

## Jesus Meets the Powerful and Powerless

Mark 5:21-43

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, June 27, 2021

### Sermon Text, Mark 5:21-43

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He 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.” <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” <sup>29</sup> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

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

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

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

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

<sup>36</sup> Overhearing<sup>Ⓜ</sup> what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

**Sermon, "Reaching for the Promises"**

Our story interweaves the plight of two people, both of whom are in desperate need of Jesus. Have you ever had a desperate need for God? Perhaps you will identify with one or both of these seekers.

The story opens with Jairus weaving his way through a crowd in order to reach Jesus. And when he does, he falls at the feet of Jesus and expresses an incredible level of faith: "My daughter has died, but you can make her live again."

Even though Jairus had position as a synagogue leader, when crises arose, his position could do him no good. Likewise, your position may give you a sense of security, but that's all. Real security comes from Christ alone.

As a leader in the synagogue, Jairus had religion; however, when a crisis arose, Jairus realized he needed more than religion: he needed Jesus. Religion will never meet our needs the way Jesus can.

Jairus falls at the feet of Jesus and pleads, "My daughter has died, but you can make her live again."

That's a pretty incredible expression of faith. It's one thing to make this claim today because we live on the resurrection side of the cross. But what could've prompted this level of faith in Jairus this early in the ministry of Christ? Jairus must have seen something in Jesus that others had not detected.

Jesus responds to Jairus' faith and goes to his home in order to heal his daughter.

But someone interrupts Jesus as he's on his way to the home of Jairus. "Suddenly the woman with the issue of blood came up behind Christ and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.'"

Jesus is interrupted by a woman, and she is the polar opposite of Jairus. He was a man who had status in the community because he was the leader of the synagogue.

The other was a woman who had absolutely no status whatsoever. Scriptures simply describe her as "a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years" (vs. 25). That's a delicate way of stating that she had suffered a continuous menstrual flow for twelve years. As modern Western readers, we would immediately think of how that condition would've affected her health and overall quality of life. However, ancient readers would've also understood that her medical condition was only the beginning of her misery; they also understood the social and religious impact of her illness.

According to the law of Moses, women in menstruation were to remain in relative seclusion as *ritually* unclean. That didn't carry a negative connotation; rather, it gave menstruating women a break from their responsibilities at a time when women did not have all the modern conveniences which are available to women today. But ritual uncleanliness also meant that a

woman could not join in normal social activities. She wouldn't have been able to eat with others and she would not have been able to enter the temple or a synagogue.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we have a story about a man who was a leader in the synagogue and a woman hadn't been allowed to enter a synagogue for twelve years. And did you notice that Jairus' is named? but no such respect is given to the woman.

The Gospel of Mark may be the shortest of the four, but Mark tends to provide us with little details which are not found in the other gospels, and that's the case here. Like Luke, Mark tells us that the name of the synagogue ruler is Jairus. Matthew does not name him at all.

Also, Mark tells us that the woman 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." Not only does Matthew omit that tidbit, but so does Luke. We don't know why Matthew overlooks that bit of information, but Luke probably omits her suffering at the hands of many doctors *because Luke himself was a doctor*.

In Jairus, we had a social somebody; in this woman we have someone who was probably a social outcast because of her condition. Yet she did not let her sense of inferiority or a low self-esteem or a poor social standing keep her from Christ.

Have you ever felt as though you were on the outside looking in? That had to be how this woman felt. She had been marginalized by society, but she still had an "in" with Jesus. Nor was she deterred by the crowds. She did not say, "I'm too insignificant for Jesus" or "Jesus doesn't have time for me" or "There are too many others with more important needs."

Such lies only keep us from the healing touch of the master. She pressed in on Jesus.

And that brings us an important point. Jairus and the woman each took a different approach to Jesus.

It doesn't matter which approach you take to reach Jesus, just get to him.

Jairus fell before him in humility and adoration. He pled earnestly with him. The woman tried to approach Jesus secretly, without calling attention to herself. So she tried to touch the hem of his garment.

Now why would she reach for his hem when it would've been so much easier to just tap him on the shoulder—especially given the fact that Jesus was on the move; he was walking. It's really quite difficult to touch the hem of someone's garment when their walking in a crowd as Jesus was. Yet that is how this woman touched Jesus. Why would she do this?

I think Numbers 15:37-40 can provide the answer for us:

The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. You have the

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Swindoll's *Living Insights Commentary on Mark*, 2016, pg. 135.

fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God.

Jesus, no doubt, had tassels on his garment and this woman sought to touch Christ at the point of the Word—at the point of the promises of God. She knew that's where the power was.

Jesus was surrounded by persons pressing in on him. Yet only one tapped into the power of God. This again raises questions for us: Are you merely pressing in against Christ—still close to him—but not tapping into his power for your daily life? The way to do that is through his tassels, which is to say, through his Word.

Follow the example of this dear woman: Christ has a tassel for you. **Christ has a promise for you.** Search his Word. Reach for the promises of God through Jesus Christ and be made whole. Jesus turns to her and says, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." And this dear woman—whom we will meet someday in glory—was healed. Thanks be to God!

But that's not the end of the story, because while Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus and gave him the sad news that his daughter had, indeed, died.

"Don't bother the rabbi," they said.

But Jesus heard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

So Jairus took Jesus to his brokenhearted home and to the bed where his daughter lay dead. There, he showed Jesus the depths of his pain.

Have you ever had a deep ache in your soul, but you didn't want anybody to know about it? *How are you doing? Oh, just fine.* We don't want anybody to know, so we shift into stoic mode.

I come from German stock; I know what it means to be stoic when you've been hurt and wounded. You're afraid to let your guard down because you're afraid somebody will say, "It's your fault. You're the reason you're in this mess."

Those kinds of somebodies would probably blame Jairus for his daughter's death, just as they would blame you for the sinking of the Titanic. So you bottle up your emotional pain and push the cork in firmly. You don't want anybody to know what you're hiding inside.

My friend, take a lesson from Jairus who was not ashamed to reveal his pain to Christ. He was not afraid to let the love of God into his heartache. In their 2006 single, John Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls sings, "The end of fear is where we begin / the moment we decide to let love in." Everything changed when Jairus let Love in.

The woman with the issue of blood shows us we can touch Jesus at his point of **power** while Jairus shows us we can let him touch us at our point of **pain**. Jairus took Jesus to the room where his daughter lay dead, and Jesus takes her hand.

Now according to Jewish law, contact with a dead body made a person ceremonially unclean—isn't it interesting that the Mosaic background behind both stories is the matter of ceremonial uncleanness. Yet Jesus was willing to get himself dirty in order to bring hope and healing to someone who sought him out.

You may feel as though you're dirty or unclean--unfit to have Jesus come into your life. But that's not the case at all. There is no indignity which you can introduce to Christ which is any greater than any indignity which he had already experienced when he trod this earth, suffered at the hands of others and ultimately died so that you and I might receive of his wholeness.

Jesus took the little girl's hand and spoke. And the same voice which called the earth and heavens into existence; the same voice which brought life to the seas and the skies, to the forests and the fields now said, "*Talitha, koum!*" which means, "Little girl, get up!" And just as the Creation obeyed the Creator, so the little girl obeyed and took a deep breath—the breath of life—and stood up and began acting like any other twelve-year-old girl.

Although the woman and Jairus approached Christ differently, they were both effective in their approach. Both were united in their desperation. Both sought out Christ as if getting through to him were the most important thing in the world. And Christ met both of their needs. The marginalized woman invites us to reach for the promises of God—don't let anything stop you—while the leader of the synagogue encourages us to let Christ come into our pain.