

“Jesus and Faith”

Mark 5:21-43

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 2021; June 27, 2021

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

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In the Gospel reading today, we see Jesus do a couple of wonderful things that are beyond human power to do. He heals a woman who had been suffering a physical affliction for many years. He brings a little girl back to life. We also see that the two miraculous things Jesus did would not have happened if there had not been acknowledgement of great need and faith in Him.

We follow the story.

Jesus had just gone back across the Sea of Galilee. He is back in the area of Capernaum. He was there beside the Sea. A large crowd gathered around Him.

Jairus comes to Him.

We are told that Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue. He came up to Jesus and fell at His feet. He pleaded with Jesus earnestly because his little girl was at home sick and near death. He was helpless. He was in need of something that is beyond human power to do. He came to Jesus to do it.

It is the grace and majesty of God that God is present to be found in the man Jesus. God would not have us search blindly for Him, having us try to find our own way to Him. So God has made Himself present for us in Jesus.

Jairus comes empty handed. He does not come to offer Jesus anything. Whatever we give back to Him we give in thankfulness and praise. He comes empty. He comes on his knees. He comes pleading. He is pleading for help. This is great worship of Jesus; to come empty handed, seeking help from Him.

What does Jesus do? He goes with him. He is going to do for Jairus what he seeks.

Along the way to Jairus’s house, Jesus encounters the woman. She had a physical condition that the doctors of her day were not able to cure. She too comes empty handed. She too comes to obtain His help, help that is beyond human power to do.

She has heard about Him. She is thinking: “Given what I have heard, Jesus can help me. And if I only touch His garment, I will be made well.”

She does this. She comes up behind Him in the crowd and touches His garment. She knows in her body that she has been made well.

She must have been surprised at Jesus’s reaction. The disciples were surprised by it.

Mark tells us that Jesus immediately knew that power had gone out from Him. So He stops and turns around in the crowd and says: ‘Who touched me?’” (Mark 5:30).

The disciples hear Jesus say this and begin to criticize Him. It as if they think that they have Jesus and how things ought to be all figured out. It is like they are thinking that it is obvious to them how things should be.

So they say to Jesus: “Here is this large crowd pressing in around and upon you, and you are asking: ‘Who touched me?’ (Mark 5:31).Cone on, Jesus, with such a crowd, it is obvious that many people are touching you, bumping into you, rubbing up against you. How can you possibly be wondering if anyone in particular touched you?”

But why would they assume Jesus to be so dumb as to stop and ask who touched me unless He really had a reason for asking it? Jesus knows something they don’t.

But here is an interesting question. What is the difference between the crowd in general

pressing in on Jesus, and the woman touching His garment? What is the connection to the woman that Jesus does not have with the crowd in general? Power was not going out from Jesus just willy-nilly whenever someone else in the crowd just happened to bump up against Him.

The difference is the woman's need and her faith. That is the connection. That is why the power went out from Jesus to this woman, when she touched His garment. The woman came to Jesus with her need and in faith in Him as the Savior she needed. She was not just bumping up against Jesus in general as part of the crowd. She touched His garment in faith, in great need. She did it on purpose, trusting who He is.

And why does Jesus even want to know who touched Him? What difference does it make?

Because faith and relating to Jesus in faith are personal. I don't mean personal here if what we hear with that word is that I make up my own personal Jesus; that Jesus is just mine of my own contriving and no one else's.

Faith in Jesus is not personal in that way. No one makes up for him or herself who Jesus is. Jesus is who He is quite independent of what we may think about Him or believe about Him. Our faith does not make Him what He is but receives Him, as He comes to us in His Word, in His Sacrament, and Spirit, as He is. And so we believe in Him as He is.

Personal means here that she herself had faith in Jesus. It means that He knows each one of us, and each one of us is drawn by Him to know Him. He wants to know the specific woman who touched His garment.

It is interesting what the woman's reaction is. She is afraid. She is afraid that Jesus is going to be mad at her because she touched His garment; sort of sneakily. So she came to Him, trembling. She fell down before Him and told Him everything, the whole truth (Mark 5:33).

But Jesus knows why she did what she did. She came to Him empty. She came to Him in need. She came to Him trusting Him.

So He says to her, "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed" (Mark 5:34).

This is a remarkable thing for Jesus to say. It means that the miracle of her being healed would not have happened if she had not had faith. If she had not come to Jesus in need and believing and trusting in Him like she did, He would have done nothing for her. He would have meant nothing to her. But since she came that way, her faith made her well.

