

"Do Not Be Afraid -- Only Believe"

Are you too proud to ask for help? Sometimes success and prestige can make us so prideful, that when we need help, we are often reluctant to ask for it. If you are use to being a leader or a person of influence, it can be hard to admit that you need help. And yet, sometimes, no matter how hard we try to act tough, no matter how strong we might try to stand in the face of adversity, sometimes the trial is too much. Sometimes we find ourselves broken and hurting, unable to do anything about it.

In our passage for today, we have a leader. This man named Jairus. He was one of the rulers of the local synagogue. This was a position of prestige. He would have had several duties in the synagogue. Rulers of the synagogue typically supervised the services and maintained the general order. If there were visitors, he might invite them to address the congregation. He would also hand the scrolls of Scripture to the person who would read them during the service.

Now there is nothing in this passage that would make us think Jairus is too proud to ask for help. But one thing is obvious - he is at that breaking point in life. Whether or not Jairus is the type of guy that would normally ask for help, or not, we're not told. But when we find Jairus in our passage in verse 22, we find him broken. This ruler of the synagogue comes to Jesus, broken. He comes to Jesus, and according to verse 22, falls to the ground before him, at his very feet. He comes begging - "Come, lay your hands on my daughter that she may be healed."

And so this morning, we'll look at this account of Jairus and the miraculous resurrection of his daughter. Next week we'll look at this same passage again, but focus on this woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years. But this week we'll focus on Jairus and his twelve year old daughter. We'll see how Jairus in this difficult trial in the life of his family, had to cast away his fears and find help and hope in Jesus. As a leader, he was not immune to the trials that go on in life, but when the trial came, he had the wisdom to get help. He came to Jesus for help. He placed his faith and trust in Jesus. And as we look at this faith of Jairus, we'll see how we too need to fix our faith on Jesus, finding hope in him, even when things seem hopeless.

And so turn with me then to this passage. Let's begin with verse 21. In verse 21, we pick up where we left off last week. Last week, we saw that Jesus had crossed over in a boat to the eastern side of Sea of Galilee. Our story ended with the Gentile people there sending him away, afraid, and wanting nothing to do with him. Yet, here in verse 21, when they return to the other side of the sea, back to Galilee, we see that they are welcomed once again by a great multitude of people. Jesus never seems to get a break, does he?

And so Jesus arrives back on the shores of Galilee, probably in the city of Capernaum, when all of a sudden, this man Jairus arrives, falls down to the feet of Jesus, and begins to beg him. He desperately begs Jesus to help his "little daughter". Notice the way Jairus refers to her - his "little daughter". Linguistically, this is something called a diminutive in the Greek, which basically means you add a letter to the word "daughter" to make it a "little" daughter. We do the same thing in English; for example "book" and "booklet". You add the three letters l-e-t to book and you have a little book. Jairus called his daughter a little daughter. But, at the end of this passage we'll see that this daughter is

actually twelve years old, which for that time and culture was not considered all that young. So for Jairus to call his daughter a little daughter was probably a term of endearment. It shows how special his daughter was to him. She was daddy's little girl. And so with her being so sick you can understand why this brought this influential leader to his knees - to a point of helplessness and desperation. Many of you are parents out there; put yourself in Jairus' shoes.

Jairus then tells Jesus that his daughter is at the point of death. The Greek actually uses the word "eschatos," which is where we get the word "eschatology;" that's a big word that means the study of the end times. So, basically, Jairus is saying that his daughter is about at her end. The end is in sight. She is in desperate need of healing, before it's too late! Her death is imminent, and so Jairus is begging Jesus to come quickly to heal his daughter!

And notice the faith of this man - verse 23. Jairus confidently declares that if Jesus but lays his hands on his daughter, then she will be healed, and will live. But of course, this is what sparks the urgency. Jesus is at the lakeshore. The daughter is sick at home. Jairus needs Jesus to get to the daughter before it's too late, so that he can lay his hands on her and be healed. Of course, you and I know that Jesus could but command and the daughter would be healed from a distance. That's what happened with the servant of the centurion in Matthew 8. The centurion told Jesus that he was not worthy to have Jesus come into his house, but just say the word and the servant would be healed - and of course Jesus did just that. But that is not where Jairus' faith was at this point. Instead, God will use this situation to show forth an even greater power - that Jesus could raise someone from the dead!

