

Two Examples of New Life

Mark 5 v 21-43 - Littlebourne - 27th May 2021

Parallel Passages: Matthew 9:18-26, Luke 8:41-56

Two weeks ago we saw Jesus' power at work in the calming of the storm - what the disciples saw as an impossible situation was turned around by Jesus. The disciples thought they were about to die, but Jesus commands the storm to cease. Then we saw the demon possessed man, who all thought was a hopeless case, but Jesus healed. Nobody could tame the demoniac, but Jesus set him free with just his word. These hopeless cases, Jesus steps in.

v21-24a

21 And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. 22 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet 23 and implored him earnestly, saying, "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." 24 And he went with him.

So Jesus is back in Jewish territory again - back in Galilee. As is usual now, there's a big crowd of people, wanting to see and hear Jesus.

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue comes up to Jesus. The ruler of the synagogue would be responsible for maintaining the synagogue building and organising the schedule of services and other activities. Though not a priest or Levite, he was pretty important to the religious life of the area.

This is a man with power, probably pretty well off, certainly religious. But he is struck with sorrow just like anyone else could be. Sickness and death cared nothing about this man's status.

Luke's account of this tells us that it is Jairus' *only* daughter who is sick. He must be distraught. But he's obviously heard something about Jesus, or seen Jesus at work before, so he comes before Jesus and falls at his feet.

Jairus' attitude is good - he humbles himself before Jesus, acknowledges that he is at Jesus' mercy in this situation. He's realised he can't do anything - he needs the supernatural help of Jesus.

And Jesus immediately sets off with Jairus towards his house and his dying daughter. Even though a large and surely noisy crowd surrounded Him, Jesus takes the time to address the needs of one man. We can be confident that He hears our individual needs even though millions cry out to Him.

v24b-29

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. 25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28 For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." 29 And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

So the crowd is following Jesus as he travels to Jairus' house, and surrounding him. Amongst that crowd is one who was suffering also.

It's hard to understate the impact of her ailment. She suffered physically, from the condition, but also likely suffered at the hands of the physicians that failed to cure her. She would have suffered socially - her condition would make her ceremonially unclean (as outlined in Leviticus 15), so she would defile others she came into contact with. She suffered religiously - being unclean she would not have been able to participate in any religious activities. She suffered financially - all she had she spent on useless remedies. She suffered emotionally - all the above combined would make for a miserable existence.

Similar to the Leper we saw healed back in chapter 1, an issue like this was a life shattering event. And similar to the Leper, probably none of us have experienced the kind of suffering that this woman faced. We might not be able to identify with this woman's suffering directly, we don't likely have anything like her illness, but maybe we face suffering and sorrow.

She too must have heard about Jesus, as Jairus and the crowd had, and this led her to seek out Jesus. She took a big risk - anyone she would have pushed past in the crowd to get to Jesus would have been made ceremonially unclean and really resented her. The moment she was recognised, she would have risked more than embarrassment.

Many followed Jesus with curiosity, but in this instance, only one went and touched him with faith to be healed. How many of us are like that - near Christ, following at a distance maybe, but not really going right up to him and touching him? How many come to church but don't come to Jesus?

Mark explains that this woman's goal was to touch Jesus' clothes - there was a sort of superstition that touching the clothing of someone powerful would bring a benefit. Her pursuit of Jesus wasn't perfect - it was possibly more superstition than real faith - but Jesus used it anyway.

The effects were immediate. One touch of real faith can do more for the soul than a hundred self-imposed austerities. God can do things that no man can do, can cure diseases that no man can cure.

v30-34

30 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 And he looked around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

You can imagine that Jairus isn't too pleased at this turn of events. Someone healed, great. But the delay probably didn't thrill him. The woman is healed, why this conversation as well? Why does Jesus stop and ask who touched him?

We've seen throughout Mark that Jesus has two natures - he is truly God and truly man, both human and divine. His divinity is what healed the woman, his humanity is what prompts the question "who touched me".

There's something different about the touch of this woman than the pressing of the crowds, so Jesus stops and seeks to talk to her.

She had approached in such a way as she did so as to avoid confrontation, to avoid being pointed out. Her touch should have made him unclean until sundown. She feared rejection, humiliation.

But Jesus challenges her assumptions and treats her with kindness. She falls at his feet, but he doesn't take advantage. She confesses to touching him, publicly, but he doesn't embarrass her.

