

Signs & Wonders

Dr. Amy-Jill Levine

SESSION 4

A Bleeding Woman And A Dead Girl

The Importance of Women's Bodies
(Matthew 9:18-26)

OPENING

Questions: How many of you have heard the word: Gnosticism? What does it mean? What's the danger, especially in extreme Gnostic thinking?

Scripture: John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made its home among us.

Thought: Richard Rohr reminds us of how the incarnation (the Holy taking on flesh) is not a contradiction, but an eternal reality as the Holy is always being made known in the "stuff" of everyday life.

Question: Jesus appeared to be genuinely concerned about the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people. Are these things to be separated and understood as being independent from one another?

Listen to the Scripture: Psalm 139:1-12

LORD, you have examined me. You know me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up. Even from far away, you comprehend my plans. You study my traveling and resting. You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways. There isn't a word on my tongue, LORD, that you don't already know completely. You surround me—front and back. You put your hand on me. That kind of knowledge is too much for me; it's so high above me that I can't fathom it. Where could I go to get away from your spirit? Where could I go to escape your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there. If I went down to the grave, you would be there too! If I could fly on the wings of dawn, stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—even there your hand would guide me; even there your strong hand would hold me tight! If I said, "The darkness will definitely hide me; the light will become night around me," even then the darkness isn't too dark for you! Nighttime would shine bright as day, because darkness is the same as light to you!

Question: What do you feeling?

Scripture: Matthew 9:18-26

ONE: While Jesus was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

ALL: And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well."

- ONE: Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.
- ALL: When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping."
- ONE: And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that district.

Quick Review: What are three differences between Mark and Matthew's telling of the story?

1. In Mark's Gospel, the Leader of the Synagogue has a _____.
 2. In Mark's Gospel, the young girl is _____.
 3. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus seems uncertain who _____.
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VIDEO

Questions: In the scripture, it says: "...suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before Jesus, saying..." How do you understand this leader kneeling before Jesus? Now Jesus was sitting or reclining. Does this have you seeing things any differently?

The Difference In Faith: Matthew compared to Mark — In Mark, the young girl is only sick when her father comes and asks Jesus for healing. In Matthew, she is already dead, yet the man says, "...come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

Question: What does it mean to have faith when faith seems absurd?

Thought: When Jesus arrived at the home of the leader, he said to the crowd: "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping."

Scripture: Romans 7:2

A married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if he should fall asleep, she is freed from the law of her husband."

Questions: Who else was sleeping in crisis (Matthew 9:24)? What does that potentially tell us?

In the Book, AJ writes: The NRSV has Jesus say, "Take heart." We can do better. We can translate his comment as "be courageous" or "be confident," and I like the idea of keeping both connotations. To have courage is to have a sense of confidence, for without that confidence, we would not be able to act. We've seen the term before in Matthew's Gospel.

Jesus says: "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well."

Question: How do you understand the family (familia) language in this and other passages?

Scripture: Matthew 9:1-2

And after getting into a boat Jesus crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

Scripture: Matthew 12:46-50

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Question: Is there another level to the miracles, something about healing the brokenness and divisions found within our societal systems?

THIS THURSDAY - Zoom Call With AJ (Amy-Jill Levine)

7pm on Zoom

Meeting ID: 861 0824 8128

Passcode: signs

QUESTIONS: What do we ask?

1. It appears as if the Gospel writers included miracle stories beyond simply creating a sense of awe. Looking at Mark and Matthew, are there other reasons (purpose) for including these stories? How might you describe these reasons?
2. Are there any of the miracle stories where you believe there is a hidden gem of meaning that is often overlooked?
3. ??????