

Mark 5:21-43
July 16, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Jesus obviously had a lot of teachings, and of course they were all important. But there are a few teachings that Jesus focused on – like loving others. But there is one thing that He desired to see, and that is FAITH. Why do you think FAITH was so important to Him? [Let people engage]

Transition: We are going to read about two needy people who had faith in Jesus and His ability to heal. And you will see a striking difference between the two people who sought out Jesus. Jairus was an important synagogue officer, and the woman was an anonymous “nobody”; yet Jesus welcomed and helped both of them. Jairus was about to lose a daughter who had given him twelve years of happiness (Mark 5:42), and the woman was about to lose an affliction that had brought her twelve years of suffering and sorrow. Let’s read the text and see what Jesus says about FAITH.

BOOK:

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

There is a good lesson here for all of us. Not everybody has the same degree of faith, but Jesus responds to faith no matter how feeble it might be. When we believe, He shares His power with us and something happens in our lives. There were many others in that crowd who were close to Jesus and even pressing against Him, but they experienced no miracles. Why? Because they did not have faith. It is one thing to throng Him and quite something else to trust Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 126-129). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Victory over Disease (Mark 5:21–34)

One crowd sighed with relief as they saw Jesus leave, but another crowd was waiting to welcome Him when He returned home to Capernaum. In that latter crowd stood two people who were especially anxious to see Him—Jairus, a man with a dying daughter; and an anonymous woman suffering from an incurable disease. It was Jairus who approached Jesus first, but it was the woman who was first helped; so we shall begin with her.

The contrast between these two needy people is striking and reveals the wideness of Christ's love and mercy. Jairus was an important synagogue officer, and the woman was an anonymous "nobody"; yet Jesus welcomed and helped both of them. Jairus was about to lose a daughter who had given him twelve years of happiness (Mark 5:42), and the woman was about to lose an affliction that had brought her twelve years of sorrow. Being a synagogue officer, Jairus was no doubt wealthy; but his wealth could not save his dying daughter. The woman was already bankrupt! She had given the doctors all of her money, and yet none of them could cure her. Both Jairus and the poor woman found the answers to their needs at the feet of Jesus (Mark 5:22 and 33).

The woman had a hemorrhage that was apparently incurable and was slowly destroying her. One can only imagine the pain and emotional pressure that sapped her strength day after day. When you consider her many disappointments with the doctors and the poverty it brought her, you wonder how she endured as long as she did. But there was one added burden: according to the Law, she was ceremonially unclean, which greatly restricted both her religious and her social life (Lev. 15:19ff). What a burden she carried!

However, she let nothing stand in her way as she pushed through the crowd and came to Jesus. She could have used any number of excuses to convince herself to stay away from Him. She might have said: "I'm not important enough to ask Jesus for help!" or "Look, He's going with Jairus, so I won't bother Him now." She could have argued that nothing else had helped her, so why try again? Or she might have concluded that it was not right to come to Jesus as a last resort, after visiting all those physicians. However, she laid aside all arguments and excuses and came by faith to Jesus.

What kind of faith did she have? It was weak, timid, and perhaps somewhat superstitious. She kept saying to herself that she had to touch His clothes in order to be healed (see Mark 3:10; 6:56). She had heard reports of others being healed by Jesus (Mark 5:27), so she made this one great attempt to get through to the Savior. She was not disappointed: Jesus honored her faith, weak as it was, and healed her body.

There is a good lesson here for all of us. Not everybody has the same degree of faith, but Jesus responds to faith no matter how feeble it might be. When we believe, He shares His power with us and something happens in our lives. There were many others in that crowd who were close to Jesus and even pressing against Him, but they experienced no miracles. Why? Because they did not have faith. It is one thing to throng Him and quite something else to trust Him.

The woman planned to slip away and get lost in the crowd, but Jesus turned and stopped her. Tenderly, He elicited from her a wonderful testimony of what the Lord had done for her.

Why did Jesus deal with her publicly? Why did He not simply permit her to remain anonymous and go her way?

