

A Girl's Resurrection -- Mark 5:21-24; 35-43

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Please bow your heads with me for prayer: "Lord, we are about to take a trip back in time. We are about to consider a story that took place 1000's of years ago. Yet in this story You have a message for us today. By the power of the Holy Spirit may this story come to life. May it seem as if we were there as the story unfolds. May what we see and experience change us. May we leave never to be the same. In Jesus' name, Amen."

The story is told of a servant and a rich merchant in Baghdad. The servant goes to the market and encounters Death, who gives him a certain gesture. The servant interprets this gesture as a very bad omen. So, the servant rushes back to his master in a great panic and begs him for a horse, so that he can ride to Samarra and escape whatever calamity will befall him should he stay in Baghdad. The kind master gives the servant a horse, and goes to the market to investigate for himself. When the merchant finds Death and asks him why he frightened the servant so, Death replies: "I wasn't trying to scare him. It is just that I was so very surprised to meet him here, because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra!"

Death is an enemy. And it seems that no one can escape it when their time comes. In our story today we will witness death stealing a daughter from her father. But we will also discover One who has authority, even over death.

Let's consider now a summary of our story:

A father came to Jesus begging Him to come to his house and heal his daughter. On the way the father was told that his daughter had died. Jesus encouraged him to just believe. When Jesus arrived at the house, He forced all the hired mourners to leave. Then He went into the room where the girl was lying. He took her hand and told her to get up. When she did, everyone was amazed.

What did Jesus experience in this story? First of all, He experienced drawing attention. In Mark 5:21 it says "a great multitude gathered to Him". As Jesus and His disciples came across the Sea of Galilee towards the region of Galilee, the people saw Him coming. And in masses they crowded the shore. Jesus' arrival drew attention. He has only been gone a short time. The last time He was in Galilee was probably close to 24 hours before. He had preached a memorable sermon, known as the Sermon by the Sea. And so when He comes back to the western shores of the Sea of Galilee He draws attention. There is someone else is drawn to Jesus at this time. In Mark 5:22 it mentions "one of the rulers of the synagogue came". This man heard that Jesus was back in town and searched Him out. Many people believe that by this time Jesus was in Levi's house (a previous scene already pictured in Mark 2:15-17).

Second, Jesus experienced an urgent request. This request is made by one of the "rulers of the synagogue". The rulers of the synagogues were in charge of the synagogue services. They assigned people to read a certain Scripture, asked someone to lead out in a prayer, and requested a time of exhortation from the Scripture. They were respected in that society. Many of them were learned rabbis and looked down on Jesus as being unlearned. In Mark 5:22 this ruler of the synagogue is identified by name as Jairus. He comes to Jesus with an earnest request. His daughter is sick. He begs Jesus in Mark 5:23 to "come and lay [His] hands on her". The reason he is so urgent is because she is "at the point of death".

Third, Jesus experienced a series of obstacles. In Mark 5:24 it says "a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him". This word translated, "thronged" means to "compress on all sides". They were making it hard for Jesus to move. Because of this crowd Jesus' progress was slow. In Mark 5:35 another obstacle is mentioned. "Some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house". They declared that the girl was already dead and so there was no need for Jesus to come. Their unbelief and even death itself confront Jesus. They are obstacles in Jesus' way to the girl. In Mark 5:36 Jesus speaks to Jairus. He says, "Do not be afraid." Fear. It arises in Jairus' heart. And it threatens to be yet another obstacle for Jesus. So, Jesus tells Jairus to say no to fear and simply believe. Jesus is confronted with another obstacle in Mark 5:38-40. When He arrived at Jairus' house, He "saw a tumult". The house was filled with and possibly surrounded by hired flutists and mourners. Mournful music filled the air. Loud crying and wailing jarred in Jesus' ears. All this hoopla disturbed Jesus. And when He asked them why they were making all this commotion over someone who was only sleeping, these people "laughed Him to scorn" (verse 40). This final obstacle upset Jesus more than the others, and Mark says He "put them all out". A more literal translation would be He "threw them out".

Fourth, Jesus experienced selecting an inner circle. In Mark 5:37 it says, "[Jesus] permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James". As Jesus approached Jairus' house, the only people He allowed to continue on towards the house were these three disciples. The large crowd was not allowed. Nine of His own disciples were not allowed. Only Peter, James, and John. In the Greek there is a definite article before their names – "the Peter, James, and John". It insinuates that these three were a single unit. In Mark 5:40 it says Jesus also "took the father and the mother of the child". The word translated "took" means to "receive near" or "take alongside". After Jesus threw out the hired mourners, He brought the girl's parents close to Him. They and the three disciples were chosen by Jesus to surround Him as He entered the room where the girl was lying.

