



Embodying the Gospel of Worth

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*She spent everything
and still was called unclean.
Doctors took her money,
systems took her dignity,
and still the bleeding did not stop.
... But you—
you felt her before you saw her.
You called her “daughter”
in a world that called her burden.
So ... we pray not just for cures—
but for a gospel that interrupts
every structure
that says some bodies are worth saving
and others are not.
Can mine be worth saving?*

- By the Reverend Sam Houser (abridged from original)

I stumbled upon this sacred text last week while scrolling social media and waiting for my surgeon to make his hospital rounds. My body in the balance, after another series of emergency surgeries and unexpected hospital stays, eagerly looking forward to hearing I was able to return home. As I read the text that morning, it took immediate root in my spirit, asking aloud the very question I had been holding silently to myself:

“Can [my body] be worth saving?”

Dealing with chronic and severe illness these past fifty-four years has afforded me significant time to be in conversation with my body and listen to the stories it is trying to tell.

The story it was telling that morning was one of frustration. The emergencies and resulting physical restrictions, the severe pain, the exorbitant cost—all consequences of my pain being ignored and minimized because of the body it is being experienced in. My story—which began in a girl’s body, developed in a queer body, evolved in a body that has given birth—is shaped continually by cultural narratives about what it means to be a person with a disability, a substance use disorder, and a history of surviving sexual trauma.

As I lay there that morning, holding Sam’s words and the gospel of love and justice they point towards, I reflected on the pains of embodiment experienced by my neighbors, my transgender neighbors, my Black neighbors, my neighbors who are not documented, my neighbors who experience poverty, my neighbors who do sex work, and so many more neighbors—pains with an intensity and volume I cannot imagine.

That morning, I found healing in hearing my question asked out loud by another, in hearing the injustice named, and in being reminded of the call to embody the gospel which testifies to human dignity and worthiness—of my body, of all bodies, and especially those of our most marginalized neighbors.

May we each embody the gospel which declares all bodies are worth saving, and testify loudly to that gospel so all may be able to know it.

(Reverend Sam Houser is the author of “no longer keeping the peace,” “between the lines,” and “queering the psalms.”)

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