For one thing, He did it for her own sake. He wanted to be to her something more than a healer: He wanted to be her Saviour and Friend as well. He wanted her to look into His face, feel His tenderness, and hear His loving words of assurance. By the time He finished speaking to her, she experienced something more than physical healing. He called her “daughter” and sent her on her way with a benediction of peace (Mark 5:34). To “be made whole” meant much more than receiving mere physical healing. Jesus had given her spiritual healing as well!

He dealt with her publicly not only for her sake, but also for the sake of Jairus. His daughter was close to death, and he needed all the encouragement he could get. It was bad enough that the crowd was impeding their progress, but now this woman had to interfere and stop Jesus! When one of Jairus’ friends arrived and announced that the girl had died, no doubt Jairus felt that the end had come. The Lord’s words to the woman about faith and peace must have encouraged Jairus as much as they encouraged her.

Finally, Jesus dealt with her publicly that she might have the opportunity to share her testimony and glorify the Lord. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy ... He sent His word, and healed them ... Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (Ps. 107:2, 20–21) No doubt some people in that crowd heard her words and trusted in the Savior; and when she arrived home, she already knew what it meant to witness for Christ.

Victory over Death (Mark 5:35–43)

It was not easy for Jairus to come to Jesus publicly and ask for His help. The religious leaders who were opposed to Jesus would certainly not approve, nor would some of the other synagogue leaders. The things that Jesus had done and taught in the synagogues had aroused the anger of the scribes and Pharisees, some of whom were probably Jairus’ friends. But Jairus was desperate, as many people are when they come to Jesus. He would rather lose his friends and save his beloved daughter.

It is beautiful to watch Jesus deal with Jairus and lead him to joyful victory. Throughout this entire event, it was our Lord’s *words* that made the difference. Consider the three statements that He made.

The word of faith (v. 36). At this point, Jairus had to believe either his friend or the Lord Jesus. No doubt all of his being responded with convulsive sorrow when he heard that his beloved daughter was dead. But Jesus assured him, “Be not afraid, go on believing” (literal translation). In other words, “You had a certain amount of faith when you came to Me, and your faith was helped when you saw what I did for that woman. Don’t quit! Keep on believing!”

It was easier for Jairus to trust the Lord while his daughter was still alive, and while Jesus was still walking with him to his house. But when Jesus stopped to heal the woman, and when the friend came with the bad news, Jairus just about lost his faith. Let’s not be too hard on him. We have probably given way to doubts when circumstances and feelings have overwhelmed us. Sometimes God has delayed and we have wondered why. That is when we need that special “word of faith” from the Lord, and we receive it as we spend time in His Word.

The word of hope (v. 39). When Jesus and Jairus arrived at the house, they saw and heard the professional Jewish mourners who were always summoned when a death occurred. It was traditional for them to wail loudly, to weep, and to lead the family and friends in lamentation. The presence of the mourners in the home is proof that the girl was actually dead, for the family would not have called them if there had been even the slightest hope that the girl was still alive.

“The child is not dead but sleeps!” were our Lord’s words of hope to Jairus and his wife. To the believer, death is only sleep; for the body rests until the moment of resurrection (1 Thes. 4:13–18). The spirit does not sleep; for in death, the spirit of the believer leaves the body (James 2:26) and goes to be with Christ (Phil. 1:20–23). It is the body that sleeps, awaiting the return of the Lord and the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51–58). This truth is a great encouragement to all of us who have had Christian loved ones and friends depart in death. It is His word of hope to us.

The word of love and power (v. 41). Unbelief laughs at God’s Word, but faith lays hold of it and experiences the power of God. Jesus did not make a spectacle of this miracle. He was sensitive to the feelings of the parents and grieved by the scornful attitude of the mourners. *Talitha cumi* is Aramaic for “Little girl, get up!” Jesus added, “I say unto thee” (with the emphasis on the *I*), because it was by His authority that her spirit returned to her body (Luke 8:55). The words were not some magic formula that anybody might use to raise the dead.

The girl not only came back to life, but was also healed of her sickness, for she was able to get out of bed and walk around. Always the loving Physician, Jesus instructed the astounded parents to give her some food lest she have a relapse. Divine miracles never replace commonsense human care; otherwise, we are tempting God.

