

1 July 2018

Text: Mark 5:21-43

In the name of + Jesus. Amen.

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue, meaning that he was a layman responsible for the local house of worship. Some of his duties would include making sure candles were cut to a certain length and lit at the proper times, keeping the communion vessels clean and replacing any that were beyond repair, etc. Because of his position in the church, he would have attended services whenever they were and he would have heard about Jesus and the miracles that this Jewish rabbi and carpenter from Nazareth was doing. So it's no wonder that when Jesus came by boat to the other side, that Jairus would seek him out. "Here is a man who can do wonders. Can He save my daughter as well?"

When Jairus ran out to meet Jesus, he fell at our Lord's feet and "implored him earnestly", meaning that he put himself in a posture of humility and respect, as reflected in his desperation. Jairus had an only daughter who was 12, almost the age where she could be married and perhaps have a family of her own. And this only daughter was sick, so sick in fact that she was at the point of death. So Jairus hoped that in his time of desperation, that Jesus would lay His hands on the daughter "that she may be made well and live."

I have never known what it is like to have a child that is so sick that they could die. Some of you have. Some of you have even had children pass away at some point and time. I cannot even begin to imagine the great sense of loss and mourning you have endured. But you have and only by the divine work of our Lord have you been able to get to where you are today. I imagine that the same sense of grief that you would have at the sickness and death of a child would be the same that Jairus had for his daughter. I wonder if the same questions you'd asks is what he asked as well, "Why God? What have I done to make you take my child. How could such a loving God do such a horrible thing?"

Here's the thing: it is sin that leads to death. That doesn't mean that children die because of the sins of their parents. Everybody is sinful, from birth to the grave. We are born with original sin. We are sinful and the cost for sin is death. It is the curse of the Garden. If you think you are without sin, then you are wrong and the truth isn't in you. St. Paul writes, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But just because you sin doesn't mean that your child has to die for what you have done. No child does.

In fact, even though the price of sin is death, when the believer dies a physical death, it is not death but rather sleeping as verse 39 puts it in our text today. Matthew 27:52 describes our bodies as falling asleep like this, "The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised." St. John writes these words of our Lord on the matter of death being only sleep, "After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.'"

Fellow believers in Christ, let that be of great comfort to you, that death has no hold on you, that the evil foe cannot put you to death. For when Jesus died on the cross for your sins and was buried in the tomb, He overcame death, hell, and the grave for you. And because He lives, you can face tomorrow, and every day, knowing that as a believer, you have "been crucified with Christ. It is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you. And the life you now live in the flesh you live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you (Galatians 2:20).

Jairus knew that Jesus was about life. He had heard about it, maybe even had seen that everything Jesus did was not to take life but to give it back. He also knew that his daughter was dead, because someone from home had told him, and he knew that because she was dead, that she needed a Savior. And if anybody could save her it would be Jesus.

Our text tells us that Jesus goes to Jairus' home, where there is a funeral now. In a separate room, visitors waited to see this child who had been taken from this earth too soon. They gathered, paid their respects, spoke kind words to the family, and waited for the Jairus to say a few words, to give a remembrance, a eulogy of sorts, for his young daughter.

Sounds a lot like our funerals today. This week, we will bury two of our own. One, Mr. Paul Elzey, who was beloved by so many. His passion in reading the lessons were second to none. His love of music and the gift of singing in service to the Lord touched the lives of many, even changing the lives of some. And Mrs. Bobbie Duff, the wife of former pastor Floyd P. Duff. Bobbie lived out her vocation with a joyful heart as the wife of a pastor who diligently served when she had the opportunity. A mother who went without many times so that her children had everything they need. A gifted woman whose talents never went un-noticed. Both Paul and Bobbie will have funerals very similar to the one in our text this morning. Both, have fallen asleep, their earthly bodies waiting that day when Jesus comes again and with a shout and the blast of a trumpet, their physical bodies will be called up into the air, to join their spiritual ones, perfect, unblemished, without death, rot, and decay.

And Jesus will do for Paul and Bobbie what He did for Jairus' daughter: He will simply say, "rise". And they will. And you will too, if you believe. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). Jesus is life. Everything Jesus did on this earth, every miracle, every word, every touch, was for the purpose of reversing the curse of death and giving in its place, life.

He still does it today. VBS this year was, in a nutshell, about baptism. Every day the children learned how God is with them, how He delivers them, and how He keeps His promises. His promise of forgiveness of sin and life everlasting is there in the waters of the font. It's there because that is where His words of life are proclaimed for you. It's there, His life covering you as it pours down your head to your toes. That is what the children heard, the Gospel for them, the Word of life for them.

He speaks words of life to us as well there on His altar, where His body and blood await for you to receive Him. There He gives you eternal life and He strengthens and preserves you daily, keeping you in your baptismal grace unto life everlasting. His meal for you is a meal of life, that forgives all your sins because in it He says to each believer, "Rise".

Brothers and sisters in Christ, take comfort in the Savior who gives you life. Even in the midst of heartache, mourning, and sorrow, rejoice that as believers, we will see our loved ones again because of the life won and given to us by our loving Savior. Celebrate with one another the means of grace that save us, as we live this Christian life together. Amen.

In the name of the Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.