Lots of healing in our Gospel lesson today. But what is interesting as I read it is what the healing seems to be that Jesus is pointing to.

In order to get at this, it’s helpful to look at the way these two stories are put together. Scholars call this kind of text an intercolation. And all that fancy word means is that this lesson has the structure of a sandwhich. Usually when you make a sandwich you start with two pieces of bread that are basically the same. So the bread of this text is paragraphs 1 and 3. It’s all the same story, you could leave out the story of the woman and it would be a single story on it’s own. Hopefully that makes sense here. Paragraphs 1 and 3 could stand fine without paragraph 2. That’s the two slices of bread.

But in between this story of Jairus and his daughter there is another story told, that could also stand on it’s own. This is the meat if you will of the lesson. You could just read paragraph 2 and that would work as a complete story as well. But like a good sandwich you want to combine bread and meat in a way that is a much more interesting meal. So that’s what is happening in our Gospel lesson today from a structural point of view. These two stories are meant to work together to help us understand I think a fuller sense of what we mean by the healing power of Jesus.

So I’m going to deal with each story separately at first and then put them together at the end. Sort of go through the process of creating the sandwich and we’ll see what it tastes like and what the meaning comes out to be when we put it all together.

Let’s start with the bread, the story of Jairus and the healing of his daughter. Now what is the healing power of Jesus here? Yes, it’s basically a supernatural miracle. Poof. Something that happens instantly and is extraordinary. And this of course is a common understanding of God’s healing power. The guy gets up out of wheel chair, or a blind man suddenly sees. What gives this story it’s pop are all the people who say it’s impossible. But guess what? Here comes the guy who proves them all wrong. The skeptics who don’t believe. The girl isn’t dead, she is sleeping. I’ll just wake her up. And everyone just laughs a him. What you mean? She’s dead. You’re a fool. But Jesus in this supernatural way triumphs over all the laughter, all the doubters, all the people who said it’s not possible. Do not fear, only believe. See? That simple. Get up, and she gets up. No problem, no stress, no big deal. Boom, God can do anything. It’s a story of absolute triumph and victory over and against all odds and death. Against every naysayer and doubter, Jesus wins. And the girl is completely healed, just like that, instantaneously.

Now, this is what I think we often associate with God’s healing or God’s healing power. And I would surely never say that things like this never happen. If it was your daughter surely you would long for the same healing, pray for it, and it would be right to do so. Miracle stories like this abound. But notice please how this story ends. The way stories end are very important right? Well, this has an interesting ending to say the least. Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know this, that he had raised this girl from the dead. Jesus is very clear that this miracle should remain private and unknown. Instead he tells them to give her something to eat. What? Get her something to eat? In other words, Jesus does everything possible to down play this healing that has just happened. To not make a big deal out of this. A light lunch will do. Now this is crazy. Because the minute she walks out of the room everyone is going to know what’s happened. It doesn’t make any sense from that point of view what Jesus is saying here. And so it begs the question…..why is Jesus so adamant that this story of a supernatural extraordinary miracle be kept private and unknown. Very interesting. Why would that be? Jesus very clearly wants to downplay the notion that God’s healing is primarily about a supernatural miracle. Why?

Well, I think the answer to that question is found in the meat of our sandwich this morning. Because here we have a healing story that is much more complex, and an understanding of healing that is quite different from the way we usually think about it. And right away we enter a whole different reality. A whole different world. A whole different kind of healing.

What’s different here is that this story is about a woman who had spent years longing for a healing that never came. Jairus didn’t have to wait very long for the healing he wanted. Poof. But here we are dealing with pain and a suffering that this woman has lived for many years. She has sought healing for a long time and it hasn’t come. No instant cure, only a long road of seeking one. Maybe you’ve had that experience. This is a far cry from the instant crisis, instant cure of Jairus daughter. The way in which Jesus makes it all seem so easy.

That’s not quite how it goes here. What is emphasized here is how painful it was to live like this for years. This woman had a hard life for a long time with no answers. Do not fear only believe. Hasn’t been so easy for her to pull that off. She has been considered unclean by her neighbors all this time, and so had lived this sense of shame I am sure for all these years as well. This is a deep wound that is being expressed by the story. The wound of the blood is really secondary to the wound of years of feeling like a nobody. And the physical pain to boot. And you can tell by the way she approaches Jesus that she is a wounded soul. She shies away from any attention. She doesn’t want to bother anyone. Isn’t worth it. Reluctant to ask for help. I don’t want to be noticed. I don’t want to be seen. All the symptoms of a person who has lost confidence. So she sneaks her way through the crowd and tries to touch Jesus and receive her healing without being noticed. And she does it. She touches Jesus clothes. And the text says that she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. But that’s not the real wound is it? Nope.

We soon discover that this supernature physical healing does not healthe real wound. Her body may have been healed, but her heart was still very wounded. Long after the physical wounds heal, the emotional scars can linger. And they can last a lot longer than 12 years. See, if we’re just going to think of God’s healing as literally raising a child from death, or healing a flow of blood, something extra-ordinary, some kind of supernatural flash, we may be missing the main point of what God’s healing is all about.

Because the real healing that God has for us is for those much deeper wounds, emotional wounds, heart wounds. And you know what? They don’t instantly heal. Jesus doesn’t just show up and fix this kind of wound. You can’t just snap your fingers or say a little phrase like “do not fear, only believe” and expect instant victory, if you hurting, or don’t feel worth much. If you’re struggling with stress or anxiety, or anger, if you have short fuse. I know that you can pray for God to fix it until the cows comes home and there is just no quick fix for the healing that God has in store for you. The wowy zowie is for the outside it seems. But that’s just not how it works when it comes to your heart or mind or your emotional life. Healing there is a whole different ballgame.

And that’s why in our 2nd story today when her body is healed the story is far from over isn’t it? This woman healed of her physical wounds had a long way to go still with her emotional ones. Jesus doesn’t know what happened. He’s not superman here is he? He looks around in this huge crowd for a needle in the haystack. And we’re stuck as readers in the story. And that is often what happens when it come to healing emotional wounds and scars. We often just get stuck. And you have the same issue for years and years and years. The same disease. The story stops. And Jesus just stands there, and waits. And finally the woman just can’t take it anymore. And in what I think is the heart of our “sandwich today” this woman comes before Jesus in fear and trembling and tells Jesus the whole truth. See, and I think that is the healing power of God in it’s deepest form. Truth telling. And I assume the whole truth was the whole story. The years of pain, feeling like a failure and a nobody for years. She started talking about it. Sharing her story. Sharing what happened. It’s terrifying for her. But she shares with Jesus her wounded heart. The healing she needed there, no supernatural miracle could touch.

And now Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease. And her faith in this story is not that she touched Jesus clothes, but the courage to tell the truth. She is made well, but notice that she has much healing yet to do. See, this kind of healing is not instant cure. But it’s the realization that you can heal. That those old hurts can be healed. But don’t expect God to zap them away. God’s healing is a journey. Its not as flashy as supernatural wow. But it’s the healing that comes from digging down in there and find those wounds and scars. And showing them, at least to God, and a person you can trust.. Because after all, that sharing of those wounds and scars was the healing work that Jesus did on the cross.

And so our sandwich comes together with a message about healing. Supernatural poof is surely possible with God. But the real the meat, is the healing God does by inviting us on a journey. A walk. A people who can tell their story and share their hurts and scars. And as they take that journey together, over time they begin to realize. God indeed heals. Amen.