

As Simple and as Hard as a Trust Fall

By Rev. Katie Hambrick

Do you know what a trust fall is? You know, the game we played as kids where you would fall backwards and someone would catch you? When I first started college, I went to a small southern baptist school in Rome, Georgia. The school had this orientation weekend where they took all the freshmen away to these cabins in the mountains for us to get to know each other, etc. It was awful.

I love camp and always have, but something about assigned weekend retreats kills me on the inside. My rebellious nature cannot handle it. So I was already off put by having to go. However, then I met two guys on the bus that I actually enjoyed as people. We ended up hanging out most of the weekend and freshmen year; their names are Cole and JR.

The nice thing was that this retreat center had high rope courses, which I love. I love high ropes. The time comes where we get to go on the high ropes. I was stoked, and convinced the guys to come with my roommate and I. We get to the course and the first thing that happens is they have a trust fall. You are supposed to get on this wooden platform and just fall off of it with no harness while the group holds out their arms to form a basket to catch you. I am not kidding. And the worse part is everyone had to take a turn before y'all could move on.

I get picked to go second. I get up to the platform and I see just how high it is. I see my friends and roommate put their arms out, forming a basket to catch me, and I decide that this is the moment I should turn around, quickly close my eyes, and fall off the platform. Only when I go to

fall, I panic. This panic resulted in me flailing my arms around while falling and punching Cole directly in his cheek, causing the group to drop me.

The task I had been given was simple in nature. You just fall back. However, in reality, having enough faith to just fall back and hope I would be caught was terrifying. It is hard to have faith that people are going to catch you. Faith is scary.

You have heard Dan and I explain many times that faith is a process. Sometimes that process is great, and our faith feels strong. Strong enough we would just fall backwards off the platform. Other times, that process is full of doubt and questions. Thus, causing us to not feel as though we can fall backwards off the platform out of fear that we might not be caught. And sometimes, those two parts of the faith process can live together. Sometimes we are fearful, yet we are strong.

What the two main characters in today's story are demonstrating is just that very thing. Both Jarius and the woman are demonstrating deep faith. They are fearful and full of questions. Jarius has questions for his daughter's healing and peace. The woman has questions for her own healing and comfort.

First, let's look at Jarius. He is a leader of the synagogue and has high status. He comes and humbles himself before Jesus for his daughter's healing. He knows Jesus can heal her and he has faith that Jesus will. They start to make their way to Jarius' house. The crowd is following them and pushing in on them.

When a woman interrupts their journey. She had suffered for 12 years from hemorrhaging. For the amount of time that Jarius' daughter had been alive was also the same amount of time that she had spent suffering. She had spent all her resources going to doctors and healers. She was deemed

unclean by society based on her being a woman and bleeding. She was unlovable and untouchable according to society.

She did not even approach Jesus to heal her. She pushed and crawled her way through the crowd, saying if I can just touch his cloak then I will be healed. Just touch his cloak. Scripture tells us that when she touched his cloak that Jesus immediately felt power leave him and he asked who touched me. She was healed. The disciples, being the disciples, basically ask him as if he is crazy who didn't touch him? The woman speaks up. She tells him the whole truth.

The whole truth. How many times do we try to pretend that the whole truth is not actually the entire truth? Has anyone else done that? There have been moments where I have prayed, and attempted to look my very best in the eyes of God. I do not disclose all the information, and I pretend to be a saint. I do this like God wouldn't know the whole truth if I just did not say it out loud. That isn't how God works or Faith works though. We have to bring our entire selves as well as our entire truth to God. We cannot skip over the parts we don't like or we think God will not appreciate. We have to bring it all. Just like the woman did.

After she shares her whole truth with Jesus, he calls her daughter. A title and gift of acceptance. She is not unworthy of love or untouchable. She is precious- as precious as a daughter. He tells her that it is her faith that has healed her. During this, people come to tell Jarious that his daughter is dead. Upon hearing the news Jesus says to him, "do not fear, only believe." Jesus and Jarious head towards the house. When they arrive, people are mourning. Jesus tells the girl to get up and she was healed.

Jarious and the women show tremendous acts of bravery and faith. I could not have done what that woman had done. I would have never been

so bold as to push my way through the crowd and grab the hem of the cloak. The hem would have been dirty. It would have been covered in filth, but she had the bold faith to trust that not only is God real, but God is faithful. She had faith in God's faithfulness to us. Faith in God's promises. I wish I had that kind of faith. The kind that would push through a crowd. The kind of faith that would humble myself before Jesus and ask him to come heal a sick family member.

The struggle I have with this story is that sometimes no matter how faithful we are, it does not feel like God is faithful back. How many times have you prayed for healing for a loved one yet the healing seems to not come? How many times have you prayed for magic Jesus to come and wave his wand so that all your problems would just go away? You pray and you pray but magic Jesus does not come. Your loved one does not get better. Your problem grows worse.

The problem is not your faith or lack of faith. It is not that you didn't say the right thing. The problem is that sometimes healing does not look like we think it should. We think we know better than God and insist that if God does not heal a situation the way we believe it should be healed then the healing didn't come. That God wasn't faithful to us.

Sometimes healing comes in the form of not us getting better, but in peace... in wholeness... There was a story told to me once of a man who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in his early fifties. He and his family prayed that he might be healed. Twenty years later, when the disease was reaching its last stages and he was winding down, he told his friend that his prayers had been answered. His friend said how- you are literally dying, you are not being healed? To which the man responded, "I

have been healed, not of my Parkinson's disease, but of my fear of Parkinson's disease."

Healing is not always literal. It can be and most times is peace and acceptance in the face of fear and disappointment. It is our awareness of God's presence with us in our brokenness and despair.

That we are not alone.

God cries with us.

That God is faithful.

That the peace that goes beyond all understanding is healing as well. That is the good news, as well as the hard news. Healing may not come in the form we think it should. It may not look or feel like we think it should, but that does not mean that God is not faithful.

What makes that difficult is finding the strength to believe and trust that.

To believe that God's ways are higher than our own as the author of Isaiah wrote.

To find the strength to push through the crowd to touch the cloak of Jesus.

To find the strength to pray anyways, knowing that our prayers might not be answered exactly how we think they should be.

To find the strength to fall off the platform and trust fall into the arms.

It is as simple and as hard as a trust fall. Amen.