

Text Lamentations 3:22-33; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43
Theme Going with the Flow
Subject The healing of Jairus' daughter and a Woman with a flow of blood
Occasion 4th after Pentecost – July 2, 2006 – Peace – Pella

Not so long ago I told you about my experience with the streets of St. Louis
How street names change suddenly and the counsel of locals is “Don’t fight it; go with it” – just flow down the street

With this image I talked to you about grace and God’s unconditional love
Don’t fight it; go with it – just flow with God’s grace

These last weeks I’ve been captivated by the image of flow
Particularly this woman who’s blood had been flowing out of her for 12 years
So it is that my theme for this morning is Going with the flow

Let us pray ...

Tuesday I flew to Austin to join my friend David for a meeting in Sequin on Wednesday

Once on the plane I obeyed the orders and symbols:

briefcase stowed, seat belt fastened, seat-back upright

Once in the air I trusted the pilot and was going with the flow

Once in David’s car I obeyed the symbols:

Seat-belt fastened; doors locked

Once underway I trusted David and was going with the flow

Going with the flow can be surrendering to stay alive

Jumping out of a moving plane or car can be deadly

For these two women in the gospel reading, a 12 year old girl and a poor widow, Going with the flow of tradition was deadly

They each would bear the label “unclean”

The widow because her body had an uncontrolled flow of blood

The 12 year old because by the end of the story she is presumed dead

But “unclean” is easily misunderstood:

Blood is life-giving and so it is holy – a means for God to sustain life

If life is holy, then the passing of life holy

Touching blood or the dead is having contact with what is holy

In this way “unclean” might actually mean holy

“Unclean” is a means to say blood and life are *awesome* because they are in the realm of God

Going with flow of tradition meant that anyone who had contact with either of these women, a bleeding one and a presumed dead one, would need to go through a ritual of cleansing: signs and symbols of cleansing to re-enter the flow of life

Jesus had contact with both women

The poor widow touched Jesus; Jesus took the little girl by the hand

But we don't hear of Jesus going through a cleansing ritual

I dare say that Jesus, earlier named as the holy one of God, had been touched by a holy one and had touched a holy one

Going with the flow of this passage is going with the flow of holiness

But this flow of holiness deviates from the tradition surrounding the passage

Jesus has been summoned by a father to heal his dying daughter

The father, a leader of his Jewish community, has broken with the flow of tradition

He's seeking the help of a traveling healer

When a child is near death, no effort or expense is too great

Even deviating from tradition

The crowd becomes like a river holding Jesus in its rushing rapids

racing from here to there

From teaching to healing

Jesus going with the flow of the crowd – Go Jesus! Go!

Suddenly there is a break in the flow

What could staunch the flow of this crowd bringing the healer?

No one saw her

Jesus sensed her

The flow of his healing power had been diverted

the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth (Mk 5:33)

What happened to her?

That she was caught? No

The flow of blood had stopped – she knew it

What did she tell him?

Likely how she'd come to be widowed, spent all her money, living like an outcast due to her condition and poverty

Going with the flow was killing her *in every way*

The crowd was about to flow again – but then the messengers came

The whitewater race had now become a gentle drift

No need to hurry – the little girl is dead

All the signs said so – eyes shut, no breath, no pulse – limp & lifeless

Jesus offers to the father a new river

"Don't fear, only believe." (Mk 5:36c)

This is no small matter

This leading Jew had kept the laws of Moses out of fear of breaking tradition

Jesus is still teaching: *staunch the flow of fear; go with the flow of believing*
Trust in God's presence rather than fearing God's absence

[Reminds me of the women at the empty tomb as Mark reports it

They went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. who were gripped by fear (Mk 16:8)

They feared and did not believe]

So the flow of this now-smaller-crowd entered the house supposing the sad truth

Jesus takes 3 with him, Peter, James, John, WHO WOULD ONE DAY LEAD BELIEVERS

He tells the aunts & uncles, friends and the priest "(She) **is not dead but sleeping** (5:39)

They'd seen the signs – they knew the zest of this 12-year-old

So **they laughed** – an angry laugh at anyone who would defy the signs

Jesus put them out – only now with Mom and Dad and the 3 disciples

He gave them a new sign

He took her by the hand: "**Little girl, get up**" (5:41c)

And it was so

She got up, walked around, and wanted something to eat

Signs of life – an adolescent girl going with the flow of life: up, moving, eating

When I arrived in Texas last week, there were many news reports about the body of Pfc. *Kristian Menchaca* arriving at the Brownsville airport on Monday

Kristian had been tortured by the el Quida in Iraq and then brutally killed

The reports told of his wife, son, family and pastor being at the airport to receive him

For the last week the flags that line Torres Boulevard have flown at half staff

Banners reading "*In honor of Pfc. Kristian Menchaca*" had been added

"11 members of the 101st Screaming Eagles Military Funeral Detachment provided full honors as they carried the varnished brown coffin from the chartered Falcon jet to a waiting hearse. The coffin was draped with an American flag." (*The Brownsville Herald*, June 27, 2006)

The police procession and 100s of residents accompanied the hearse slowly to the events center on the boulevard that now had 100s more flags displayed

Many in the crowd held flags high as the hearse passed them.