Last of all, Jesus experienced restoring life. In Mark 5:41 it says Jesus "took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha, cumi". These words are in Aramaic. This was the common language of the people in Palestine at this time. Mark translates these Aramaic words into the language he was writing his gospel account in – Greek (the universal language throughout the then-known world at that time). The translation is, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." In restoring life to this young girl (according to verse 42 she was 12 years old) Jesus used both touch and words. Life-giving power flowed through His body into hers. And His voice made death flee. It awakened the deep sleep of death. Mark says, "immediately the girl arose". She immediately responded to Jesus' voice. I imagine it must have been like seeing her waking up after being in a deep sleep. Her eyes opened. Her mouth closed in death moved. Color returns to her face. Her muscles become active and she sits up, looking around, probably wondering what has happened. What an incredible moment that must have been - Jesus restoring life! The story then closes in verse 43 with Jesus giving some "doctor's orders", which we will look at in a few minutes.

So, what did Jairus experience in this story? First of all, he experienced humbling himself. Mark 5:22 identifies him as a "ruler of the synagogue". As such he would have typically been too proud to come to Jesus. To come to an uneducated rabbi and ask for help would have been too condescending for him. But on this day he was desperate. Mark says he "fell at [Jesus'] feet and begged Him earnestly". He lays aside all his pride and prostrates himself before this Rabbi. His begs for the sake of his "little daughter". The term he uses to refer to his daughter portrays endearment. Hispanics use a similar word in Spanish - "bambina". In English we might say, "sweetie pie" or "sweetheart". She may have been Jairus' only daughter or she may have been his youngest one. In any case he was willing to do whatever it would take in order for her to get well again, even if it meant humbling himself before Jesus.

Second, Jairus experienced his faith being tested. In Mark 5:24 it says "a great multitude followed [Jesus] and thronged Him". This crowd of people must have been frustrating to Jairus. They obstructed the way making it hard to get to his house. This crowd made their progress quite slow. And in our next story, which is sandwiched in between this story, we will discover that they actually had to stop completely for a time. In Mark 5:37 Jairus hears some news that really tested his faith. Some people from his house somehow got through the crowd and told him that his daughter had died. I can hardly imagine the emotions that must have filled Jairus at this moment. "We're too late! If it weren't for this suffocating crowd, we could have made it!" Then fear must have set in. Death had stolen his daughter. What would he do now? She was gone! The words of those from his house regarding Jesus must have tested his faith as well. "Why trouble the Teacher any further?" they asked. The word translated "trouble" means to "harass, strip, or whip". They made it sound like Jairus' request was a real problem for Jesus. He was only a teacher. What could He possibly do now? To ask Him to come for someone who was dead would be unthinkable torture. "You can't expect Him to do anything for you now!" And so, doubt filled Jairus' heart and severely tested his faith.

Third, Jairus experienced being cared for. In Mark 5:36 Jesus speaks up before Jairus can. He must have overheard the message. And He tells Jairus, "Do not be afraid. Only believe." In the midst of fear and doubt, Jairus is given encouragement and hope. Someone takes him in and cares for him. Jesus reduced his stress with His statement. "All you need to do is believe. I'll do the rest. Everything's going to be ok." Later on in Mark 5:40 Jairus is again cared for by Jesus. In the midst of all the mournful music and the jarring noise of wailing mourners, Mark says Jesus took Jairus and his wife into the house. Jairus was drawn in by Jesus. He was made to feel safe and that everything was going to be ok.

Fourth, Jairus experienced being reunited. In Mark 5:41 and 42 it describes Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. Jesus "took her by the hand". He used endearing words. He was gentle and yet spoke with authority. He was acting like a father. As Jairus watched he was "overcome with great amazement" according to verse 42. The wording used here can also mean to "be in a trance or a dream". Jairus couldn't believe it. It seemed too good to be true. His daughter was alive again! What a great, happy reunion that must have been.

Last of all, Jairus experienced urgent instructions. In Mark 5:43 it says Jesus "commanded strictly" or "ordered strongly" that "no one should know it". Jairus is ordered by Jesus to not tell anyone what has happened. It must have seemed an impossible thing to do. Everything inside of him must have screamed to go tell the whole world! What a contrast Jesus' orders to Jairus are to His orders to the man who was demon-possessed in our last story. He told this man to go to his house and tell his family everything! But here Jairus is told to not tell anyone. The reason, as we have considered already, was because here in Galilee any news about Jesus' ministry only resulted in more persecution for Him from the Jewish leaders, who were out to find a way to put Jesus to death. Jairus was also instructed in Mark 5:43 to give his daughter something to eat. Interesting words. Perhaps this is a detail mentioned by Mark that reveals the type of disease this girl had, in that it prevented her from being able to eat. Or Jesus may have mentioned this because He knew that in his excitement Jairus might forget about her physical needs.