Was it that Jesus wanted to make clear to her that it wasn't just touching his clothing that solved her problem? He told her that her faith had made her well. But that does not mean the faith in itself had power—after all, it was possibly mixed with false beliefs; rather, her faith could heal her because of the object in whom it rested, Jesus Himself.

It wasn't how long she touched or how strong her grip was, rather who she touched. Indeed the physical touch itself was not the main thing, rather the faith that she had. Christ's garments had no power, but He did, and the woman was healed because of her faith in the all-powerful Savior. In other words, Jesus wanted to make sure she understood that it was He who had healed her.

Many in that crowd touched Jesus, but she touched Jesus with faith.

v35-37

35 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

Whilst Jesus is still delayed, the news arrives that Jairus' daughter is dead. Tragedy is turned to impossibility - what was a long shot is now unthinkable.

The people who inform Jairus of his daughter's death are a bit inconsiderate, aren't they. "Jesus can't help with this" they say. They imply that all hope is lost.

Was Jairus impatient with Jesus? Was he distraught that the distraction of the woman caused delay that possibly led to his daughter's death? When he hears that his daughter is dead, does he give up hope? Does he blame the crowd and the woman for holding up Jesus?

Jesus tells him "Do not fear, only believe". Under normal circumstances, giving up hope at this point would be understandable. "Keep on believing", says Jesus. What brought Jairus to Jesus in the first place was the belief that he could help, now he needs that belief in the face of the seemingly impossible.

It doesn't really take that much to believe in God in the sense of believing he exists. Many people do that. But to believe he cares about you or that he can help your situation is another level of belief and that's what Jesus is calling Jairus to do here. True faith is required to stake our lives on God's promises.

v38-40

38 They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. But 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.

As was custom, a band of mourners were present very quickly after the death, so that public mourning would be done before the dead were buried, typically before sundown.

To them, Jesus was being ridiculous - they didn't believe at all that Jesus could raise the dead. Trust in God makes no sense to the unbeliever.

Then Jesus takes only select people to see the daughter. Only Peter, John, James and the parents were allowed to see the daughter raised to life - they were the ones that trusted that it was possible.

v41-43

41 Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. 43 And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

When there appeared to be no hope, Jesus did the miraculous. He raises to life this girl and they are all overcome with amazement.

How almighty is the power of Christ - over death itself. Christ turns mourning to celebration, death to life, with the mere power of his word.

At the end, Jesus again charges people to keep quiet about what they had seen. Jesus wasn't ready to reveal things in their fullness quite yet - Jesus does things at the right time. This occasion, we would not have seen a miracle like this were it not for Jesus' delay in reaching this girl.

The Lord's delay is often part of the plan - would we have seen God's power at work in Lazarus being raised from the dead if Jesus had not delayed in coming to them (John 11)? Chapter 6 shows us Jesus letting the disciples go on ahead into another storm. Had he not let them struggle with the storm, his power would not be displayed. Same in the end of Chapter 4 when Jesus calmed the storm - had he not slept through it and let it occur the

disciples would not have seen his power at work. God is not early, nor late - he is right on time.

God doesn't do miracles all the time - if someone physically dies, raising them from the dead is not an ordinary occurrence, it's miraculous because it's unusual. However much more common is his raising the spiritually dead to new life in Him.

Colossians 2:13 says:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses

Romans 6:4 :

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

We all naturally are spiritually dead - without Jesus' death and resurrection, without the indwelling of the spirit to give us faith, we dead. But with Jesus, we are made alive, able to live in relationship with Him as God intended.

Of course, in the long run we can look forward to new physical bodies too, in a world with no sickness or death - but much more important that we are made spiritually alive.

Conclusion

We've seen that for both rich and poor alike, high status and outcast alike, Jesus has compassion.

We've seen both Jairus and the afflicted woman humble themselves before Jesus - they both fell at his feet and place their trust in him.

1 Peter 5:6-7 :

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

We've seen that we should believe in God's promises, even when it seems to us to be impossible. Let us examine ourselves for genuine God-given faith with which to go to Jesus. Of course, it is when faith is tested that it is strengthened.

We've seen that God works at the right time and that sometimes this involves a delay that we might not see the value of. But God is glorified in his perfect timing.

God is able to raise us to new life - we who were born into this world spiritually dead are able to be raised to life in Jesus Christ. Indeed, his coming to earth, his taking on flesh was all that we might be able to approach him.