances.

Our attitude is essential in healing the body, mind and spirit. It is very human to ask where God is in the midst of suffering an illness. We wonder if God causes it or just allows it? Quite honestly, I avoid simplistic answers to complex questions. It is hard for me to believe that a compassionate God causes or even allows human suffering. What is more important to believe is that God supports both a person who is ill as well as the caregiver. I resist the notion that everything happens for a reason or that everything that happens is necessarily God's will.

We have no choice but to accept that innocent lives are taken by illness or violence or natural disasters. As long as we live we may never understand why people suffer and others prosper. It is only by faith that we learn to live with what we can't comprehend. What is essential is an attitude of trust and confidence that no matter what happens, we are not abandoned. I know and believe that God's love permeates our very beings in the worst of times. Physicians and psychologists tell us that a positive mental attitude is crucial to the healing of both body and mind. We know that technological research and a surgeon's skill can do little without a patient's cooperation in the healing process. The patient has to want to get well. The medical world understands the importance of treating the whole person. This includes the caregivers who are an essential part of healing.

A negative attitude predetermines a negative outcome. Those who overcome enormous odds fighting physical or mental illness refuse to allow themselves to become victims. They learn everything they can about their illness and take the initiative to get the help they need. If they can't find it they look elsewhere until they do. They make every effort to maintain a cooperative attitude during the healing process because a positive frame of mind is integral to healing. The right attitude and determination is the best defense against cynicism and despair to provide a better quality of life. Whether there is any ultimate cure is less important than an attitude that gives quality to the time we have. The same is true if you are a caretaker of someone suffering a serious illness; your attitude makes all the difference.

The Supreme Court decisions this week upholding the Affordable Care Act and the right of everyone to be legally married anywhere in the nation are both significant. The decisions provide opportunity for the uninsured to have health coverage and caretakers to have access to a spouse in a hospital. Equality of opportunity has long been a hallmark of our nation and it was with the right attitude that these decisions were rendered.

We must never give in to the power of despair and hopelessness but maintain an attitude of confidence and hope. It is up to each of us to have right attitude that will give greater control over the quality of our lives.