How does this story reveal Jesus as our example? How do we know from this story what a healthy and dangerous Christian looks like? First of all Jesus is revealed as our example in that He encouraged faith. In Mark 5:36 Jairus' response to the message that his daughter had died was similar to the disciples' response to the storm on the sea (Mark 4:35-41). In both cases the response was fear. But Jesus revealed that all that was necessary for them was to have faith in Him. In Mark 5:36 He said to Jairus, "All you have to do is believe. You have a choice, Jairus! If you believe in Me, everything will be ok." And so Jesus reveals that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who encourages faith in the face of death. People all around us

are hearing bad news. Like Jairus, some of us have lost loved ones to death. How can I as a healthy and dangerous Christian encourage hope and faith in someone who has been visited by death? I invite you to turn with me to Ephesians 2. We will read verses 2, 4, and 5. (Read) I used to be dead in trespasses in sins. But Christ has made me alive. His resurrection power has raised me from the dead. Because of Him I am no longer void of spiritual life. I have been made alive by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I know by experience Jesus' authority over death. And so as a healthy and dangerous Christian I can encourage people's faith in this resurrection power even in the face of death. Jesus reveals that a true Christian is someone who cares enough to listen to someone responding to death with fear. And with confidence encourage their faith in Jesus' resurrection power: "Stick with Him. He will get you through."

There is a second way in which Jesus is revealed as our example in this story. He is our example in that He created a reverent environment. As He approached Jairus' house, He started narrowing down the number of people who were with Him. He came to the house with only three of His disciples. And then He threw out the hired mourners who were in the house. Along with His three disciples (Peter, James, and John) He took the father and the mother of the girl into the room where the girl was lying. Only five people were allowed to be with Him in the chamber of death. Unbelief and all disturbing noises were left outside. Only faith and reverence were allowed to come inside. There was going to be a showdown between the enemy of death and the Lifegiver. And in order for a miracle to take place, Jesus created a reverent environment. And so He reveals that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who does whatever it takes so miracles can happen in people's lives. They create an environment where people can encounter God. There's another story in the book of Mark in chapter 11. Just as in our story today, Jesus threw out some people who were causing a commotion. We will probably get to this story sometime next year. (☺) In Mark 11 there was an irreverent environment in the temple. People were buying and selling animals for the sacrificial services. The temple was filled with the merchandise. And it was getting in the way of people worshipping God. This was one of the few times Jesus got really angry. People's lives were at stake. Their eternal destinies depended on whether or not they were able to experience God when they came to the temple. Because of the irreverent environment in the temple, miracles in people's lives were being prevented.

This is why we have asked you to fill out these worship surveys in the past few weeks. If anything is distracting or disturbing you as you come to worship here, then it is our duty as healthy and dangerous Christians to get rid of these things. We need to create an environment where miracles can take place in your lives.

So, where are you in this story? You say, "I wasn't there. This story happened 1000's of years ago!" You're right, but the reason this story has been preserved for 1000's of years is so you can be a part of it. The reason God has kept this story in print is so that we might experience what took place. It's for us! There are many different characters in this story. Which one(s) do you identify with? There is the large crowd. This crowd was filled with people who needed to be healed. These people were self-focused. They got in the way because they had no thought for Jairus' daughter. Some were spectators only. Is that where you are – in the large crowd? Then there are the hired mourners. For them the events in this story were nothing more than another day at work. They were just doing their job. Maybe that's you. Your life is nothing more than doing what you need to do in order to pay the bills. Then there were the nine disciples. They had been chosen to be a part of the Twelve. But in this story they were left behind. Is that where you are - a follower of Christ, but feeling left out of the inner circle? Then there were the three disciples - Peter, James, and John. They had a special connection with Jesus. And they were eyewitnesses of a great miracle. Maybe that's where you are – close to Jesus, witnessing His power in people's lives. Then there are the girl's parents. They had experienced great loss. Death had stolen away their daughter. But Jesus turned their sorrow into joy. Is that where you are –

experiencing loss or maybe having your sorrow turned into joy? Then there is the girl. She experienced sickness and death. Maybe you are sick or dead in your sins. But then this little girl experienced resurrection to life. Is that where you are – alive today because of the resurrection power of Jesus Christ?

The reason this story has been recorded is so that every single one of us might experience what the girl experienced. That's why the Holy Spirit is here. You might be suffering under the enemy of death. But there's no reason any of us should leave here today without experiencing Jesus' resurrection power. All you have to do is pray this simple prayer:

“Lord, I'm a sinner. On my own I have no spiritual life. On my own I can't go any further than the grave. Reach out and take my hand. Speak Your words to me that have creative power. Fill me with Your resurrection power. Then I will arise and no one will be able to keep me from praising my Lifegiver throughout eternity. Amen.”