And so Jesus and Jairus head out, rushing to his home to save his daughter. And yet, it seems that so do the crowds. Verse 24 says that the great multitude who had gathered around Jesus then began to follow them. It says that they thronged around him. This alone would have probably slowed them down considerably. And it's at this point that the woman with the flow of blood comes onto the scene and plays a critical role in this story with Jairus and his daughter. She is healed. And yet, the way the story is told by Mark, it gives the impression that her healing and the interaction that followed with Jesus, served to sufficiently interrupt and delay their trip to heal the daughter. The result is that the daughter dies while Jesus is healing and ministering to this other woman. This woman, who had been effectively dead for twelve years, is healed and given new life, while this daughter, who had been alive for twelve years, now finds death.

And yet, this event, you would think, should offer hope to Jairus. Jairus was the one who said that if Jesus could just lay hands on his daughter, then she would be healed, and here this woman merely touches Jesus' garment, and she is healed. But of course, Jesus ultimately points to the faith of the woman as the means for her healing. It is to faith that Jesus will call Jairus to in a moment as well.

For while Jesus was still speaking to the woman who was healed of her chronic bleeding, news arrives from home for Jairus. Verse 35 tells us that some messengers from his house had come and interrupted Jesus. They tell Jairus, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?"

Surely Jairus' hopes must have been dashed. Could his messengers have been any more blunt? "Your daughter is dead." Those words must have been like an ice pick in his heart. His stomach probably sank instantly, a cold chill filling his insides. His beloved little daughter - gone.

Surely we can understand the messenger's perspective. Don't bother the teacher anymore. There's nothing more that can be done. She's gone. That was even King David's response when he lost his child. King David's first child that was born between him and Bathsheba became deathly sick, and God said that the child would die. And so David fasted, and wept, and waited upon the Lord all night, praying that the child would not die. But once the child died, David got up, ate, washed up, and went to the temple to worship the Lord. When his servants asked him about his behavior, about why he fasted and mourned before the child died, and not after, David replied, "Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23).

And so the messengers to Jairus understood death. It was not something that people came back from. There had never been a doctor who could bring someone back from the grave. Even King David, who recognized God's great power, and the great power of prayer, even he gave up hope for his son after he died. David was powerless to bring his son back. There were no amount of prayers or fasting or weeping that could David do, to bring him back.

Surely that must have been Jairus' initial reaction. My little daughter - gone, forever. I will go to her, but she will not return to me. But listen to verse 36: "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only believe.'" Jairus may have lost hope. The messengers clearly had. King David recognized when he had to throw in the towel. But not Jesus. Jesus' response is not what they would have expected. "Don't be afraid, only believe."

There is hope again. Hope in a new son of David, in the greater son of David. David said of his dead son, "Can I bring him back again?" Jesus says of this dead daughter, "Believe!" Believe in me. Believe in the kingdom power which I hold. Believe more than you have already. Jesus' healing hands are not limited to only healing the living; we'll see that they can also raise the dead. And of course, Jesus healing is not about his hands. It's about his power. That's why he told the women he just healed, that it was her faith that healed her, not the touch of the garment. It was faith in the one with all power and authority. The same will be the case for this daughter of Jairus. "Just believe," Jesus tells him, and you will see the power of God manifested before you.

Certainly this is what Jairus wanted to hear so badly at that moment. The messengers probably thought Jesus was crazy. Pop psychiatry would probably say that such faith was just denial, denial of the reality of the death, escaping from dealing with the truth. Surely that would have been the case if anyone else uttered these words. But this wasn't just anyone. Jesus, the man who calmed wind and sea, who had healed countless people and cast out countless demons, it is Jesus who offered this hope when everything seemed hopeless.

And so Jairus takes this hope and continues with Jesus to his home to see his dead daughter. In verse 37, Jesus leaves behind the crowd, and even his disciples, except for Peter, James, and John, and they continue on to Jairus' house. And yet, though Jesus leaves one crowd, he quickly finds himself before another. In verse 38, they arrive at Jairus' home, only to find a large tumult of people weeping and wailing aloud. Amidst this crowd of mourning people, Jesus again offers a glimmer of hope to the hopeless. Jesus tells the mourners, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

But look at the response by these mourners. They are certain of the death of this child. There is no doubt in their mind. And so they ridicule Jesus. What's probably the most shocking is that these mourners laugh at Jesus. How quickly

their mourning turned to laughing. It was common practice to hire people to mourn for you the loss of a loved one. Probably most of these people were such professional mourners. They did not genuinely care about this young girl.

