

**Proper 8b  
Mark 5:21-43  
June 28, 2009**

**She fell between the cracks. It happens all the time, and it happened to her. She was just a regular sort of person, nobody special. She had a job; she owned a house; she drove a car. Her family was mostly dead, and she had no children. But she was keeping it together. She was just like most of us ... a middle-class resident of the Greater Lansing area. Doing her job, making ends meet. It was fine.**

**But things turned sour. She got laid off. She couldn't afford the COBRA payments, so she lost her health insurance. Then she got sick, and she had to pay her medical bills. First she sold the car for some ready cash. But then the house went into foreclosure. One thing led to another, and she ended up homeless. Now she is staying in the Volunteers of America women's shelter, working hard to find her way back to the life she had lost**

**She fell between the cracks. People are always falling through the cracks. It happens all the time.**

**It happened to that woman. That nameless woman, lost in the crowd that surrounded Jesus that day. Jesus was on his way to help Jairus, the very important leader of the synagogue. Jairus's daughter was sick. She was dying. It was important for Jesus to get there in time.**

**But there was a woman there in that gap between the request and the arrival at Jairus's home. One woman, one utterly forgettable woman, a woman who had fallen through the cracks of her society into nothingness.**

**She was no daughter of a synagogue leader. She had no man to speak for her, to hunt out a healer for her, to care for her suffering and her illness. She was utterly forgettable.**

None of us can imagine how dire this woman's situation was. She was destitute, although clearly she had once had enough money to pay many physicians. She was ritually unclean, unable to participate in the sacrifices and ceremonies of her Jewish faith. She was unprotected and unworthy of notice, since she had no man to speak for her. She had fallen through the cracks, and nobody cared if she ever climbed out again.

But *she* cared. The world may have forgotten her, but she had not forgotten herself. She may have been shoved right out to the edges of her society, but she chose to fight back. She reached back in to the world that had shut her out. She reached back in, to touch the one person who could make the impossible possible. She stretched her hand out from amid that seething, sweaty crowd, and just brushed the edges of Jesus' tunic with her trembling fingertips.

In one instant, the whole order of her universe was reversed. Instead of infecting Jesus with her disease, the power went the other way ... Jesus's goodness and mercy and wholeness flowed out of him to heal the bleeding woman. Instead of huddling silently among the crowd, fearing to speak, the woman came forward at Jesus's bidding and told him the whole truth, the truth she had tried to conceal from the crowd that swarmed around her. Instead of being a woman alone, without family, without status, she now was named "daughter." She was placed on the same level as the little girl Jesus was about to heal.

In the single, glancing touch of a garment, that woman was transformed from sick to healthy, from unclean to clean, from alone to included, from nobody to daughter. Even when she had fallen between the cracks, even when she had been forgotten, she never forgot herself. She knew she did not belong on the fringes. She knew God intended something better for her. She reached out and claimed her healing.

There are so many people who fall through the cracks. It happens all the time. And we don't even notice, any more than the people in the crowd noticed the woman with the flow of blood. Like the woman in the shelter.

**Like the more than 17,000 kids in Ingham County who live on the free or reduced cost meals they get at school, but who are now on summer break ... a break that for them means far more trouble than fun. Like the folks lining the hallways in any of our local nursing homes, waiting for visitors, for something to stir their interest.**

**Like the man with the cans, pushing a big grocery cart along Michigan Avenue to the Kroger. Like the homeless guy who dozes in a study carrel in the East Lansing library. They are there. They are always there. But we forget to look out for them. And too often, when we see them, we would rather look away. It is easier to let them go, anonymous and invisible, slipping back into the crowds.**

**We may have forgotten these children of God. But I assure you, they have not forgotten themselves. Even now they are reaching out, seeking that healing and wholeness, the comfort and peace that so many of us enjoy without even thinking about it.**

**And I have seen you reaching back, reaching out for them with the hands of Jesus, reaching out to pull them back from the edges into the center. I know many of you make and serve meals on Saturdays at Advent House. I watched almost two dozen of you repair and restore a woman's home in South Lansing with Rebuilding Ingham. I was filled with pride and hope as 100 of you gathered at the Nehemiah Assembly to advocate for equal access to healthcare for all children. And I am thrilled by how many of you are continuing that work now that the Assembly is over.**

**I have watched members of this parish reach out to touch sick and suffering people in Haiti, to dig and weed and plant a garden in the orphanage in Mirebalais. I have heard some of you dream of making a difference with your lives and careers, your longing to spend all your time and energy — not just your spare time, but all your time -- working to restore the brokenness in this world, to reach out and pull people back from the edges into the center.**

**People do fall through the cracks. It happens all the time. It happened to the woman who intruded herself right into the midst of the story of Jairus and his daughter. It happens all over the world. It happens right here in mid-Michigan.**

**But we are the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. We are the Body of Christ, and so we have the distinct honor of doing as he did:**

**When we feel that hand brush against us, appealing, demanding, beseeching, we can turn around, just like Jesus did. We can reach out, just as he did, to help pull someone back out of a deep crevice of sorrow and trouble. We can speak, just as he did, and ask to hear their stories. We can pronounce God's approval, just as he did.**

**We can name them into our own family: Brother, Sister, Son, Daughter, Grandmother, Grandfather. Forgotten no more. Beloved forever.**