

WELCOME

Grace and Peace be with you in the name of the Holy-One-of-All!
Thank you for coming! We're so glad you've chosen to worship with us today.

It gives me great joy to tell you that
First United Church of Christ and Conference Center is
a church with full real life standing in the Eastern Association;
Southern California Nevada Conference of the
United Church of Christ (UCC).
And anyone you see with a "Minister" tag is an ordained UCC minister in real life.

And as a real UCC church, we'd like you to know that
"No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here."

As this month of celebrating Pride comes to an end we are grateful for this place.
A place that has become a beacon of hope for many to feel safe.
As we like to say, it's good to be real in Second Life!

Today's service will be in voice and text.
Music will be on the media viewer, so be sure that you have your voice and media
turned on.
If you don't know how to do that, let someone know and we'll try to help.
There will be a link in Nearby so you can watch it in your browser if the viewer
isn't working for you.

If you would like a bulletin for today's service you can find it in the red binder
in the back along with a donation bowl.

One of the blessings and responsibilities that come with
our being a real church with real standing is that we, like all UCC churches,
support the work of the national church not only with prayer
but financially.
So we greatly appreciate any offering you can make to support this ministry.
If you prefer, donations can be made on our website, firstuccsl.org.

If there are any announcements about the life of the church, please type them in
Nearby Chat during our Gathering Music.

Welcome!

GATHERING MUSIC

Brandon Lake - Count 'Em (Official Music Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6Ti41hJ5fQ>

SCRIPTURE

A reading from the book of Mark 5:21-43 (The Message)

After Jesus crossed over by boat, a large crowd met him at the seaside. One of the meeting-place leaders named Jairus came.

When he saw Jesus, he fell to his knees, beside himself as he begged, "My dear daughter is at death's door. Come and lay hands on her so she will get well and live."

Jesus went with him, the whole crowd tagging along, pushing and jostling him.

A woman who had suffered a condition of hemorrhaging for twelve years—a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before—had heard about Jesus.

She slipped in from behind and touched his robe.

She was thinking to herself, "If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well."

The moment she did it, the flow of blood dried up.

She could feel the change and knew her plague was over and done with.

30 At the same moment, Jesus felt energy discharging from him.

He turned around to the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?"

His disciples said, "What are you talking about?"

With this crowd pushing and jostling you, you're asking, 'Who touched me?' Dozens have touched you!"

But he went on asking, looking around to see who had done it.

The woman, knowing what had happened, knowing she was the one, stepped up in fear and trembling, knelt before him, and gave him the whole story.

Jesus said to her, "Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole.

Live well, live blessed! Be healed of your plague."

* * *

While he was still talking, some people came from the leader's house and told him, "Your daughter is dead.

Why bother the Teacher any more?"

Jesus overheard what they were talking about and said to the leader,

"Don't listen to them; just trust me."

He permitted no one to go in with him except Peter, James, and John.

They entered the leader's house and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and neighbors bringing in casseroles.

Jesus was abrupt: "Why all this busybody grief and gossip?"

This child isn't dead; she's sleeping."

Provoked to sarcasm, they told him he didn't know what he was talking about.

But when he had sent them all out, he took the child's father and mother, along with his companions, and entered the child's room.

He clasped the girl's hand and said, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, get up."

At that, she was up and walking around! This girl was twelve years of age. They, of course, were all beside themselves with joy.

He gave them strict orders that no one was to know what had taken place in that room.

Then he said, "Give her something to eat."
Word of God for the people of God,

Thanks Be to God

SERMON

PLEASE

As I meditated on these scriptures the word please keeps rising in my spirit.

A word that we often use when asking for something.

Could you please pass me the salt?
Could you please call me when you have a moment?

A word that I often remind my youngling to use when asking for something so he does not sound demanding and rude.

But this please is different.
It is more like begging, and asking from deep inside, please.

Please come and save my daughter!
Please heal me!

Each of them are different in how we approach a situation.
Or perhaps we are alike in some ways when it comes to asking for help.
Are you the kind of person that can easily say, could you help me with?

Or are you the kind of person who will grit your teeth and 'by God I'm going to take care of it myself, or die trying?!"

There is a reason for each of these responses.
Sometimes they change depending on what the circumstances might be.

Jairus may not easily kneel before anyone except out of love for his daughter.

Each of us has a coping mechanism when it comes to asking and awaiting a response of approval or rejection.

Theologian and writer, Gloria Anzaldúa, compares her coping mechanism and protecting against rejection as a “nopal de castilla.”

She says, “There are many defense strategies that the self uses to escape the agony of inadequacy and I have used all of them. I have split from and disowned those parts of myself that others rejected. I had used rage to drive others away and to insulate myself against exposure.”

