

13th Sunday
6/30/2024

PROPELLERS

Think about propellers. When activated, they move things forward whether those things be ships, planes or even just air. Within each of us there are propellers, forces that when activated can move us forward. Today's gospel gives us examples of moving forward, of being propelled.

The first is Jairus, the synagogue official. What propelled this dignified leader, from a group of people that didn't always get along with Jesus, to *fall at his feet and plead earnestly*? You could call it love mixed with fear, desperation, faith and hope. When has desperation led you to do something never considered before? People journey through the desert or across the ocean into a foreign and sometimes hostile land not because they want to break laws but because they're desperate.

Have you ever been so desperate that, throwing aside your dignity and social standing, you would fall down at the feet of a wandering preacher and beg? Perhaps if your child was dying, you would. Love, mixed with fear, desperation, faith and hope could function together like the blades of a propeller to move people forward. Jesus tells Jairus, *Do not be afraid, just have faith*.

This speaks to the importance of faith but it also speaks to something else, the danger of fear. There can be a reverential fear, a respect that comes from love. But there can also be a destructive fear; a fear that closes us in on ourselves and causes us to turn what from what is true and good toward what is false and bad. Fear causes us to say mean things, to act cruelly and in extreme cases, fear leads to violence. People burn crosses on other people's front yards because they are afraid of them. Jairus' love, fear, desperation, faith and hope drove him, propelled him toward Jesus.

But Jairus isn't the only one propelled. Can you think of a time when things just seemed to go from bad to worse; when everything you try to do to fix the problem doesn't work and things get harder and harder and you don't know what to do? Has your desperation ever reached the point that you would jostle your way through a crowd on the chance you might be healed? Perhaps if you were sick enough, long enough, you would. This unnamed, suffering woman must have known something about desperation, fear, faith and hope and all of those must have

propelled her forward. Her suffering would not only have drained her physically and financially, it would have pushed her to the edges of society as it made her ritually unclean. This was a society where it was inappropriate for unrelated men and women to touch each other and for her to touch Jesus in her condition would have made him unclean. And yet the opposite happens. Jesus makes her clean. He recognizes her faith that among propelled her to him.

Desperate people can do desperate things. Due to their stress, desperate people can make poor choices but both these people made good choices. They both turned to Jesus. In the midst of our challenges and struggles, out of love, sometimes out of fear, at times even perhaps out of desperation but also faith and hope, we can turn to Jesus.

We can create that space for Jesus even when we're not desperate. Like the afflicted woman and Jairus, we can draw close to Jesus in humility and even a sense of boldness. We create that space as we develop a life of daily prayer, appropriate to our state in life, taking the time to talk to God but also listen. We create that space when we learn to see Christ around us in others and we see God at work and how we can cooperate with his works at times in big ways but also in every *little way*. We create that space when we regularly and worthily share in the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist. Here, like that woman, we touch Jesus and ask for his grace to touch our lives. We create that space when with lives of intentional faith, we strive to live out generously the duties of our daily lives.

But there is another propelling taking place, a much more powerful one. Through love for a fallen human race, the love of God, propelled the Word of God to take flesh in the person of Jesus allowing the invisible God to become visible in him. That love propelled Jesus into his ministry of healing and even more importantly, propelled him to die on the cross and rise from the dead to lead us together into the life of God.

Jairus had faith that Jesus could heal. Jesus then invited him to step out into even deeper faith, that Jesus can raise from the dead. And Jesus can invite us to deeper faith as well. Jesus says, *Little girl, I say to you arise!* And then it said she *arose*. And the word used there is the same word used for the resurrection of Jesus.

This gospel invites us not just to renew our faith in some generic way but to renew our faith in the resurrection of the dead, just as in a few minutes we will profess together, *I look forward to the resurrection of the dead.*

Every Sunday we come together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to celebrate God's propelling love. This faith strengthens us and together we seek to strengthen each other. May the love, fear, faith, hope and even desperation of our own lives lead us to make good choices, to turn to Jesus. May it not lead us down the dark path of fear but propel us to Jesus that each day we may follow him into his light, his life and his love.