And so Jesus gives them only a veiled hope. It's almost as if Jesus is speaking to these mourners in a parable. Surely the daughter is dead. Jesus is not saying that she was just in some state of a coma. The account in Luke especially leaves no room to think that. Clearly this daughter is dead. But Jesus refers to her as only sleeping because he plans to raise her. When she is raised, it will as be as if she was only sleeping. From that perspective, she is only sleeping, in that her resurrection is imminent. And so to these mourners who obviously did not care about this girl, so much so that their mourning could be turned into instant laughter - to them Jesus gives only a veiled hope. To these who were hard hearted and unbelieving, Jesus gives them only a hint at what he will do. But to the believing parents, and his three inner disciples, he then takes them inside to the daughter, so that they can witness what he will do.

And from there Jesus proceeds to do something amazing. He proceeds to raise the child. Verse 41 records that Jesus took her by the hand and said, "Talitha cumi," "Little girl, Arise." Mark actually records, and then translates, the Aramaic words that Jesus used. Jesus, being a Jew, would have probably spoke most of the time in Aramaic. And yet, of course, the New Testament is written in Greek, and so most of the words of Jesus in the New Testament would have been inspired translations and summaries of Jesus' words in Greek. And yet here, Mark records for us the actual Aramaic that Jesus uses. Why? Well, this is not some sort of magic spell, that Jesus is using, as some would suggest. Instead, I think Mark is showing us how vivid and amazing this event was. History records that Mark relied primarily on Peter's eye witness account in writing this Gospel. And so, Peter must have remembered exactly the words that Jesus used here. Think about that - when some event in your life is extremely profound, you might remember exactly what someone said at that moment. Maybe it was your wedding proposal: you remember exactly how your wife said "yes". Or maybe it was a scary moment, maybe you remember exactly how a thief asked for your money. When an event is profound, you might remember the exact words.

I think that is what is going on here. This is a profound event in Jesus' ministry. This is not just some routine healing, a flow of blood, or a case of leprosy. He has just raised someone from the dead. This is the first account of a resurrection in Mark. Here Peter, James, and John, and the two parents, are looking at this dead girl, and Jesus utters these two Aramaic words, and she comes back to life. Verse 42 says that they were all "overcome with great amazement!" How could you not be? Word's can't do justice to what they were feeling. Surely it would be one of those unforgettable moments in your life. Peter probably played that event back in his mind over and over again before he told it to Mark and it was recorded here.

And in the midst of all this amazement, Jesus again shows his compassion. While they are all dumbfounded, Jesus interrupts them and tells them to give the girl something to eat. What a loving savior.

And as clearly profound of a miracle that this is, I'd like to point you to another amazing aspect of it as well. In the Old Testament, if you touched a dead body, you became ceremonially unclean. Numbers chapter 19 describes some of the provisions in the law concerning this. If you touch a dead person, you will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, and will have to go through a ritual purification on the third and seven days. But what does Jesus do here when he comes to this dead girl. The first thing he does: he touches her, taking her by

the hand. He certainly didn't need to do that. He could have just commanded and she would be raised. But Jesus is teaching us something here. He is teaching us that he has power even over death. He has power over the wind and waves. He has power over demons. And he even has power over death. This power is so great, that it is not Jesus who becomes unclean when he touches this unclean, dead, girl, but it is the dead girl who becomes clean, who becomes alive again! Jesus turns the unclean into the clean, the dead into the living.

Do you see it? All that has happened in this event has been according to God's providence, to show forth Jesus' mighty power, to give hope to the hopeless, and to proclaim the coming of the Lord's favor. This interruption with the woman with the flow of blood, this interruption that proved fatal for Jairus' daughter - this was part of God's providence to show forth this great power here - not just a miracle of healing, but a miracle of resurrection. Even Jesus' touch of this woman, shows what has been demonstrated here: Jesus has come to proclaim power over death. What King David could not do, Jesus does. What no man could do, the God-Man, Jesus Christ does. He has raised someone from the dead!

And of course, Jesus would ultimately solve the problem of death on the cross. On the cross, Jesus would conquer death. He would remove the sting of death for those who trust in him. On the cross, he paid the penalty for our sins, so that we can come to him and be forgiven.

