

Pastor Troy E. Medlin
5th Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 5:21-43
6/27/21

He was called...unclean.....contagious.... outcast....promiscuous...His name...was Robert Alan Kissel...but to those who knew him...he was Sonny...he was my great uncle...and if you ever come visit me in my office...you will see his picture up on the wall...he was an aspiring Episcopal priest and hospice chaplain...and yet...in the 1980s his life was cut short...in many ways....because he was HIV+....and had AIDS.....and because of the world in which he lived.....and the misconceptions people had about AIDS...about what it was and what it meant....he....along with so many others lived in, isolation, and silence.....often restricted....cut off....from family....church, intimacy and community....often left to suffer alone...with shame and stigma....attached to their very bodies....

She would have been called...unclean....living in isolation and silence....left to suffer alone...with shame and stigma attached to her very body....as Dr. Wilda Gafney puts it...she would have been restricted....placed in exile...because of the confusion and fear associated with a woman's body....she would have been restricted....from the communal life of the village.....cut off from a sense of belonging....and left to reside on the edges of life.....And...we do not even know her name.....

This month marks the 40th anniversary of when AIDS was described...and back then so many people living with AIDS...like my Uncle Sonny were unable to experience the touch of loved ones....the touch of acceptance....and care....the touch of tenderness...and many were left to die without their family members holding their hand....because of confusion and fear associated with their bodies.....

She was restricted...we do not even know her name...she had the label....of impure...placed upon her....and...because of that...if she were even to touch another person....they too....would have been restricted....from the communal life of the village.....cut off from a sense of belonging....and left to reside on the edges of life....just by coming into contact with her.....because of the confusion and fear associated with her body.....And...she knew that....having lived with restrictions for 12 years.....

Still.....she had *heard* about Jesus...I've always wondered....what...was it exactly she heard...about him....who was it....and what did they say...about him....what had he done for them.....she had heard about Jesus....and with crowds pushing in on him...she weaved her way through the crowd...And...she did it...she *touched* him.....and immediately....she was healed....And...Jesus knew something had happened...he felt power come out from him....and he wants to see her....and so...she comes in fear and trembling....and yet...there was something

about Jesus....that told her...she could tell him the *whole truth* and all that might include....so she does....and then after it all....Jesus calls this once unnamed woman: *daughter*....Once estranged she is now called: family.....no longer is she restricted, she is restored...no longer is she cut off...she is brought in....she touched him and now she is embraced/touched by Jesus....he has turned her mourning into dancing....

Jesus has met her *in that place* of disconnection and death...and brings new life....filled...with joy and brought into community.... She goes in peace...a new peace, lasting peace, an indescribable peace.....a peace that only that Jesus can give.....

Later that same day....Jesus...still moving.... literally goes to a place of death and despair....and touches the dead body of Jairus's daughter....and takes her by the hand....and immediately....the one who was dead is now alive again....

One is restricted....cut off....named impure...experiencing a kind of death...even while being physically alive.....and one is physically dead.....Jesus crosses boundaries of death, despair, and disconnection....and brings a healing touch, restoration, renewal, and resurrection....

And....The life of this Jesus....culminates on a day....in Jerusalem...on a hill outside of the city....where Jesus dies alongside all of the cut off, restricted, impure, disconnected ones...and all those who have been made outcasts.....Jesus becomes the exiled one himself....fully identifying with all of the scandalous ones....and even with you and me...cut off....because of the perpetual power of sin and evil....and Jesus goes all the way down.... to the untouchable....unconquerable.....place....going all the way down into death and hell itself....and crossing the final boundary..he rises from the dead....declaring once and for all there is no one and no place....that is beyond the healing touch and embrace of Jesus's wounded hands....

In Holy Baptism...those hands have embraced each one of us...holding you and I in those arms of love...strong and wide enough for our whole truths....we receive the same healing touch of the unnamed woman who becomes...daughter...and we once estranged and left alone....have been called beloved child and brought home...restored....into the community of faith....and those same hands that grasped the lifeless body of Jairus's daughter....have taken hold of us....and led us out of all of the graves....we have made for ourselves or that this world has placed us in....once dead....we are alive again...both now and forever....

Restored....renewed....and risen from our deaths....as named....beloved children of God....connected forever.....we now walk to this table....to take the body of Christ into our

bodies....And...having received this gift of life.....we become what we eat....and....as the body of Christ....those hands that reach out across borders and boundaries....to those restricted, cut off, and unnamed.....those become our hands.....and Jesus speaks through our voices.....we are the body of Christ....set loose in the world....

Where will we go....where will the Spirit lead us....who will we have the privilege of bringing back home...into the household of God.....what borders and boundaries will we have the joy of crossing over.....to find the lost and disconnected ones....who will we get to listen to....as they tell us the whole truth about themselves, maybe for the first time.....and then who will we get to speak the name “beloved child of God” over....Who will we get to touch....with the compassion and mercy of Jesus Christ...a touch that just might bring healing....restoration....renewal....and resurrection....

Maybe...it’s a transgender person....or another member of the LGBTQ+ community....who longs to feel the touch of a person of faith/the body of Christ...take them by the hand.....and hear your voice name them as a beloved....

Maybe it’s another person who just does not quite fit into the mold of what we consider normative or mainstream for whatever reason....and maybe they even make us uncomfortable...or make us question things about ourselves...or about just how wild and unpredictably beautiful the gospel of Jesus Christ really is.....

maybe it’s you....and you need to hear in this moment that there is enough room around this table...for you....and enough bread, and wine, and grace and love....enough Jesus..for you...for all of us to eat and be filled.....and feel the healing touch of this Jesus....clasp your hand....in this meal...

What we know is that God will be faithful and all that we need will be provided....as we follow this Jesus.....and live as his body on Earth....wherever....that may be....

His name.....was Robert Alan Kissel.....those who knew him....called him Sonny.....God calls him....beloved.....she was unnamed....and he called her *daughter*.....she was dead....he called her to get up and live.....We were estranged....and God came all the way down and touched us...you and me....him, her, and them....and calls all of us.home...by our true name....child of God.....