As with previous miracles, Jesus told the witnesses to keep quiet (Mark 1:44; 3:12). Perhaps the word got out from the mourners that the girl had been “in a coma” and had not actually been dead. According to them, there had not been a miracle after all! However, there had been witnesses to the miracle. The Law required only two or three witnesses for confirmation of truth (Deut. 17:6; 19:15), but for this miracle there were *five* witnesses! We have reason to conclude that Jairus and his wife became believers in Jesus Christ, though there is no further mention of them in the Gospel record. All her life, the daughter was a witness to the power of Jesus Christ.

Yes, God’s Servant is the conqueror over danger, demons, disease, and death. This series of miracles illustrates how Jesus met and helped all kinds of people, from His own disciples to a pair of demoniacs; and it assures us that He is able to help us today.

This does not mean that God *always* must rescue His people from danger (see Acts 12) or heal every affliction (see 2 Cor. 12:1–10); but it does mean that He holds the ultimate authority and that we need never fear. We are “more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 124-126) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

3. THE HEMORRHAGING WOMAN AND JAIRUS’ DAUGHTER (5:21–43)

This section, like Mark 3:20–35, has a “sandwich” structure. The account of the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (5:21–24, 35–43) is divided by the incident of the woman with a hemorrhage (5:25–34). What appeared to be a disastrous delay in the healing of the woman actually assured the restoration of Jairus’ daughter. It was providentially ordered to test and strengthen Jairus’ faith.

a. *Jairus’ earnest request (5:21–24)*

5:21–24. **Jesus** and His disciples returned **to the other** (west) **side of the** Sea of Galilee, probably to Capernaum. As before in this area, **a large crowd gathered around Jesus while He was still by the lake.**

On this occasion, **Jairus came** to Him. As **one of the synagogue rulers**, he was a lay official responsible for the physical management of the synagogue building and the worship services. He was a respected leader in the community. Not all the religious leaders were hostile to Jesus.

Jairus’ **little daughter** (an only daughter, Luke 8:42) was **dying** (lit., “was at the point of death”). Matthew’s abbreviated treatment of this event (135 words whereas Mark used 374) accounts for his statement that the girl had already died (Matt. 9:18). In humility, Jairus **pleaded earnestly** (lit., “begged much”; cf. Mark 5:10) **with Jesus to come and put His hands on her so that she might be healed** (lit., “saved,” delivered from physical death) **and live**. The practice of “laying on of hands” in healing symbolized the transfer of vitality to a needy recipient; it was popularly associated with Jesus’ healings (cf. 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25). Jairus probably knew about Jesus’ power from previous associations (cf. 1:21–28) and was confident that He could save his daughter’s life.

As **Jesus went with Jairus, a great crowd followed them and pressed** (“kept thronging,” from *synthlibō*; cf. v. 31) **around Him.**

b. *The healing of the woman with a hemorrhage (5:25–34)*

5:25–27. An unnamed **woman** with an incurable condition joined the crowd. **She had suffered** (lit., “was in”) **bleeding for 12 years** (cf. v. 42). This may have been a chronic menstrual disorder or a uterine hemorrhage. Her condition made her ritually unclean (cf. Lev. 15:25–27), excluding her from normal social relations since any who came in contact with her would become “unclean.”

She had suffered greatly from various treatments by **many doctors**. **She had spent all she owned** in a desperate attempt to get well. Nothing helped; in fact her condition **grew worse**.

But because **she had heard about** Jesus’ healing power (which aroused her faith), **she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His cloak** (outer garment). She did this despite her “uncleanness” and with a desire to avoid an embarrassing public disclosure of her malady.

5:28. She kept telling herself that **if she could just touch His clothes, she would be healed** and then she could slip away unobserved. Perhaps her faith was mixed with a popular notion that a healer had power in his clothing, or she may have known someone who had been healed in this way (cf. 3:10; 6:56).

