

### **Mark 5:21-43**

Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.\*

## **Rejection and Acceptance** - June 27, 2021

*Mark 5:21-43*

One of remarkable things about scripture is that we forget sometimes that the authors very carefully and deliberately constructed the stories. In other words, the various incidents in Jesus life are laid out in a very deliberate, organized way. When the author of the Gospel of Mark sat down to tell the story of Jesus, he had all kinds of material in front of him. His task was to organize the material in such a way that it would tell a coherent story about Jesus but organize it so that each part of the story reinforced what went before and would foreshadow that which would come after. If you remember back to your high school or college English classes, the techniques we learned then to help us understand a writers work apply to the gospels as well.

I'm pointing this out because today's gospel lesson is two stories rolled into one. However the stories reinforce each other and understanding how Mark wrote these two lessons together gives us greater insight of Jesus purpose and mission.

Here's the scene: Jesus is making his way through town. By this time in his ministry he is very popular and everyone wants to see him. The story reports that the crowds were pressing in on him. Everyone wanted to touch him, hear him, see him. Along comes a man named Jarius who was an official in the temple and well respected and loved by the people. Poor Jarius was suffering terribly because his daughter was sick. In fact, she was at the point of dying and he desperately needed help. So Jarius did what any desperate father would do, he sought out the only possible source for help. He dared to hope beyond hope that Jesus could do something to save his dying daughter.

At the same time there was a woman who had what the gospel refers to as "bleeding disorder." For 12 years she had bled uncontrollably and no one could help her. She had spent all her money trying to find a cure. We certainly know people like that, don't we? We know people who have suffered from all kinds of diseases and tried everything they could to find a cure. Yet, nothing happens. They only get worse. We wish we could do something for them. But we can't.

So here we have the contrast of the popular beloved official and this poor desperate woman. They had one thing in common. They needed help and Jesus was the only one whom they felt could help them.

But look at what happens. Look at the way Mark structures the story. First Jarius meets Jesus and begs him to help his dying daughter. Immediately Jesus sets off for the house of Jarius. But suddenly, Jesus journey is interrupted. This woman pops up out of nowhere and doesn't even say a word to Jesus but furtively touches him. She touches him in the belief that by simply holding on to him for a moment, even for a second, she would be cured. She thought that because she was so poor and destitute she couldn't possibly talk to Jesus herself. So she did what she thought was best and touched him.

The woman thought that by touching Jesus she would be cured and then she could sneak away into the crowd. But remarkable thing happened. She was cured! But she could not sneak away into the crowd. Instead, Jesus said, "I felt healing power come out of me." "Who touched me," he asked, "who

touched me?" Of course the disciples, upon hearing Jesus' question, had no idea what to say. Everyone was touching Jesus. Everyone wanted a part of him. How could they possibly identify one individual out of the many who were pressing up against Jesus? Nonetheless, Jesus insisted somebody touched him and he wanted to know who it was.

The poor woman was terrified. She knew that she had touched Jesus and she knew that simply by touching his garment she was cured. Happy yet terrified at the same time. Perhaps she was thinking that Jesus would be angry, that she had stolen something from him. Would he take back her cure? The last thing she wanted was to meet Jesus face-to-face, yet here she was in the presence of Jesus who was demanding to know who had touched him.

What else could she do? She confessed. "Yes, I am the one who touched you." I guess at that point she seemed resigned to her fate. Maybe she felt this one moment of her life that she had actually experienced a cure was worth everything she had went through. Nonetheless, she was prepared to accept whatever ever Jesus said to her, even if it meant that he would take back her cure.

And what did Jesus say? "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." Remarkable words. Jesus called her daughter! Incredible. Jesus called this poor desperate destitute woman daughter. That meant Jesus put himself into a personal relationship with her. Suddenly her condition, her illness, everything else about her was irrelevant. Jesus called her daughter. Moreover, far from taking back the cure, Jesus declared that her faith had made her well. We need to remember that in Scripture there is a profound distinction between healing and wellness. Jesus healed many people. In other words, he made their diseases go away. However despite their healing, many of them, in fact, most of them were not well. Jesus defines wellness as being in a fully accepting relationship with God. In other words, we are well when we fully trust in God for whatever happens in our life. The good and the bad. Wellness means we know we are fully blessed because God is in charge.

Only one task remained for this woman. The task that I hope she was able to do because so many who are touched by Jesus Christ don't do it. I hope that after all of she experienced that she truly believed that she was worthy to only be made well but to accept and embrace the title of daughter. I fear, my friends, that so many of us in our heart of hearts feel unworthy. I fear that so many of us do not think that we are lovable or capable of being loved. So many of us think like this woman did who could not even bear to ask Jesus in person for what she needed. She felt the only way that she could receive healing was to touch Jesus' garment without his even knowing about it. That's how poorly she thought of herself.

