

SERMON: HEALING THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD AND RAISING THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS, Luke 8:41-56, November 5, 2017

Fr. Tom Hopko said that from an early age his mother taught him the necessity of three things: to pray, to go to church, and to always remember God. I often wonder about the choices that we make, and why we don't pray, go to church, or think about God. We are so caught up in the things of this world that we have little time left for what the Lord says is "the one thing that is needful." Don't we as parents generally desire happiness, health and financial well-being for our children? But what have we set up for our children or ourselves if we zealously spend most of our time pursuing the externals and neglect the internal heart and soul? What good is everything else if our hearts and souls are sick, dark, starving and torn in tatters because of neglect? Is that what we want for our children or for ourselves? How is it possible that we don't see this?

We like to think that we are in control, but there is much that is beyond our control. The woman who came to our Lord today was grievously ill for 12 years. Imagine, she was hemorrhaging non-stop for twelve years. She did not plan or foresee this illness when it first occurred 12 years ago. She was probably living her life, making plans, doing well when one day she came up against a brick wall, like an icy cold splash of water thrown into her face. Her illness was embarrassing. She rarely went out in public or was with people, because she constantly had to tend to the blood issuing from her, clean it up, replace her garments and bandages, and whatever else she had to do to cope with her situation. It was unlawful for her to go into the Temple or to come into contact with others because she was considered unclean. How could she cope and hang on in such a situation for 12 long years? Why didn't she just give up? Yet she persevered and hung on. She tried physicians, but none of them could help her. Ultimately what helps her and saves her is her faith. The suffering she went through, like St. John Chrysostom says, was like gold being purified in the fire. Her soul, her heart, her internal disposition and mind were honed, purified and cleansed. Like Fr. Sergius of St. Tikhon's Monastery says, she probably wasn't worried about going to Wal-mart, or anything else for that matter. Her main concern was, as the Lord says, "the one thing that is needful." She has faith in our Lord and knows in her heart that He can heal her. She is bold now and despite the fact that she could be stoned to death if caught, she sneaks up and pushes her way through the crowd to touch the fringe of the Lord's garment. Power goes out from the Lord and she is healed. The Lord reveals her to the crowd, and she is terrified because her secret is now known. She has violated the Law, and she can be stoned to death. The Lord tells her not to be afraid. He tells her that her faith has made her well, to go in peace. After 12 years of suffering, her heart having been cleansed, now she can resume her life as if she were newly born, seeing the world and life through new eyes and a new perspective. When she touched the Lord she did not make Him unclean. Just the opposite, He remains pure and she is cleansed, just like when the Lord came in contact with and healed the lepers. Just like when the Lord was baptized, the water did not sanctify the Lord, but the Lord, by going into the Jordan River, sanctified the water and through it all the waters of the earth.

While all of this is going on, Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, is agonizing. He has requested that the Lord go to his daughter who is dying. Instead of showing a sense of urgency and running to the dying girl, the Lord is delayed and takes the time to heal and interact with the woman. Now the word comes that the girl has died, it is too late, don't bother the Lord anymore. But what is the Lord's reaction? He goes to the dead girl anyway. "She is not dead. She is sleeping." When we die, it is not forever. It is not the end of all things. The Lord has conquered death. He is all-powerful over death and life. The sting of death has been removed from sinful mankind because the Lord has suffered, died and rose from the dead. The girl has died, but one day she will rise in the universal resurrection. Jesus shows everyone that He has power over death and life by reviving the girl, just as the Lord revived the son of the

widow, just like the Lord revived his friend Lazarus in Bethany. The mourners at the girl's house laugh at Jesus and ridiculed Him because he said that she is not dead but sleeping. Aren't the Christians and the Christian faith mocked and ridiculed on a daily basis? I was once told that I am insane because I believe in the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God. Is that what it has come to? Christianity is equated with insanity. This girl, the son of the widow and Lazarus will experience death again. They were revived, but not yet resurrected unto eternal life. When they die and rise the next time, it will be for eternity.

May the Lord grant us the understanding and the volition to care first and foremost about our spiritual lives. May the Lord grant us to have the faith of the woman with an issue of blood. May we follow all the teachings and writings of the Holy Fathers which are expressed in the simple injunction of Fr. Tom Hopko's mother: to pray, go to church, and always remember God. Amen.