

Précis of sermon "Taking a Chance on Love" by Rev. Hugh D Reid Kingsway Lambton United Church Toronto

July 8 2018

Reverend Reid began by asking how you restore hope when it seems to have been lost or how do you risk to love again when your heart has been broken. Scripture provides an answer within two separate stories – one intercalated within the other - in Mark 5:21-43. These passages were made more vivid in the telling by Rev. Reid's recent travels in Israel and a visit to the newly excavated village of Magdala on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. A modern worship centre called "Duc In Altum" has been built there – a name which means "put out into deep water". In the Encounter Chapel of the centre, there was a large mural depicting a throng of men's sandaled feet and one pair of sandals at the bottom of a white robe and prayer shawl. In the midst of all the feet, there is also one frail weathered hand reaching out from a frayed sleeve toward the white robe. It brings to mind the woman who had suffered from bleeding for 12 long years. Her ailment not only made her physically sick but made her religiously unclean and an outcast. She would have been shunned as though she had leprosy. Her lived experience might well have left her feeling totally rejected and drained of hope but she was willing to take a chance on hope by reaching out to touch Jesus. Despite the crush of the crowd around Jesus, He stopped and asked "who touched me?" Jesus recognize that something exceptional had happened and that someone had claimed the hope that He came to bring. And Jesus stopped to hear from this nameless, status-less woman. Jesus gave her a new status and eternal significance as a daughter of God.

This story is sandwiched between the two parts of the story of Jairus – one of the leaders of the synagogue - who came to Jesus begging that He come to his home and heal his daughter who was near death. Although Jesus says nothing, He follows Jairus through the crowd with a sense of urgency. After the telling of the story of the woman who had suffered with bleeding, we hear the Jairus' 12-year-old daughter had already died by the time Jesus arrived at her home. Dying at such a young age, she would have been deprived of a full life and the opportunity of creating life. But Jesus comes to give life and give it abundantly. Jesus tells Jairus not to fear, only believe and his daughter is healed. And that is the key message of the sermon. If you are alone, feel rejected, see life as meaningless or you have given up on love and have a broken heart, Jesus has commanded - stop fearing and start believing.

Reverend Reid closed his sermon with the story of Viola Desmond, a black schoolteacher born in 1914 who wanted to establish her own hairdressing business to cater to the unique needs of black women. There were multiple challenges to overcome as admission to beauty schools in Halifax was not possible for a black woman at that time. She overcame that hurdle by going to other cities to take courses. Eventually, she set up her own beauty salon and later established a school to train women from the Maritimes and Québec. However, it was an event in 1946 when she was denied a ticket to sit in the downstairs level of a movie theatre that led to her notoriety. When she

refused to sit in the balcony of the theatre where blacks were supposed to sit, she was forcibly ejected, arrested and actually charged for failing to pay the extra penny in theatre tax required for a downstairs seat. She spent time in jail and paid a fine of \$20. With the support of her husband, her church, Cornwallis Street Baptist Centre, and her minister, she fought the charges inspired by her faith and her desire to reach the full dignity and humanity of all of God's daughters and sons. She never won the court case but she began a movement, 10 years before Rosa Parks, to reach out for the full life God intended for all people even when the culture around her tried to oppress her. Now she will be remembered with her image on the 2018 \$10 bill. Her image can be a reminder to stop fearing and start believing that we are all sons and daughters of God and that our faith can make us whole and well.