

“When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.” In a small town on the edge of the lake, two wildly distinct lives intersect. Drenched in desperation, a middle-aged man of means drops to the ground begging the Physician for help. Though his position of authority has afforded he and his family a comfortable living, it has been of absolutely no use in changing the dire condition of his beloved daughter. Having probably exhausted all other routes, this frantic father throws caution out the window and earnestly pleads for relief from an unconventional Healer that just came from across the border.

While on their way to his house, a single woman with no shelter or financial resources impulsively rushes through a throng of people. Ravaged by a relentlessly painful disease for so long and having been poked and prodded by a number of doctors without any cure in sight, this outsider desperately seeks relief. “This is my last chance,” she says to herself. “I can either break social etiquette and risk getting into trouble, or face a slow and excruciating death.” After being called out, the woman falls to her knees and the whole story tumbles from her trembling lips. Though they come from different worlds, both the man and the woman in today’s gospel are urgently hunting for healing, for drastic change of their circumstances. Sharing only brokenness in common, Jesus disregards public protocols and unconditionally reaches out to each, moving them both into the restorative refuge of God’s kingdom. Let freedom ring.

“When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.” Drenched in desperation, a single mother risks it all for the sake of her beloved child. As told by Professor Carvalhaes, “One day a group of drunken gang members went to Maria’s house while her daughter Gloria was at school and they raped her. It took a few days until María was able to get out of bed. Gloria was 6 years old and had to cook and clean and take care of her mother, not

knowing why [she] was prostrate and barely speaking.” Knowing that they would come back and that that atrocious act would be common from now on, she contacted a smuggler and made a deal with him to get her to the U.S. Selling what little possessions she had and giving her meager house to the smuggler, “she had to take the train of death that crosses from Central America to the borders between Mexico and the U.S. They were to swim to the other side but neither of them knew how...[They eventually made it]...together but as soon as they [did], officers separated them and placed them in different cars. At that time, María screamed with her entire lungs begging ‘Bring back my daughter! My baby! My baby! Don’t worry, I will come for you, my love! Don’t worry! Say your prayers every time you are afraid and sing our song!’ All [she] could hear from her [daughter] was “Mother! Mommy! Please give me my mommy!” Shivering, they were taken to [separate] private jails and left there for a long time.” Nancy, a lawyer who did pro-bono work, visited Maria. After 12 months, Nancy finally found her daughter in a children’s facility in Mexico. When she went to see Gloria, the young child was skinny, barely spoke and was very sick. Nancy introduced herself and said that she knew where her mother was. Jumping out of bed, the little girl asked where, to which Nancy explained she was quite far away, but that they would soon be reunited. Tightly embracing one another, tears freely flowed and Gloria once again found her appetite. Having the foresight to take a picture, Nancy journeyed back across to the prison where María was and reassured her that her daughter was OK. As the professor describes, “the bleeding of her heart finally stopped. They hugged and Maria cried for almost an hour in Nancy’s chest.”

Thousands of miles north on the outskirts of a small town on the edge of a lake, a veteran and his wife sit in limbo. Afflicted by diabetes and side effects from renal cancer, and having seen his fair share of different medical practitioners over a number of years, he seeks relief. For a

period of time now, they have migrated together through the wilderness of the organ transplant system, hoping for a new lease on life. Having recently made it all the way through the lengthy process to the borders of the ruling committee, he was declined entrance. And so they wait once again for the results of further blood tests to see if his diabetes has morphed into type one, which would make him eligible for both a pancreas and kidney transplant. Folded into a compassionate community of family and friends, they earnestly beseech the itinerant Healer.

Though they come from different worlds, both Maria and Tom, and their families, are searching for healing, for transformation of their current circumstances. Sharing the common ground of brokenness, Jesus, whose power, love and mercy knows no bounds, reaches out to each, moving them both into the restorative refuge of God's kingdom. Let freedom ring.

As we come to the table and fall on our knees, we seek refuge. As we come to the table and lift our faces to the risen Son, we ache for wholeness. As we come to the table and lift up our hearts, we pray, "O Lord, have mercy on us." As we come to the table breaking bread and drinking wine together, the Advocate unites our diverse voices to praise God together. As we come to the table and stretch out our empty hands, the God who willingly enters our fractured lives lays healing hands upon us. As we come to the table today, Jesus declares in his broken body and blood, unreservedly given and shed, "Let freedom ring for all those for whom I died. For the insider and the outsider. For the rich and the poor. For the soldier and the pacifist. For the old and the young. For those in power and those without it. For the individual and the community. For all who share beating hearts hewn from the Creator's very own. Let freedom ring for the creation I so love." Amen.