

1997. That's how long 12 years ago was. Take a trip back - what were you doing in 1997? 1997 was the year Princess Diana and Mother Theresa died. Tim McVeigh was convicted. In Scotland a sheep was cloned and named Dolly. Gas was \$1.22 a gallon. President Clinton was in office. Pastor Herrof was here at Resurrection.

12 years ago my family had just moved to Denver from Buffalo, NY. I was an awkward teen in a new school. I had just started work at the Dairy Queen. 12 years is a long time.

Where were you 12 years ago? Did you expect that you'd be sitting here in 2009? In Chicago, at Resurrection? Has this been a straight shot for you, or a series of winding roads and new paths with plenty of backtracks and dead ends? Surely for most of us there have been some interruptions, some unplanned events along the way – over the last 12 years.

12 years is a whole lifetime. 12 years is how old his daughter was. Jairus could barely remember what life was like without her and now she was near death. Having heard that Jesus was back in town, he runs to him, presses his way through the crowd, throws himself down, and in desperation, cries, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” Jesus immediately goes with him. Together they press through this crowd of arms and elbows to go toward the 12 year old girl.

12 years is how long this woman has been bleeding. 12 years of blood draining out of her, depleting her energy, her nutrients, her social networks. 12 years could have easily depleted her hope as well – but she takes a chance, and against all rules and customs that she as an unclean person and a woman should follow, she presses through the crowd, reaches out and touches Jesus.

She says, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Based on the prophet Malachi a legend arose that when the Messiah came, there would be special healing powers in the tassels of his prayer shawl, which Jewish men wear.

This woman, pressing through the crowd grabs hold of the edge of his cloak. She is demonstrating her faith, or at least her hope, that Jesus is the Messiah and that even his clothes have healing powers.

And she is right. She touches him. “Immediately the hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.”

Jesus' stride is interrupted because he feels something, too. The power goes out of him. “Who touched my clothes?” he asks. Surely Jesus' disciples and Jairus are urging Jesus to move more quickly, “You see the crowds pressing in on you; how can you say, “Who touched me?” Let's go! Remember the 12 year old girl. But Jesus stops. He looks all around at the crowd pressing in on him to see who had touched him.

Can you feel the weight of the crowd? The anxiety of Jairus? So many things press in on us, too, weighing us down. So many urgent things, places we should be, expectations to meet. It can feel suffocating and scary. Things interrupt us but we continue to press on. We move past people who make us uncomfortable, experiences that scare us, even fleeing from our own selves, and stay the course. But sometimes, something or someone touches us in a way that stops us in our tracks. We look around. What might we find when we stop the pressing on long enough to pause and take notice of this interruption?

She comes forward, falls before Jesus like Jairus only moments before. Tells him the whole truth.

Jesus responds, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

The hemorrhaging had stopped as soon as she touched him. She is already healed when Jesus says, “be healed of your disease.” But perhaps he recognizes that it is more than her body that needs

healing. 12 years of pain and suffering have given her an identity that is “the hemorrhaging woman” and most everyone simply sees her as an interruption, or worse.

Although this woman is the unnamed interruption in the story of Jairus and his daughter, this interruption takes up most of the space in this passage and, in fact, becomes the center point of the narrative. The writer of Mark’s gospel clearly wants us to spend a moment here. We can’t skip over her because she is right smack in the middle of the story we thought we were reading. We can’t get to the end of Jairus and his daughter’s story without stopping here.

Jesus stops. He takes notice of this interruption. And then, to this woman who is unnamed, Jesus gives a name, a name that forever ties her to him – daughter.

In calling her daughter, Jesus not only gives her an identity, but he lifts this interruption to the level of family. He establishes the same kind of relationship with her as Jairus has with his daughter. And like a parent, he would do anything possible to save his daughter. She is no interruption to Jesus. She is central to the story, his story.

Sociologists have a concept called the looking glass self. The idea is that you become whoever the most important person in your life thinks you are. So what if no one will touch you, no one will come near you, what if when people tell your story you have no name? And then one day someone looks you in the eyes and reflects the healing love of a parent and calls you – daughter.

Who do we let reflect who we are? What or who has formed your identity? Parents, a job, your partner, a chronic illness, friends? We are often schizophrenic in our identities – so many competing images of who others see us as that some days when we look in the mirror, we don’t even know who we’re looking at anymore.

Today God gives two more children the identity of daughter. In the reflective waters of baptism, God calls Mira and Rosemary. These two girls are being baptized this morning, which, perhaps, feels mostly like an interruption in their day, (and maybe yours.) To have someone pour water on their head, be paraded around in this heat. Interrupting nap time, feeding time, play time. (Making the service longer.)

But in this wet interruption, God shows up, naming each – daughter.

Lots of people will help shape Mira and Rosemary’s identity. But who will they see when they look in the mirror? What image will be reflecting back to them? Parents, sponsors, gathered people of God, our job is to remind them that in the mirror is a daughter of God. Maybe this responsibility will help us to remind ourselves, too. By water and the word they become daughters in new family today, part of a new story. The family and story that connects all of us here today.

But let’s not forget there is another daughter in our gospel story this morning. Jairus’ 12 year old daughter still lies ill in her bed. Word comes that Jesus’ interruption has distracted him and taken too much time. The daughter has died. But Jesus goes anyway. “She is only sleeping,” he says. Those mourning are so sure of what they know that even in their despair they laugh at him, doubting that Jesus can make a difference.

Are we also skeptical? As we get shuffled around in crowds, hemorrhaging our own pain and fear, desperate for touch, but feeling invisible, desperate for healing, but seeing only death, do we doubt that it can be any different?

Jesus presses on past those gathered and goes to her, takes her by the hand and lifts her up. The daughter gets up and walks around. Rejoins her family. Those standing by were overcome with amazement.

12 years ago, 12 minutes ago, Jairus and this woman seemingly had nothing in common. One rich, one poor. One named, one unnamed. One man, one woman. And on and on. Their paths would have probably never intersected – or if they had, they would have quickly gone their separate ways, passing by another interruption in their day. And yet now, by the life-giving touch of Jesus their stories have become intimately woven together and cannot be told without each other. On that day their lives were forever changed – so that the next 12 years will be different than they ever imagined.

Today Mira and Rosemary become intimately connected, interwoven, inseparable from our story, from God's story. The touch of water that interrupts our dry life is the story that holds us all together, so that 12 years from now, Mira and Rosemary and all of us will still be family, still part of the same story. And 12 years from now chances are we will need to interrupt Mira and Rosemary as they head toward adolescence. We'll need to interrupt them with water, reminding them to look into the waters of baptism to remember who they are. We can lean over their shoulder and look, too. Chances are we'll need this interruption. Maybe we even need it today.