

## DO NOT FEAR, ONLY BELIEVE!

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor Messiah Lutheran Church

Mark 5:21–43

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!

### I. INTRODUCTION

In last week's Gospel lesson we heard about Jesus being asleep on a cushion in the stern of a boat. A storm had arisen and the boat began to fill with water. The disciples were afraid. There were other boats with them. They woke Jesus and He rebuked the storm and there was calm. But remember what Jesus said to the disciples after that: ***"Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*** (Mark 4:40-41).

Right after this incident Jesus and the disciples entered the region of the Gerasenes. While stepping out of the boat Jesus is met by a man with an unclean spirit, a demon. Not just one demon actually, several. You may recall the man possessed by Legion, for there were many demons in him. No one could control him, mere mortals were no match for the strength of this man he lived in the tombs. Chains couldn't hold him and he would break shackles into pieces. Jesus cleansed this infamous man casting the demons into swine. 2000 pigs rushed into the sea and drowned. The herdsmen rushed to the city to tell of the historical account. The people came to Jesus and saw the man cleansed but rather than rejoicing over the wild man's restoration they begged Jesus to leave. Jesus and the disciples got into the boat and headed to the other side. And that brings us to our text for today.

### II. JESUS THE HEALER

With all that's happened there's no question why Jesus is met by such a great crowd of people. And in that group is a man that we will focus on this morning, a man named Jairus. He is a religious ruler of the synagogue. He is well to do, for he has servants. But what sets Jairus apart is that he is a father. He has come to Jesus to ask for help. Jairus is a believer. Maybe not a believer of Jesus as the Messiah, but he believes Jesus can help his daughter if only Jesus would touch her, speak words of healing over her. Jairus is a loving father who would do anything to help his daughter.

As parents you know what I'm talking about. Regardless of the age of your child, regardless of how far away they live, regardless of whether they stay in touch with you or not, you would do anything to help your child if you could. How many times have you thought, 'If only I could have suffered the pain instead of them?' A child hurts their finger and you feel a deep pain within yourself. If only you could trade places, you know what I'm talking about. Oh how we would love to keep them safe and happy if we could, even trading places with them if possible.

Jairus is that type of father. The Pharisees didn't have good relationship with Jesus. But for the sake of his daughter, Jairus checks his ego at the door and approaches the only one he believes can save her. He falls at the feet of Jesus and begs Him, ***"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."*** Jesus responds immediately and goes with him.

But the crowds follow, they crowd surround Jesus. He is encircled by the masses. Have you ever been to a stadium while it's letting out? How quickly can you move? As a matter of fact, in a stadium everyone is moving towards an exit, but here they are all trying to get close to Jesus. This is

gridlock. Imagine Jairus anxiety. "We need to get moving, my little girl is ill. I need to get Jesus to her side, move! Get out of the way! Let us go!"

In the midst of all of this is a woman who has suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had a discharge of blood for 12 years. This made the woman unclean according to Levitical Law. This would be considered a punishment from God. She would be scorned by society, untouched by loved ones, lest they too become unclean. In her plight she had consulted many physicians, but to no avail. The loss of blood would have debilitated her. Her hair and teeth would begin to fall out, her finger nails would become soft and rubbery, skin would be cool and clammy, dehydration, kidney failure, memory loss, dizziness, confusion and a ghostly paleness that would be visible to all. And on top of that is the total and utter fatigue.

This woman believed the touch of Jesus could heal. In her society it was considered inappropriate to approach or touch a man you didn't know. In addition, she was unclean and Jesus was a religious ruler, to touch Him would make Him unclean and potentially unleash His scorn. This woman took a lot of risk to seek out Jesus. I imagine she was thinking I will just sneak a touch that will be enough. Stealth, that's the ticket, fly in under the radar, sneak a touch get out and I'm good, No need for anyone to know. That may have been her intention but what we read shows how things really played out. ***And Jesus, perceiving in Himself that power had gone out from Him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?"***

I love the disciple's wonderfully doltish answer: ***"You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"*** Duh, Jesus it's the crowd! But the woman knew. So she came forward in fear and trembling and fell down at His feet and told the whole truth. And Jesus said to her, ***"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."*** The woman was right the touch of Jesus does amazing things, it heals and makes whole. I imagine that when she was healed of that hemorrhage she was also healed of all the symptoms and side effects as well. Lest we forget, she was restored to her family and society.

