

I have a friend who wants to be a professional musician in the worst way. He's attending music school, practicing hours a day, lives, eats, and breathes music. There's only one problem. Truth be told, he's not much of a musician. It's sad because he's already invested years of his life and much money toward a career he would love to do, but toward a career that's destined to be mediocre.

I think of him as I hear about the woman with the hemorrhage in today's Gospel. This story is one of several miracle stories that come early on in Mark. They tell us who Jesus is. When he calmed the storm in last week's Gospel, we learned he is master over the earth. When he cures the woman with the hemorrhage, we learn he is master over sickness. And when he cures the daughter of Jairus, we learn he is master over death.

The woman with the hemorrhage--(It's a shame we don't know her name)--went to Jesus as a last resort. Mark tells us she had already tried every doctor in town, every medicine on the shelf, and she had spent her savings on getting well, but she only got worse. All she wanted was to get better. She spent her life trying to be cured from what no one could cure.

That's why she reminds me of my friend, the would-be musician. Some people spend all their energy on one project, even if it's unreasonable to hope for success. Like the woman, they try certain methods, even if they know they will fail.

What finally works for her is what works for Jairus: faith. She believes Jesus can save her. When she finally lets go of her other methods, and turns to Jesus alone, she finds not only health, but salvation as well.

My sisters and brothers, sometimes we may find ourselves pursuing a goal we cannot achieve, but we've invested so much in it it's hard to let it go. It may be the goal of health, it may be education, a job, a relationship, youth, or popularity. Some goals we want so much we grab them too tight, and they ooze away from our grasp. It's then when we stand empty-handed that we can turn to Jesus alone to save us.

There's a story about an old man who lived on the isle of Crete. He loved Crete and he swore he would never leave it. As he lay dying, he reached to the ground and dug out a fistful of dirt, so that even after death he would still have his Crete. He approached the gates of paradise, but Peter said to him, "You are welcome here if you leave everything behind." He said, "I could never leave my Crete." "Then wait out here." The old man watched many others, more sinful than he, enter the gates of heaven. He finally realized that paradise must be more than the dirt in his hand. He stood before Peter, loosed the dirt, and then entered the gates of paradise. And there he found Crete.