**Worship Devotion for 5th Sunday of Lent, March 21, 2021**

*This year for Lent we are having the theme: “At the Crossroads.” When we come to a crossroads in our life and we must make a decision on which road to take, we often stop and ponder which way to go. During our Lent Devotions, we will gather at the crossroads, listen, look and learn at the signposts, contemplate the choices and choose the path that God is calling us to. We will use Scripture and the stories found in them of characters at their crossroad moments to help us in our own crossroad moments. This service will be recorded and have special music and images to help worship. You can go to our webpage* [*www.umchapelvalley.org*](http://www.umchapelvalley.org) *by going to our devotion page, found on the menu, or on the webpage there is a link to the Facebook page or you can go directly to our Facebook page,* [*www.facebook.com/chapelofthevalleyumc*](http://www.facebook.com/chapelofthevalleyumc)*. We will also have our zoom Sunday morning gathering at 10 am. There is also a scheduled zoom time each Wednesday of Lent at 7:00 to have a discussion about our Crossroad Challenge and how we are doing and what we are learning. The zoom information for both are enclosed. Set aside some time and space for this worship time. Do what you can to make it a sacred space and time. A suggestion: find a way to play some music during this time to begin this worship time and/or to end it. These are just aids to help you take some time to spend with God.*

**At the Crossroads with Two Women**

**Bleeding Woman and Syrophoenician Woman**

**Gathering at the Crossroads**

**Call to Worship**

We gather here at the crossroads as God’s people, to seek direction in the living of our lives. We come here to be still and hear what God would have us do. We go the way of Christ because we desire to be renewed, restored and recreated. And it starts here at the crossroads.

**Music** (sing or read) *We Are a Wilderness Wandering People*

We are a wilderness wandering people, on a journey of the soul. May we find our destination in our longing to be whole. Our Holy God is calling to us with Jesus by our side. May compassion be our compass, may the Spirit be our guide.

*Jim and Jeanie Strathdee*

**Listening, Looking and Learning at the Signposts**

**Scripture** *Mark 5:25-34*

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

*Mark 7:24-30*

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go— the demon has left your daughter.” So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

**Devotion** *At the Crossroads: Two Women (Bleeding Woman and S*yrophoenician Woman*)*

Last week we looked at two encounters with Jesus with two men at crossroad moments, Nicodemus and Zacchaeus. Today, we will look at two more encounters with Jesus by women in their crossroads moments….the bleeding woman and the Syrophoenician woman….notice how we do not even know their names, yet we know a little bit about their stories because their crossroads moments and even Jesus’ crossroads moment is worthy to write down and tell the story.

Let’s first look at the bleeding woman. From the story written in the gospels, we know she has been hemorrhaging for more than 12 years. I cannot even imagine how awful that would be. And back then not only was it bad physically and mentally but spiritually as well. The story goes on to say she saw many physicians and spent all of her money trying to get help and to be made healthy and whole, but all to no avail. She had all but given up and those around had given up on her for sure. She had heard about Jesus and thought if she could just get to him and touch his garment, perhaps she could be healed once and for all. She had nothing to lose. This was her first crossroads moment. She had all but given up on herself, and her family and friends had given up on her and left her to herself. It was a sin to be out and about due to her hemorrhaging, but she felt she had no other choice. She chose the path of healing and wholeness one more time. She reached out for Jesus’ garment, touched it, and knew immediately that it had worked. She was healed. She could feel it! Jesus knew something too. He felt a power surge in essence leave his body. He stopped and asked who it was who touched him. His disciples said that so many people were touching him. How could he possibly know that someone specific touched him…yet he knew a healing had occurred, a secret, concealed healing. This is when we get to the second crossroads moment for the bleeding woman who was no longer bleeding. She could just leave, knowing she was healed and be done…or she could admit what she had done and what the mere act of touching Jesus had done for her. She again chose the path of healing and wholeness….for her healing couldn’t really be complete unless she followed through with the faith act completely. She owned up to her act of desperation to Jesus. Jesus did not answer with anger but with love. He told her that it was her faith that made her well. Faith in him and faith in herself. She did not give up on herself. She did not give in to the despair of not being well. Even when the odds were against her and everybody she knew, and some she didn’t, said that there was no hope. She knew with Jesus there was always hope.

Let’s look at our second encounter now. This is one where there is also a few crossroads moments. This one takes place in the region of Tyre…Jesus was trying to be incognito. He didn’t want people to know he was there. He needed down time…a rest…sabbath…yet word must have got out. A woman who was a gentile we are told of Syrophoenician origin came seeking help for her daughter. A mother’s love is fierce and strong. Jesus wanted to be left alone. Here is where this woman and Jesus’ crossroads moments intersect, and not necessarily in a good way. She asks for help and he says no. He even goes further to say she, and her daughter, are not first in line when it comes to healing. He compares them to a dog…granted the phrasing he uses is talking about a beloved pet…but a pet none the less. She chooses to continue on her path to get help for her daughter. She sets Jesus straight with the logical understanding that even dogs get fed and taken care of…especially beloved pets. At that point Jesus is faced with the stark reality of his crossroad moment. His sabbath time or her need for love, grace and wholeness for her daughter….Jesus chose love and grace. In his complete humanness, he was torn, yet in his humanness and son of God self he knew love and grace win every time.

It is interesting to me that in both stories, we do not know the women’s names. We do however know their “problems.” Because that is how society saw them. Even, Jesus, for a split minute, looked at them differently. They had to fight for themselves. This month is Women’s History month. It is interesting to note these two stories during this month. Most people would say that women have come so far….but have we. Yes, we have many rights and are able to do so much more than before. However, we still have to fight every day for people to see us for more than our “problems.” Our health, our bodies, our origins, our stories….we continue to have to choose to fight for ourselves and our daughters….just like our two women in the scriptures today.