Going with the flow was an outpouring of sympathy for his family, grief at his death, gratitude for his sacrifice for freedom

Watching the television reports I saw American flags held by diverse people:

young and old; Mexican, Asian, African, and European; Christians, Jews, Muslims; rough looking bikers and frail people in wheelchairs

Our flag symbolizes the unity of a people

Every nation has one as a symbol of its unity

I remembered learning as a Boy Scout

how and when to raise and lower it or fly it at half mast; how to fold it;
 how to protect it from the elements; what to do with it if it is damaged

 On Wednesday David drove us to the Bishop's office in Sequin for the meeting
 Bishop Tiemann's office of the ELCA's Southwestern Texas Synod is on the
 campus of Texas Lutheran University – one of the 28 colleges of the Evangelical
 Lutheran Church

I'd been on the campus of Texas Lutheran one other time: the summer of 1978
 As we neared I got a sick feeling in my stomach; tears flowed down my cheeks
 Lesley's and my daughter Jessica had drowned in a swimming pool east of
 Sequin during that visit
 I can still see her nearly 3-year-old little body floating in the middle of the pool
 It was my fault – I had taken my eyes off of her for just a moment
 I remember crashing through the water to lift her up;
 Carry her body that bore the signs (breathless, cold and limp) to the side
 Shut out all the shouting voices telling me what to do
 And then begin CPR – thinking: breathe twice, press 5 times; breathe twice
 Refusing to let her *go with death's flow*

It all came back as we arrived in Sequin
 Today Jessica lives in Boone with her husband Nate and two daughters, Emma & Grace
 My thoughts flow quickly to other children: *Soyer, Rebecca, Sarah, Pang, Jeremy*
 I am gratefully humble before God's providence that I cannot understand

 On Thursday my plane left Austin at 6:30 a.m. (You know I didn't make these
 arrangements)

I read with disappointment that the Senate failed to pass an amendment to protect
 the flag of these United States
 I understand the concern for 1st amendment right of free speech
 I do not understand protecting the freedom to destroy the symbol of it
 This is far more than a matter of partisan politics or patriotism
 This is a cultural matter of crucial concern for everyone
 Signs and symbols are so important, I dare say, *essential* to life
 In this culture, caught in the flow of information technology, we are trading in important
 signs and symbols for computer icons that leave us alone at a screen on our desk
 I'll not diminish the value of computer, airplane, automobile and other safety icons
 And I do understand that the 10 Commandments are Judeo-Christian icons
 that are not significant to every American
 But our nation's flag is a unifying symbol of unity for a very diverse nation
 The celebration of diversity requires that we have a symbol that in some way
 reports, "we're in this together"
 Then all the more "*of the people, by the people, for the people*"

In this room Christians gather under one symbol

None is greater and no other is here to challenge or confuse

Only this cross reminding us of Jesus who transformed death to life

Christians begin worship here at a bowl of water

the holy washing that cleanses and claims us eternally

every time we touch or are near water we remember the cleansing and claim

Christians at worship here see an elevated book and a table set

God's life-giving Word and Christ's life-giving flesh and blood

Hold a book and we think of The Book

Have some bread and think of The Bread

Taste some wine and think of The Cup

The people of Peace are going with the flow,

Not a crowd desperate for anything or anyone that might fix our problems

Not a people living in fear of God's wrath and death

Not content with the way things are

The people of Peace are going with the flow named in the mission statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

We have been marked with cross of Christ forever; we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world

On this Independence Day weekend we are a thankful people

By the mystery of God's providence we are here in this land of abundance

Go with the flow to the celebrations

Give thanks for all whose lives have been damaged or spent in preserving freedom

Delight in the diversity of our nation:

Enjoy the many languages, diverse foods, variety of clothing and customs

Encourage the diversity and offer your own

Let God's counsel to Abram be God's counsel to each of us

blessed to be a blessing

Are you going with the flow?

Be sure it isn't just the fashion

Be sure it isn't just the rush of the crowd

Be sure it isn't just to fill your days and go to the grave

Watch for signs and symbols that bring life and preserve it

Don't be left breathless, cold and limp

Together we grow peace

Do not fear; only believe (5:36c)