Now this does not mean that the power was in her faith. No. Her faith made her well because it was faith in Jesus. The power is Jesus's power. But Jesus's power would not have done anything for her if she had not sought Him empty-handed and trusting that He could do what she needed Him to do.

Does this make faith a guarantee? Many Christians have agonized like this: I have faith, why has the miracle not happened? That is a different question. Let's just say for now that since faith is in Jesus, it also waits for Jesus's answer, in whatever way and timing it may come. But the fact remains that Jesus responded to faith, and the miracles would not have happened without it.

As Jesus was still talking to this woman, messengers came from Jairus's house. They told Jairus that his daughter has died. Why bother Jesus any longer (Mark 5:35). It's all over now. Death is final.

Jesus immediately speaks to Jairus: "Don't be afraid. Just believe" (Mark 5:36).

That is a pretty nervy thing to say. Jesus, did you not hear? They said she has died. What am I supposed to believe now? There is nothing more powerful than death. Of course, I am afraid.

But here Jesus has an authority and a right and a mission that is beyond what we in our

natural capacity and in our common human experience regard as remotely possible. So He speaks into the fear in the face of death: Do not be afraid, only believe.

He gets to Jairus's house. He sees the weepers and loud wailers. He says something even more nervy: "Why are you making this commotion and weeping? She is not dead but sleeping" (Mark 5:39).

Jesus is not saying here that the messengers from Jairus were mistaken about the facts, that she had not really died, but was just fast asleep. No. The girl really did die. Luke's account makes this clear when he says that the girl's spirit returned to her body when Jesus took her by the hand and told her to get up (Luke 8:55).

What Jesus means by "sleeping" is just that our physical death is not permanent in God's sight and in the mission Jesus came to accomplish.

He puts the weepers and wailers outside. He takes Peter, James, and John, and the girl's parents with Him. He goes to her bedside. He takes her by the hand. He exercises His authority and right and power; He exercises His mission. He speaks to her. He works His salvation and mighty power through speaking. He says to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5:41). Death must obey His command. She comes back to life. She opens her eyes. She begins to walk around. He completes his care for her by telling them to give her something to eat.

Again this is personal. Jesus Himself speaks to her: Little girl, "I" say to you. He speaks in person. She, as the one to whom He speaks, experiences His speaking and His saving. And for Jairus too it is personal as Jesus answers Jairus's pleading.

But consider this also. Jairus had to wait for the miracle of Jesus bringing his daughter back to life. Jairus had to walk that road, the rest of the way to his house. Jesus was walking that way with Jairus. Jesus told Jairus to believe, believe that his little girl would live again. But seeing his little girl live did not happen immediately with Jesus calling forth faith from Jairus. Jairus had to wait for it, waiting in faith.

Now maybe we think that he did not have to wait that long. This is true. But we are being shown something here. It is to recognize that he had to wait. And he had to wait in faith as he walked the rest of the way to his house, which must have seemed like an eternity. I wonder if Jairus felt like he was walking in mud. How hard it must have been to pick up his feet, one foot after the other, on the way to his house that day. Yet, Jesus told him to believe, believe that death is not final, believe Jairus that I have the authority right, and power to overturn death, and that it is my mission to do so; just believe in Me.

And so at the end of that journey to his house, Jairus saw the One in whom he believed do it, though it seemed like an eternity to get there.

So Jesus will do it for you, and for me, and the loved ones we miss and long for who have died in the Lord. We have to wait longer than Jairus. But we also wait in faith and hear Jesus speak to us: "Do not be afraid, only believe. Believe in Me." And He is living in you by His Spirit to give you peace and strengthen you on the way to His eternal kingdom.

These are two great miracles of Jesus. We see who He is. We see His power. Who has the power of life? God does. Who has the power of life? Jesus Does. God has come to us in Jesus. We see His compassion, as He receives Jairus and the woman in great need. He receives you. We see that He came for a mission. His mission is to ultimately defeat death for us to give us life that never dies. He accomplished this for us when He Himself rose from the dead.

But these two miracles would have never happened without Jairus and the woman coming to Jesus empty-handed and in faith. Not just any old faith, any sort of religious faith; faith in Jesus.

Let us too come to Him empty-handed and trusting Him. Then He can help us. And He will not let you down whenever and however His answer comes. Amen.