### III. JESUS AS SAVIOR

Where was Jairus during all of this? Can you imagine what was going through his mind, the anxiety, the impatience? "Come on Jesus, my daughter, remember my daughter! This woman was unclean, now healed let's go! Why start a dialog with her, let's go! We gotta move, my daughter, she has her whole life ahead of her, if we can get there in time!" But while Jesus was still speaking to the woman those servants of Jairus' house came and said, ***"Your daughter is dead, why bother the Teacher anymore?"*** Why did Jesus allow this to happen? Was it to test the faith of Jairus? I don't think so. I think it was to create, and fortify faith in Jesus. You see, Jairus may have believed Jesus was a great teacher, or a powerful prophet, or one who could heal his daughter, but did he see Him as the Messiah?

God uses people to heal, back then and today. We have doctors, nurses and practitioners who heal. Many people can heal. I believe God uses all of them in their vocation and that every healing is still a miracle of God. Sometimes God heals with His own hand as well. But only God and God alone can raise a person from the dead. And so Jesus challenges Jairus to believe. ***"Do not fear, only believe."***

Jesus will not break the bruised reed. On account of the weakness of his faith, He does not say to Jairus, as He had spoken to the nobleman in the Gospel of John: 'Go your way, your daughter lives' but instead He went with him. There was danger that Jairus' confidence would be lost. So Jesus gave him a word which creates faith. ***"Do not fear, only believe."*** In other words: ***"Cease fearing, only be believing."*** Jesus stops fears and commands faith.

Jairus needed to be touched by Jesus as much as his daughter needed Jesus touch. When Jesus touches someone it's not just temporal it's eternal. It has an eternal purpose. In Jairus it is to create faith and life. **"Perfect love cast out all fear"** (1 John 4:18). **"Do not fear, only believe."** With those words Jairus knew that everything somehow would be alright. Against all odds, against all reason, not by sight but by the very Word of God, Jairus knew everything was going to be alright.

Jesus sends the crowds away. Listen to the text: **And he allowed no one to follow Him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making such a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping."** (Mark 5:37-39)

There are some things that just don't make sense here. "Commotion" is a confused noise. The people were weeping and wailing much. It was customary to hire wailers to perform at a funeral. They entered the house of the ruler of the synagogue and He saw a tumult, people weeping and wailing quite some time. She had hardly been dead and here were these people. Was Jairus the only one hoping she would regain health? Had everyone else been waiting impatiently for her death?

When Jesus said she is asleep, **"They laughed at Him."** What did Jesus know they didn't? Jesus knew that death is nothing but a nuisance a mere obstacle in the way of life. Both the mourning and the laughter are prompted by their unbelief. And that's the way it is with the world today. People weep and wail for a few days over the death of a loved one, but soon after are laughing at matters that are sacred.

I love how Jesus deals with these naysayers. **"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 put them outside. (ἐκβαλῶν) Ek-balone that word to put outside, means to drive out, to cast out or to exorcize. Jesus treated them as a bad spirit. Sometimes people are part of a spiritual problem. Augustine says: Holy things for Holy People. These people weren't holy, they didn't belong in the midst of the Holy thing that was about to take place.

Jesus took the father and mother into the girls room and said to the little girl, **"Talitha cumi – that is little girl arise. And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement"**. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

We all are like the Jairus, the woman with the hemorrhage and the little girl. We need the touch and words of Jesus. We need it to believe, we need it to be healed of sin. We need it to be raised from the dead. And we are touched by Jesus. In baptism Jesus touches you with His life, His death and His Glorious resurrection. He touches you. St. Paul says in Galatians 3:27: **"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ"**.

**"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"** For we who are in Christ Jesus, are more than conquerors for He has forgiven all our sins and given us heaven as our home. You have Jesus Word on it. Do not fear, only believe! In Jesus name, amen and amen!

*The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN!*