

“The Sky is Falling, The Sky is Falling”  
The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8B)  
Mark 5:21-43

The world as everyone has ever known it is slowly coming to an end.

They can't see it yet, but they will soon enough. All they know right now is that there is a man from Nazareth named Jesus. He can obliterate demons and conquer sickness with his touch. His popularity has grown so much that he can no longer go anywhere without hoards of people pressing in on him...including *that* woman.

The one with no name.

The one whose body and soul have been wracked by pain and suffering for 12 years.

The one whose incessant bleeding has left defiled, excluded, and alone.

*That* woman is tired. She's weary. And she's all out of options. Like everyone else, she's heard the rumors circulating around town about Jesus. If he is who people say he is, then maybe a mere brush against the hem of his robe is all she needs. On the other hand, it could be that the one she's seeking has come only for people who are without defilement, those attend temple regularly, those have paid their dues. But doing something is better than doing nothing?

So, on her hands and knees and with her head turned down, she pushes her way through the crowds. As she touches the rough hewed linen of his robe, a sensation courses through her body and the weight of 12 years of agony, shame, and despondency fall off like molting scales. As she tries to escape back to her hiding place, she hears the Jesus' ask "Who touched me?" Trembling, she turns to him knowing that by virtue of her touch she has tainted Jesus with her own suffering and sin. Never mind that she's come out in public as a woman without a husband to speak on her behalf. She has broken all the rules. She will be punished. She should be punished. But instead of giving her what she deserves, Jesus names her "Daughter," blesses her, and sends her forth in peace. Someone who was out is now in. Someone who was broken is made whole. Someone who was useless becomes wanted. This is not how things are supposed to go. And the world as she and the crowd have known begins to crumble.

And Jesus is only getting started. After sending the woman on her way, he goes to the house of Jairus, who is also desperate and afraid. Despite the strong possibility that he will destroy his credibility as a respected and wise temple leader by turning to Jesus, he's at the

end of his rope. *It is his daughter you know.* So as the scoffers laugh, Jesus dismisses them with a turn, lays a hand on the young girl and tells her to rise up. And in the clearest proof of her embodied humanity, he instructs them to feed her.

Now it's everyone in that house's turn to discover their world coming to an end.

You see, in the world as they've known it, death has the final word; children, especially girls, aren't worth fighting for; hope is a pipe dream for those with time, money, and connections on their side; and men, especially leaders, do not show any vulnerability. This can only mean one thing: a new world is taking shape in ways never imagined since the advent of creation. Jesus' miracles today aren't a feat of magic or strength. As Barbara Brown Taylor says, "[they] remind us that the way things are is not the way they always will be. . . Every healing, every banishment of evil is like a hole poked in the opaque fabric of time and space. The kingdom breaks through and for a moment or two we see how things will be."<sup>1</sup> In and of themselves, the miracles were never the point. They were the means through which Jesus illustrated the essence of God's dream for all creation—wholeness, compassion, justice, and unconditional love. With the depth of his love, the wideness of his embrace, and the mercy in his touch, he's given them enough light in the midst of the darkness, light to lead the way to a new way of living and being with God and each other.

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Lately, I've been wondering if our corner of the world is coming to an end. We have put parameters on forgiveness, tests on belonging, and rules on mercy. Parents and children have been ripped apart and made political pawns for pride and votes. We're angry, suspicious, and out to win. I'm exhausted. You're exhausted. With each passing day, it appears to get worse. "We did not use to be like this," we complain as we throw up our hands and shake our heads.

But I've come to believe something else: the crumbling of the world as we have *believed* it to be is actually our path forward. Maybe it's only in facing the destruction that our pride and fear have wrought that we can stop pointing fingers and dehumanizing each other and start regarding one another as the children of God that we all are. As we sacrifice our comfort, pride, and convenience, the world as we know it will quake. And as it is on earth will become becomes as it is in heaven.

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Deborah Davis, or Aunt Debbie as people who know her call her, knows what it means to embody such sacrifice and vulnerability. By day she doles out lunch at a San Diego high school. When she leaves work, she loads up her 1976 Chevy Malibu with foil trays of homemade food: turkey and dressing; BBQ ribs; and all the fixins' to go with them.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Bread of Angels* (Boston: Cowley, 1997), 139.

Instead of waiting for people to come to her, she drives around the city looking for them. When reminded by a reporter that she herself is barely getting by, she gets silent and smiles. "But I have enough."<sup>2</sup>

Imagine if that were our final answer. Enough. For many of us cocooned in our middle and upper-middle class lives, going without something might feel like the end of life as we think we deserve. Deborah Davis reminds us that it's the starting part of joy. And it all started in the trunk of a 40-year-old car.

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Friends, I know it's dark. I know it's scary. I know it seems like our world is coming to an end. The easy thing to do would be to hide out in our respective political camps. But what if we turned our desperation into compassion and action instead of arguments and finger-pointing? What if we lived as though our baptism is not a ceremony for infants but the very thing by which we measure how we treat others?

And what if we lived as though we know having nothing left to lose except the world as we know it?  
*Because we don't.*

None of us knows what tomorrow holds, but this much is true: On dark and foreboding Friday, the world went pitch black and came to an end as all of creation knew it. It stayed that way.

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A few days later though—after one too many dark and hopeless nights—God's dominion of love and redemption tore through the gaping darkness, and a new creation took root.

You know, sometimes the ending we fear is actually the beginning we never knew we needed.

The Rev. Dr. Maria A. Kane  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Waldorf, MD  
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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Bread of Angels* (Boston: Cowley, 1997), 139.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Hartman, "Deliveries of Kindness," *CBS Sunday Morning*, aired June 24, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/deliveries-of-kindness/>.