Healing and wholeness happened for the women in the stories. And I would say even for Jesus. Jesus said their acts of faith made them well…healed…whole. We too can choose wholeness and healing. It takes faith… and sometimes fight. I do not mean violence…I mean determination and an inner strength for ourselves or for those we are responsible for…for those who do not have the strength or the voice. The bleeding woman was tired and worn out, yet she found the strength for one more try. The Syrophoenician woman, who was judged because of where she came from, still pushed past all the noise for her daughter who needed help.

We all at times reach the end of our rope and pray that we can just hold on until a moment comes when we take one more chance or someone who loves us no matter who we are or where we come from takes a chance and fights for us to be made whole. We also have met people who need that person to take up the fight when they have lost faith. We have all come to crossroad moments like that…haven’t we? Maybe, you have not or maybe you did not realize it. Today, I challenge you to have faith in those moments and/or to carry others who may have lost their own faith. If we all look at each other through the eyes of love and grace, allow ourselves to continuously grow and strengthen our faith and to open our hearts and minds to the possibilities. To see those who feel invisible or if we are invisible ourselves to reach out in faith one more time. We can begin to heal ourselves, those we love, and those the world has not yet seen. We are at the crossroads….let’s choose faith, love, hope and grace.

**Contemplating Choices**

**Call to Prayer** (read or sing) *Lead Me Lord*

Lead me Lord. Lead me in thy righteousness. Make thy way plain before my face. For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord, only that makes me dwell in safety.

**Prayer**

In these moments of stillness as we gather our hearts for prayer, we confess that we don't always come with confidence to our time of prayer. Our petitions lack audacity -- and fear and doubt create holes in the fabric of our certainty and hope. Give us a glimpse of the possible as we still our minds to make room for you, O God. Grant us the courage to reach out and just brush our hands gently against your cloak. Open our hearts in this silent space ... that we might hear your voice say, "Do not fear, only believe." And when we do gain that courage, Lord, make our lives reflect what the gospel is about so that others around us might yearn for the transforming power of Jesus displayed in all we do; that we would step out of our comfort zone, firmly rooted in unshakable faith to become radical for Jesus' sake.

God, as we look at the crossroad moments in our lives, help us to make good choices and follow the paths you would have us go. Help us to make a full commitment to you and start a new journey into purposeful growth. But, we know that if we are to remain faithful we need your help and your strength. So, we ask ...Teach us to pray with faith and read your word with understanding. Teach us to worship with passion and gather together with love. Teach us to give generously, serve compassionately and use our time mindfully, so that we may reflect your goodness, and that others may discover your grace through us. We lift our joys and give over our concerns to your tender care as we now pray the prayer Jesus taught us…. Our Father….Amen.

**Reflection of Poetry and Scripture**

Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it and find rest for your souls. *Jeremiah 6:16*

And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” *Isaiah 30:21*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood, And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same, And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the

first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back. I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.

*Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken*

**Time of Reflection at the Crossroads**

*Take a time to think about those crossroad places in your life, what choices and decisions do you need to make. Ask God for guidance and strength to make the correct decisions.*

**Choosing the Path**

**A Blessing for Offerings**

*We invite you to take time to give thanks for offerings made. Again, you can make your tithes and offerings to the church by sending them in the mail, you can also drop it at the church during office hours or through Pastor office mailbox slot. You can also make a donation online at* [*www.umchapelvalley.org*](http://www.umchapelvalley.org)*. There are instructions for each method*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

God of grace, it is our delight and our devotion to give these gifts to you. All we are and all we have are yours alone. Accept this joyful offering as a token of our abiding love: use it to bring peace, justice and comfort to all the world. Amen.

**Blessing**

You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11) Follow that path set before you and go in peace. Amen.

***Announcements***

We are starting in-person outdoor services every Sunday at 10:30 am starting March 28th. Everything is the same…bring your own chair to seat on, wear masks, come early to register. We will just be doing outdoor service every Sunday as we begin to work on the process to opening up further. March 28th is Palm Sunday and the following Sunday is Eater. Easter, we will have two outdoor services, one at 7:30 am and one at 10:30 am. We hope you will be able to come to enjoy worship in person. We will still be having a service on line if you are not feeling well or feel it is still best for you to stay at home. You can call the church office if you have any questions.

March 27th, we are having a work party on the outside of the church getting ready for our services. If you would like to come and help it will be starting at 8:30. Please wear masks

*Zoom Information for Sunday Morning Fellowship, Announcements and Prayers*

Below is the information for our Sunday morning zoom call at 10:00 am. You are welcome to join us.

Julie Elkins is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Chapel of the Valley Fellowship Time

Time: Mar 21, 2021 10:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/99793048966

Meeting ID: 997 9304 8966

One tap mobile

+12133388477,,99793048966# US (Los Angeles)

Dial by your location

+1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles)

Meeting ID: 997 9304 8966

*Zoom Information for Wednesday Gathering*

Below is the gathering information. Our Zoom call is on Wednesday at 7:00 pm. You are welcome to join us.

Topic: Wednesday Crossroads Challenge weekly gathering

Time: 7:00 pm

<https://zoom.us/j/94064984731>

Meeting ID: 940 6498 4731

One tap mobile

+12133388477,,94064984731# US (Los Angeles)

Dial by your location

+1 213 338 8477 US (Los Angeles)

Meeting ID: 940 6498 4731