

Sermon 062815 Miracles
Scripture- Mark 5: 21-43
Sermon Title- Get Up!

Mark's gospel stories have many special qualities. Among them is that they give the reader the feeling of being eyewitness accounts. There are details that just put you in the scene. Bible stories have more traction with us 2000 years later if we feel like we are among the people around Jesus. Mark is trying to tell us who Jesus was and what it was like to be with him. In today's story we learn of the extraordinary reaction to him from the people with whom he had contact.

The woman who touched Jesus' garment had nothing left in this world. She had been bleeding for twelve years. As if that, in and of itself, wasn't bad enough, it was thought in that society that that made her unclean. She was a social reject because of her condition and tried touching Jesus' garment out of desperation. Jairus was at the other end of the spectrum from the outcast woman when it comes to affluence and power. It says that he was a leader of the synagogue, which you don't become without affluence and power. This Bible passage would make for a good Father's Day sermon topic. Jairus doesn't act like an important man in the story, but just a loving father. He, too, acts out of desperation. His daughter is either dying or dead and he is understandably close to hysteria with fear, grief, and horror. Jesus speaks of people's

belief saving them but in this story it seems more of an- end of the rope- *need for healing power* from the Lord that motivates them. This is not a desire for God, but a need for God. This reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Abraham Lincoln. He said, “I am often driven to my knees because I have no place else to go.”

The two people looking for help from Jesus in this story are not struggling with beliefs. They are not stumbling over subtle theological questions. They were in the midst of having their lives fall apart. Jesus’ response to their anxiety was clear. He said, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” Now, lets dig into this moment in the story a bit.

The question is, ‘What is a person to believe when his whole life has blown up in his face?’ Is he to believe that life makes sense even in the face of a twelve year olds death? Believe that in some unimaginable way all will be well no matter what? Believe in God? Believe in Jesus? Jairus never asks and Jesus never says, just, ‘believe- there’s nothing to be afraid of.’ This is such a profound moment. I have, in my ministry, and in other parts of my life, shared in moments of real crisis for people. In their times of greatest affliction, I have found it common for that to be the time that believing is the most difficult. Often, I hear, “Where is God in this?” or “Why is God letting this happen?” Yet Jesus pulls Jairus in, and us in, with his words, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” I’m

suggesting that the next time you are in crisis, it is not if- it is when, that you work hard to hold onto those words from the Lord, “Don’t be afraid, just believe” and see what happens. A way to do that might be to remember when, in the past, you questioned God in time of crisis. Did that help or hurt your situation? Try saying the words from Jesus, “Don’t be afraid, just believe” and see what effect that just might have.

Now, this fantastic story moves to Jairus’ house where Jesus goes to the girl, takes her hand and says, “Talitha koum” meaning ‘little girl, get up’ and according to Mark “immediately the girl got up and starting walking around.” You can imagine her walking around the room touching familiar things- a chair, a comb, a flower someone had left- re-establishing contact with the world, getting the world back, getting herself back, getting her life back.

It was not just the child’s life that had been given back, of course, but also the lives of the mother and father, who stood there with no words they knew how to say. The worse thing that had ever happened to them became the best thing that ever happened to them. You can imagine them barely able to breath from fear of breaking the spell. Call it magic, call it a miracle, but life was back- not mere existence, but life- real, rich and full for all involved. Think back to the woman at the beach who touched

Jesus' garment and was healed... she too had lost her life and got it back.

Who knows what kind of story Mark is telling here. I'm not here to explain it to you, but to experience it with you. There are a few powerful moments for me in the story. When the desperate woman is healed. When Jesus says to the father in the midst of his greatest crisis and affliction, "Don't be afraid, just believe." Jesus, as he always does, turns the upside down world right side up by his words and actions. Then, the enormously moving part when Jesus *takes the girls hand* and says "Talitha koum!"- "Little girl, get up"- and suddenly we ourselves are the little girl.

Little girl. Old girl. Little boy. Old boy. Old boys and girls with high blood pressure and arthritis, and young boys and girls with tattoos and body piercing, "Get up! Don't be afraid, just believe." You who believe, and you who sometimes believe and sometimes don't believe much of anything, and you who would give anything to believe if you only could, 'take the hand of Jesus,' get up! You happy ones and you who can hardly remember what it was like once to be happy, "Talitha koum. Get up!" You who know where you are going and how to get there and you who much of the time aren't sure you're getting anywhere, "Just believe."

Get up, Jesus says, all of you-all of you! Get up! The power that is in Him is the power to give life not just to the dead like the

child, but those who are only partly alive, which is to say people like you and me who much of the time are closed to the wild beauty and miracle of every day we live. We, who are closed to the miracle and beauty of each other and even ourselves, Get up and live!

It is that life giving power that is at the heart of this story of the afflicted woman, and Jairus, and the daughter that he loved. It is that life giving and life sustaining power of God that is at the heart of all of our stories. The power of Jesus is the power of new life, new being, new hope. It is the chance that he'll take us by the hand and raise us up to new life. Whether we know it or not, it is what keeps us coming to church week after week, and year after year in search for it. It is the story of new life at Christmas, the story of new life at Easter, the stories like today's stories that hold that power that reminds us not that we want God, but that we need God for life. Jesus gives us the power to get up even when getting up isn't all that easy anymore. It is the power to keep getting up and going on and on toward- whatever it is, whoever He is. It is our need for Him to take our hand.

(Sing)

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand,

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.

Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light.

Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

AMEN