Like the cactus of castilla, there are these needles, nettles, and razor sharp spikes to protect ourselves from others.

Does anyone else know what I’m talking about?

There must be a compelling reason for me to open up and make myself vulnerable to potential rejection and ridicule.

And yet, here are two individuals begging, pleaseplease Jesus help me.

It doesn't matter if he appears vulnerable among his Jewish peers when pleading for Jesus to heal his daughter - Jairus is willing to risk it all.

Jairus does not care what anyone thinks, his daughter is dying.

All around us we face people with different needs and different walks of life. There are those that can ask, sell anything, and engage an audience.

Then there are those that can hide, plan in the background and excel in the shadows.

Each with the capacity to bring forth success in any given circumstance.

And yet when in desperate need each of these things might go out the window.

Beyond that, we are guarded, protecting our feelings, and our mind.

Who would not in such a world as today where with social media we might be trending or find ourselves hiding.

Gloria Anzaldua says that in order to escape the threat of shame or fear one takes on a compulsive, repetitious activity to escape awareness.

Jairus was like head on, my daughter is dying.
Where is Jesus?

Each of us has it in us to act when someone we love is in need.
But are we quick to act for ourselves?

I will be the first to admit, I am terrible at this.

Anzaldua's words resonate with me, as I constantly seek to keep myself occupied and

avoid stillness.

I am always on the move, never at rest.

Avoidance, deflection, humor is never far from my lips.

What is your armor, your nopal, your cactus, your protection?

Do you work so much that you're exhausted in order to welcome sleep and peace?

Perhaps drugs and alcohol can numb a pain, a regret, a bad memory?

Numb whatever it is and "live" another day.

Church we can list numerous addictive behaviors, or as Anzaldua says, "compulsive repetitious activities."

If I am always busy I am not still and silent.

If silence is not around I can't hear the voices of regret, shame, fear, anger, or fear of failure.

When I first entered the two year residential program at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, with Still point in the Art of Spiritual Direction, I was so adamant that silence would not find me.

The first time on zoom, I got away with muting my screen and keeping my hands busy while I listen to music. (Sorry Pastor Kris I cheated!)

It was a little more difficult to do this in person and boy did I struggle the first six months.

Darn, everyone is looking at me and expecting me to be all humming like a monk and quiet.

And I fidget.

I shuffled my feet.

I was convinced they were going to kick me out.

My ADD combined with my trauma around silence was a terrible combination for this program.

What was I thinking?!

If you know me in real life I always have my noise canceling AirPods.

Best gift ever!

Music, podcasts, sermons, and movies fill my ears all the time, even at night.

Silence reminds me of sitting for 11 months in a hospital staircase hoping I could see my mom, listening for my name.

Silence would be broken at night if my mother was choking, gasping for air, and I was up and at her side helping her.

Silence was very painful to me.

I had begged Jesus, please, please heal her.

Like Jairus on my knees, please help my mother live.

But nothing happened.

Mother died and my siblings became my responsibility.

See, I was told that if I prayed, and behaved, and followed this list of ridiculous rules that I MIGHT find favor before God and Jesus would heal my mother.

Tell that to a teen, a young person begging please...
Please Jesus.

One is frozen, waiting for a miracle that might not come.

So what is the point?

Dr. Claudio Carvalhes said, sometimes you pray with a lump in your throat, but don't stop praying.

Church, we might not be able to see the miracle we expect unfold, but trust it will be alright.

Know that wholeness will come in other ways and healing will occur.

In time I would seek counseling to deal with my trauma.

In time, I would learn to sit still and even graduated from the Still Point Art of Spiritual Direction program!

I can now drive in silence humming, praying, and it is just fine.

Wholeness means not to be divided in different parts but to come together.

All my broken pieces put back together with tape, glue, or chicle (gum), as God made me whole.

But when the loss or the threat of loss comes everything in our bodies, soul and mind become like puddy, like wet clay.

There is no rhyme or reason, just raw emotions pleading, please.

If we can dare to imagine the life of a twelve year old with his family, snuffed and taken away.

Yes we can because we have seen the world bend by gun violence in schools.

Please, oh God, please.

Jairus's unnamed child is dying and he is pleading.

His child that lived for twelve years.

What would we not do for our children?

Or as I have learned perhaps not all parents are equipped to sustain life, so let me rephrase it.

When you love someone beyond your own needs, what would we not do for them?

For Jairus, it was to say please...please come.

Church please know that this parent before you the Holy-One-of-those-in-need will hold your fear, your tears, your anger, your frustration, your betrayal, your fire, passion, dreams, hope and sustain you.

When I found out that I could be angry at God and yell all my emotions, I was liberated!

Perhaps do it in a place where the authorities are not called.
But try it.
Yell, let it out before the one who holds you.