But hear the good news, friends. Hear the good news and be at peace with yourself. This story proves once again that Jesus loves everyone equally. He does not look at our past. He does not look at our current condition. He does not look at what we have done with the mistakes we have made. Rather Jesus just loves and accepts us right now for who we are and what we are. That poor woman was so afraid to ask Jesus for help she could not even bring herself to do it with her words. Yet, Jesus helped

her anyway. When will we stop feeling like she did? When will we feel that we are worthy of Jesus Christ? When will we forget about the past, and embrace the loving future that Jesus offers every one of us regardless of what has happened before? That is true wellness and that is what that woman received. I hope she felt she was truly made well.

But, as they say, back to our story. Jesus was interrupted. His journey to help the daughter of Jarius was interrupted by this poor woman. Now imagine Jarius. Here he has managed to get Jesus to come and heal his daughter when all the sudden Jesus stopped coming to heal his daughter. If you were Jarius, how would you feel about the situation? I imagine you'll be really angry. Here you have managed to get Jesus, the last best hope you had to help your dying daughter, and there he is ,distracted. Distracted by a poor destitute woman. I imagine you would feel that your daughter's life was slipping away because Jesus was interrupted by this person.

And indeed, it was. Because while Jesus resumed his journey to Jarius' house to help his daughter, they were all informed that Jarius' daughter had died. If only! If only this woman has not interfered! Maybe my daughter could've been spared! I'm sure Jarius was angry beyond words. All hope was gone. This awful woman prevented his daughter from being healed.

Haven't we all been in similar situations? Haven't we felt times that we had everything going our way only to have it canceled. The sudden and unexpected loss of a job, a relationship, a change in our fortunes. Suddenly, unexpected things happen that take away our certainty. Yes, Jarius must have been totally despondent and angry and without help.

But friends, God does not work that way. God does not work according to human expectations. You see, hope, real hope, faith based hope, does not work according to human logic. God has a logic that belongs only to God. God has a purpose that belongs only to God. God's ways are not our ways and God works in ways that we cannot ever hope to understand. Jarius thought that his daughter was dead and that there was nothing more to be done. In fact everyone said don't bother Jesus anymore because the girl was dead.

Indeed, when Jesus arrived at Jarius' house because he insisted on going in. Everyone laughed at him because he said the girl was not dead. Yeah Jesus went on anyway. He took his closest disciples, went inside the house, and raised the daughter of Jarius from the dead. Once again, Jesus did the impossible. Jesus defied human logic. Jesus crashed into the lives of these desperate people and transformed them forever.

So what does that mean for us? Does that mean every time we reach a point of no hope that God will come and save the day? The answer, is yes, Jesus will come and do something that defies our expectations. Remember, both of the woman with the bleeding and Jarius had given up. They felt that nothing further could be done for them. The woman, now cured, felt certain that Jesus would be angry and take his cure back. She had given up hope. Jarius, upon learning that his daughter was dead, had given up hope. Nothing further was possible. There was no future.

Yet, friends, with Jesus Christ, the impossible becomes possible for those who have faith. What do I mean?

Look, as a pastor, I work and pray with people who are in all kinds of difficulty. You hear our prayer list every week. You know the struggles people are going through. You know we pray for people who are battling diseases, or unexpected news, or caring for children or aging parents, or facing drastic changes in their lives. We also know that many of those battling diseases will succumb to them. We know that those seeking cures will not necessarily find them. We know that those dealing with sudden reversals of fortune will not get their former lives back. So, for those people, and we know there are many of you out there, what do these stories have to tell us?

On the surface, you may look at these two stories and say, well these people got what they wanted. Yes. The poor woman was healed. Yes, Jarius' daughter was raised to life. But the real point is that Jesus did something that was completely unexpected. The woman and Jarius had not options left. When you really look at it, they weren't acting out of faith as much as they were acting out of sheer panic and desperation. They had no idea what would happen. All they knew is that they had to try every option.

I expect friends, I expect more than a few of us have been at such a desperate low point in our lives. We have reached rock bottom and felt we had very few alternatives.

But that is precisely when God will intervene. Jesus comes to us when we least expect it.

Faith, real faith, is not a quantity that can be measured. When Jesus speaks of people having faith or lacking faith, he is not referring to some sort of faith bank in which we can compare and contrast each other's faith and thus demonstrate the worthiness of some versus the unworthiness of others. Faith is not a matter of saying "I believe, I believe, I believe" in order to build credits in you faith bank.

No, what the poor woman and Jarius had in common is that they were willing to let Jesus be Jesus. Honestly, when each of them approached Jesus, Jarius very publicly, and the woman in secret, they had no idea what to expect. They just knew they had to do something. More importantly, because they did not know what do expect, they were willing to accept whatever Jesus did for them.

That friends, that is real faith. Too often we believe in God only when our prayers and desires are answered on our terms. Yes, the woman was made well. Yes Jarius' daughter was saved. But both of them approached Jesus only asking for something, anything, to happen.

And that is what real acceptance and rejection is about. In our relationship with God, we need to reject our plans and desires, whatever they may be, and instead accept Jesus' plan even when we can't quite understand it. Life, friends, life is never easy. It is never clear. But accepting Jesus' way of things will lead to a life that we cannot imagine now, but will be better and different from anything else. We can think of. I say these words in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.