5:29. When the woman touched Jesus’ garment, **immediately** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **her bleeding stopped. She felt** (lit., “knew,” from *ginōskō*, “know experientially”; cf. 5:30) by a physical sensation **in her body that she was freed** (lit., “had been healed”) **from her suffering**. The healing occurred without overt participation by Jesus.

5:30. Yet **Jesus** immediately (*euthys*) **realized** in Himself (from *epiginōskō*, “know fully”; cf. v. 29) **that power had gone out from Him** or, more literally, “power from Him (on account of who He is) had gone out.”

This unusual expression has been understood in two ways. One view maintains that God the Father healed the woman and Jesus was not aware of it till afterward. The other view is that Jesus Himself, wishing to honor the woman’s faith, willingly extended His healing power to her. The latter view is more consistent with Jesus’ healing ministry. Power did not leave Him without His knowledge and will. However, He exercised it only at the Father’s bidding (cf. 13:32). The touch of the garment had no magical effect.

Aware of *how* the miracle took place, Jesus **turned around ... and asked, Who touched My clothes?** He wanted to establish a personal relationship with the healed person, untainted with quasi-magical notions.

5:31–32. Jesus’ question seemed absurd to **His disciples** (the Twelve; cf. Luke 8:45) because the crowd was pressing (from *synthlibō*; cf. Mark 5:24) in and many **people** were touching Him. This emphasized Jesus’ ability to distinguish the touch of one who in faith expected deliverance from the inadvertent touch of those **crowding against** Him. There was, and still is, a great difference between the two. So **Jesus kept looking around** (*perieblepeto*; “was looking penetratingly”; cf. 3:5, 34) at the people surrounding Him in order **to see who had** touched Him in this way.

5:33–34. **Then the woman**, the only one who understood Jesus’ question, **came** in humility, and **trembling with fear** (from *phobeomai*, “to have awe, reverence”; cf. 4:41) because she knew **what had happened to her**, in courage and gratitude told Him everything.

The affectionate title, **Daughter** (its only recorded use by Jesus) signified her new relationship with Him (cf. 3:33–35). Jesus attributed her cure to her **faith** rather than the touch of His clothing. Her faith **healed** her (lit., “has saved or delivered you”; cf. 5:28; 10:52) in that it caused her to seek healing *from Jesus*. Faith, confident trust, derives its value not from the one who expresses it, but from the object in which it rests (cf. 10:52; 11:22).

Jesus said, **Go in peace and be freed** (lit., “be healthy”) **from your suffering** (cf. 5:29). This assured her that her healing was complete and permanent. In her extremity of need—incurable illness and socio-religious isolation—she was a living “dead” person for 12 years. Her restoration to wholeness of life anticipated the dramatic raising of Jairus’ daughter who died after living for 12 years.

c. *The raising of Jairus’ daughter to life (5:35–43)*

5:35–36. The delay (cf. vv. 22–24) caused by the woman’s healing (vv. 25–34) was a severe test of Jairus’ faith. His fears that his little **daughter** would die before **Jesus** got there were confirmed by the report of **some men** (unidentified friends and relatives) **from his house** that she had died. They concluded that her death ended any hope that **Jesus** could help so they suggested that it was futile to **bother** (lit., “trouble”) **the Teacher** (cf. 4:38) **any** further.

Jesus overheard the message but refused to accept its implications. This is the force of the verb translated **ignoring** (*parakousas*), which means “refuse to listen” (cf. Matt. 18:17). The present imperatives in Jesus’ reassuring words to **Jairus** could be rendered: “Stop fearing (i.e., in unbelief); just keep on believing.” He had already exercised faith in coming to Jesus, he had seen the relationship between faith and Jesus’ power (Mark 5:25–34); now he was exhorted to **believe** that Jesus could restore his lifeless daughter.

5:37–40a. Including Jairus, Jesus let only three disciples—**Peter, James, and John**—accompany Him **to the** house as witnesses (cf. Deut. 17:6). These three disciples served as legal witnesses here in anticipation of Jesus’ resurrection, then at His transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and in Gethsemane (14:33).