This little cactus of my life could not let anyone in because of so many disappointments but God through the Holy Spirit softened me to let those who would be part of the healing journey enter.

I can't count how many times I have seen a miracle in my life when I ask please....and even when I did not.

I allowed healing to happen and I was able to be vulnerable to new possibilities.

A twelve-year-old child embraced life fully, while simultaneously, an unidentified woman experienced life flowing out from her.

This nameless woman with a flujo de sangre, a blood flow had tried everything according to the scriptures we just read.

If you are a biological female and know the monthly beauty or hell (depending who you are) that comes with blood flow, you know the challenge.

And what about the law of Moses regarding these things with women?

By this time of Jesus, was this woman still seen as unclean?
Probably.

Was she pushed to the outskirts of the town for such flow?
A medical condition that could not be controlled?

How many people know about this?

To be pushed aside, to be asked to leave, to know deep inside you are not welcome in some spaces.

I also wonder how she was walking?
She must have lost iron strength in both her emotional and physical being.

Please....oh please heal me.

This unnamed woman goes to Jesus setting aside shame, ridicule, possible stoning if she was in violation of the law of Moses walking around people unclean.

This unnamed woman dared to touch, to reach, to hope, to carry her faith in her sleeve and reach out to Jesus.

If it fails it fails but what else do I have to lose?

There are unnamed women all over reaching in need of healing, and hope in our lives.

Audre Lorde in her book of selected works says, "For not only do we touch our most profoundly creative source, but we do that which is female and self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society."

The unnamed woman here in this Biblical story and those in real life must continue to reach, to enter spaces, moving through the crowd reaching for life.

The scriptures tell us that Jesus turned around and said, who touched me, for power has come out of me!
His disciples said, "have you gone mad? There are people pushing, shoving, moving and hoping to see you! Yeah you were probably touched a lot!"

And church, tell me if there was no live twitter back then, how on earth did the crowds know where he was when he got off that boat?

And yet, there they were waiting when he got off the boat pressing on.

Friends, in the deepest, most crowded of rooms, he sees you.
In the most chaotic of places, he feels you.
In the most outlandish noise and the surface of welcoming and unwelcoming spaces, he senses you, and gets it.

This unnamed woman came forward, her own protective shield aside and said, it was me!

There is healing that occurs while poor Jairus is probably fidgeting saying, we need to go, my daughter is dying!

And sure enough, Jairus people come running to him to tell him, its too late.
Jesus says, ignore them.
Ignore them!
Ignore them, church, keep moving with Jesus.
If they tell you its too late, ignore them.

You have the Holy-Spirit of God with you, keep moving.

Audre Lorde says, "The fear of our desires keeps them suspect and indiscriminately powerful, for to surpass any truth is to give it strength beyond endurance."

You have endured.
You have searched and are searching.
And you have found Jesus!

Let your soul church grow in the consciousness of knowing that whether you live or die, you are with the one who sustains, empowers you and equips you.

Don't let fear crumble you.

Perhaps say, "I don't know how, but I need you to help! Please help my unbelief."

Both Jairus and the unnamed women were merely existing until they met the one who flipped the script.

The one they said please...please heal me, my daughter, me!

What church are you asking? What is your please church?

What is it that you need from the one who gives life and life abundantly.

Quiet the noise, the crowds, the fears, the flow of tears, and hurt that might pour from you and reach out.

Call upon the one who loves us unconditionally and find wholeness.

Joy, unlike happiness, is with you in the good and the bad.

Sometimes that means just listening to music while other times it means dancing like nobody's watching.

An its okay!

Take a risk like these two did and hear, "you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed!"

Amen

Thanks be to God!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We have come to this time of prayers.

Together we will lift our prayers of joy and concerns.

We are a community that holds each other in prayer.

Today, I invite you while this song

plays to type in your prayer request in the chat box.

And come as you are,

Crowder - Come As You Are (Music Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2zhf2mqEMI>,

Holy-One hear our prayers.

Those voiced here today

Those spoken only in the depths of our hearts

those for which we have no words
We lift them all to you

Holy-One -We give you thanks, O God, for those who mean so much to us --
Those to whom we can go at any time,
Those with whom we can talk and keep nothing back,
knowing that they will not laugh at our dreams or our failures,
Those in whose presence it is easier to be good,
Those who by their warning have held us back
from mistakes we might have made.
Above all, we thank you for Jesus Christ,
Lord of our hearts and Savior of our souls,
in whose name we offer this thanksgiving.
Amen.

--William Barclay

BLESSING FOR THE JOURNEY

Let us go forth from this place into the world to find yourself; a cause you can
live for; and a love you can live into.
Go in peace!

Now, let us dance!

Crowder - Prove It ft. KB
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fsKoK9yLE0>