And so though we will all taste of physical death, if we are Christ's, that death will have no sting. That death is actually the beginning of our resurrection. When we die, our bodies rest in the grave, but our spirits go to be with the Lord. And our bodies wait until the Lord's return, until the end of this age. At that time, the Lord will raise our bodies; he will transform them and glorify them, and we will live forever with Jesus in our resurrected bodies. Death, for the Christian, has lost its sting because of the work of Christ on the cross.

And that is what this resurrection of Jairus' daughter represented. You see, his daughter's resurrection was not the final, ultimate, resurrection that we look forward to. It was a temporary picture of the end. You see this little girl, no doubt, went on to live a good, full, life... and then she died. Lord willing, she died as a believer in Christ, and we can look forward to meeting her when we go to heaven.

But my point is that even though she had a resurrection here, it was only a temporary picture of the true resurrection that we all look forward to. She eventually died again. And if the Lord tarries in coming back, we all will eventually die ourselves. But our hope is beyond the grave. That's what this little girl's resurrection tells us. It tells us that Jesus had power over the grave. It's a visible sign that tells us that we can trust him. We can "believe". We have no reason to fear. We must only believe! Jesus has shown here his power over death. He showed that especially on the cross and in his resurrection. And he declares to us now, that if we come to him in faith and repentance, that he will raise us up on the last day! Jesus is our hope. He is hope for the hopeless.

Saints of God, we are all hopeless without Christ. Any hope that we think we have, apart from Christ, is ultimately a false hope from an eternal perspective. We need the hope that is hope for beyond the grave. It doesn't matter who you are - the leader in our passage like Jairus, or the hiding woman with the flow of blood. Don't let pride get in your way thinking that you do not need help or hope. We all need it.

You see we all find trials in our lives that can bring us to our knees. Times that are so overwhelming. Times that seem without hope. Times where we should flee to Jesus. It's at those times when Jesus tells us, "Do not be afraid, only believe."

Certainly, from an eternal perspective, we can see how coming to Jesus gives us no reason to fear but instead gives us assurance. For if we come to Jesus, we know that, from an eternal perspective, our lives are safe with him. If we belong to Christ through faith, nothing, including death, can separate us from his love. Even if we die, we know that we go to be with him. That's why fear and faith are connected. In 1 John 4:18, we're told not to fear, because fear has to do with judgment, but perfect love casts out fear, it says. In other words, if we have been forgiven by Jesus, we are no longer under judgment or condemnation. We have no reason to fear from an eternal perspective. Death has been conquered in Christ. That is our greatest hope.

But I would call you to have that same faith, not only from an eternal perspective, but even in your everyday living. If our eternal lives are secure in Christ, then certainly every aspect about our lives here and now are part of his plan as well. If the Lord will not leave us or forsake us at the end, at our deaths, but instead will raise us to life, how much more will he be with us throughout our lives?

You see, I think we want to believe that the Lord is guiding us through every aspect of our lives, but the difficulty comes when we face these huge trials in our life. When we face these "drop to your knees" sort of times, where things just seem to be crashing down before us, at those times, we can get impatient with the Lord. We can get frustrated. We pray and pray, begging Jesus to help us, and nothing seems to happen. The help seems delayed. The answer seems not to come according to our timeline or according to our expectations. And when things seem like they can't get any worse - they do.

Surely Jairus' can relate. His daughter was dying. It was urgent that Jesus get to him. But here comes this woman. Surely her healing could have waited, he might have thought. The interruption to Jesus was just long enough that his daughter dies in the mean time. But was Jesus not in control? Was not this trial all a part of God's bigger plan. Didn't God use this to do something even greater in Jairus' life, and in this life of this young girl?

We're not told what went on in Jairus' mind when this interruption happened. Maybe he didn't get frustrated at Jesus for stopping to help this woman. But we know how we might react. We know how we do react when our prayers are not answered the way we want or in the timeframe we want. But when that happens, I urge us all to stop doubting. Stop being afraid. Stop being angry at God. Instead, believe. Trust. Have faith, that God knows what he is doing, and that if things aren't happening according to your wisdom, that God knows better. He has a better plan for you. Our father knows best. Let us repent of our doubts and fears, and again today renew our faith and trust in him.

And may all our living in this life, look forward to the next. May the resurrection of this beloved "little daughter," remind us how much our heavenly father loves us, his adopted little sons and little daughters, and will certainly raise us up on the last day. Amen.

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