At the house the elaborate ritual of Jewish mourning had already begun. The **commotion** (*thorybon*, “an uproar”) included the activity of hired mourners (cf. Jer. 9:17; Amos 5:16), weeping, and antiphonal **wailing**.

Jesus entered the house and rebuked the mourners because, **He told them ... the child was not dead but asleep**. Did Jesus mean she was just in a coma? Friends and relatives (cf. Mark 5:35) as well as the professional mourners who **laughed** scornfully at His words, knew she was dead (cf. Luke 8:53). Was Jesus simply describing death as sleep, implying a state of “sleep” between death and resurrection? This is not supported elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Luke 23:42–43; 2 Cor. 5:6–8; Phil. 1:23–24). Probably He was saying that in this case death was *like* sleep. From a mourner’s point of view, the girl’s death would turn out to be like “a sleep” from which she was awakened. Her condition was not final and irrevocable (cf. Luke 8:55; John 11:11–14).

5:40b–42. **After He put ... out** all the mourners, Jesus **took the** girl’s parents **and the three disciples** (cf. v. 37) **with Him** into her room. Then **He took her ... hand and** spoke the Aramaic words, **Talitha koum!** This was a command, not a magical formula. Mark translated it for his Greek-speaking readers, **Little girl ... get up**, adding the clause **I say to you** to emphasize Jesus’ authority over death. Since Galileans were bilingual, Jesus spoke both Aramaic, His mother tongue—a Semitic language related to Hebrew—and Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world. He likely also spoke Hebrew.

At Jesus’ command, **immediately** (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **the girl got up and** began walking around for (*gar*), Mark explained, **she was 12 years old**. The parents and three disciples **were completely astonished** (from *existēmi*, lit., “out of their minds with great amazement”; cf. 2:12; 6:51).

5:43. Jesus then gave two **orders**. The first was a **strict** injunction to silence. Jesus did not want the miracle to attract people to Him for the wrong reasons (cf. comments on 1:43–45).

The second command, that the girl be given food, displayed His compassion and also confirmed that she was restored to good health. Her body had been resuscitated, returned to natural life, but was still subject to death, and needed to be sustained by food. This contrasts with a *resurrected* body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–57).

Church, C.L. (1998). *Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 433). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

FAITH AND FEAR (5:21–43)

Mark’s account of a girl restored to life and a woman healed is a second example of his “sandwich” technique. He juxtaposed two examples of faith: a synagogue ruler, a highly respected community member, with a now-impooverished woman who lived as an outcast because of her hemorrhage. The woman in the “inner” story “had heard about Jesus” and exemplified faith in daring to touch the fringe of His garment.

Again Mark noted fear at the end of her story. Her fear of illness and death was surpassed by her awe at this one who knew He had healed her. Like the Gerasene she told her story of God’s mercy to her. Jesus’ address “Daughter” brought her into relationship with Him based on her

saving faith. This new relationship makes going in God's peace possible. In the "outer" story Jesus called Jairus to faith that did not fear even death but trusted that God was at work in Jesus to restore life to his daughter. The laughing crowd of mourners viewed as ridiculous a faith that trusted God no matter what. Those who trusted God had the last laugh.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 622-623). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

In 5:21–24, 35–43 Jesus proved his power over death. Mark weaves this experience with another showing Jesus' lordship over disease in 5:25–34. This serves as substantiation for the authenticity of Mark's account, for it is perfectly natural to find an interruption in the activity of Jesus.

Jairus, who held a position of authority and respect in the synagogue, came to beseech Jesus to intercede in behalf of his little girl. As they walked away together, out of the crowd came a woman who had a physical problem which had plagued her for twelve years. She had spent all her money for medical attention, but without relief. In addition to her physical illness, she was considered ceremonially unclean, as described in Leviticus 15:25.

When she touched Jesus, he knew that power had gone forth from him. It cost Jesus to heal. He was conscious of the flow of the power of God through him to another.

Moving on more quickly with only three of the apostles, they went to the home of Jairus. When the professional mourners had been cleared out, Jesus took the little girl by the hand and restored her alive.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 5:21-43. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.