

“DON’T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE”

Mark 5:21-43

Key Verse: 5:36

“Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”

Thank God for blessing the European and CIS conferences abundantly through our prayers. Thank God that through four weeks of study from Acts he renewed in our hearts his great vision for world salvation. We learned that we should not live by petty desires and remain in our own comfort zones, but step out in faith according to God’s great plan for his people. God is the Almighty God with great vision, and he wants his people to live with his vision. Now, as this new fall semester has begun, we are returning to Mark’s gospel. Today’s passage mainly talks about having faith in Jesus, the Messiah. Two very different people come to Jesus by faith for help. But Jesus did more than solve their problems. Jesus helped them to deepen their faith and experience the power of faith which was beyond their imagination. Jesus does not want us to be shallow in understanding him. Jesus wants us to know him more and more deeply so that we may experience the fullness of his power, grace and love. Sometimes, though we have faith in Jesus, we are overwhelmed by practical problems. We may feel trapped by our sinful desires, bad habits or character flaws, as well as our circumstances. We feel that faith is one thing, but practical life is different. However, the faith that Jesus wants us to have empowers us to overcome the gravity of sin and our real world problems. Furthermore, Jesus wants us to grow in our relationship with him to live a vibrant, dynamic, victorious life. Learning faith in Jesus is an adventure. Let’s embark on this great journey.

First, faith that comes to Jesus (21-29). This passage begins with Jesus surrounded by a large crowd, after crossing back over to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee (21). Many people came to Jesus, eager for his help, in contrast to people of the Gerasenes. Among them was a synagogue leader named Jairus. In Jesus’ time, though the temple was the center of the nation’s spiritual life, the synagogue was the place where Jews met locally for prayer and worship. Synagogue leaders were influential men in their communities. So Jairus must have been respected as a man of godly character. At this point in his ministry, most synagogue rulers would not welcome Jesus, for he had been rejected by Jewish leaders. But Jairus was different. When Jairus saw

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Jesus, he stepped out from the crowd and fell at Jesus’ feet (22). It is amazing that he revealed his great humility before Jesus publicly. How could he come to Jesus like this? It was out of his father’s heart for his daughter, who was dying. Luke tells us that she was his only daughter (Lk 8:42). She was just twelve years old, about to blossom into a beautiful young teenager. It was time for her to study hard and dream about a bright future. She was more precious to Jairus than his own life. He could do anything for her. At this moment, Jesus seemed to be his only hope. So he pleaded earnestly with Jesus, **“My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live”** (23). He believed that one touch from Jesus would heal her. How could he have such faith? Romans 10:17 says, **“...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”** When he heard about Jesus who preached the good news of the kingdom of God, and healed many kinds of sick people, and drove out demons, faith in Jesus was planted in his heart. When his daughter became sick, he must have searched for every way to heal her. But nothing helped. His money, his social status, his reputation, his record of good deeds—none of these could help save his daughter. He realized that he was powerless. Sometimes when powerful people reach their limitation, they become extremely frustrated and filled with rage. Or they fall into melancholy. But this man came to Jesus. Though his situation was desperate, he had awesome respect for Jesus. He was not demanding or impatient, but humbly asked Jesus’ help. Obviously, Jesus’ heart was moved by his humble plea. So Jesus went with him (24a). Jesus is ready to help anyone who asks him humbly.

A large crowd followed and pressed around Jesus (24b). A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years (25). It is hard to imagine how much she had suffered from bleeding. As a woman, she might have been very sensitive about her outer appearance. Many young women are sensitive about the smallest imperfections and obsess over these endlessly. Some practice unhealthy eating habits in order to look attractive. But this woman had a very serious problem. Constant bleeding for twelve years had drained her beauty and strength. She could not hide her condition with makeup and fine clothes. Verse 26 says, **“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.”** In spite of all her efforts to get well, she was dying a little more each day. She suffered not only physically, mentally and

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emotionally but also socially, for she was branded as an “unclean” woman, in that religious society. Whatever she touched was considered unclean. She was a source of uncleanness, and no one wanted to associate with her. So she was withdrawn, isolated and lonely. We would expect her to fall into fatalism and to suffer from depression and bitterness. Shame and despair tormented her soul whatever she did. She was hopeless. But when she heard about Jesus, hope arose in her heart. She must have heard about Jesus who healed the man with leprosy out of messianic compassion. No one dared touch a leper, for it was prohibited by the law of Moses, and leprosy was contagious. Leprosy was more dangerous than Ebola. However, Jesus touched the man, saying, **“I am willing. Be clean!”** And his leprosy was cleansed. When she heard this story, she was very much encouraged and was able to come to Jesus. So she came up behind him in the crowd. She kept saying to herself, **“If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed”** (27-28). With every step she took, she had to overcome fear and doubt, focusing on Jesus. In her weakened physical state, she had to press through the crowd of people thronging around Jesus. How could she do that? It was only by faith. Finally she got close enough to reach out and touch Jesus’ garment. When she touched his cloak by faith, immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering (29). Her body regained its strength and energy and her beauty was restoring. She felt that she looked like a princess and was overjoyed.

The two persons in these stories are very different from each other. Jairus was successful and well known. The woman was nameless and almost invisible. Jairus came openly and publicly, and boldly spoke his request to Jesus. The woman came secretly and never requested what she wanted; she only thought to herself. Jairus came to Jesus bringing his daughter’s problem, while the woman came with her own problem. But they had common factors: each one had a very serious problem, and they brought this problem to Jesus by faith. Also, out of desperation they put their hope in Jesus. They believed that Jesus would solve their problem. This suggests to us that no matter what our background or problem, what matters is that we come to Jesus by faith. Coming to Jesus sounds easy, but it requires overcoming obstacles within us and barriers without. For Jairus it was to overcome his pride and prejudice. For the woman it was to overcome her fear and doubt, and the pressing crowd. When we come to Jesus by faith, he welcomes us, heals us and solves our problems. To Jesus, there is no human qualification. Whether we are rich

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or poor, educated or uneducated, well known or unknown, attractive or plain, Jesus welcomes anyone who comes to him with faith. To Jesus, only faith matters. What is faith? Faith is to trust Jesus, focus on Jesus, think of Jesus, look at Jesus, in this hope: “if I just go to Jesus, my problem will be solved.” Let’s come to Jesus by faith.

Second, Jesus deepens our faith (30-43). Many people come to Jesus in their time of need. But once their problem is solved, they no longer seek Jesus. To them, Jesus is a problem solver. But Jesus wants to do more than just solve our problems. He wants us to know him personally and grow in faith. Let’s see how Jesus helped those who came to him to grow deeper in faith.

The woman came to Jesus secretly, and also she wanted to leave secretly after being healed. However, after she had taken several steps, she heard something that stopped her in her tracks. She was caught by Jesus. When the woman had touched Jesus’ cloak by faith, at once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, **“Who touched my clothes?”** (30) This question baffled the disciples. They responded, **“You see the people crowding against you, and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”** (31) Though many people touched Jesus, nothing happened to them. And Jesus did not show special interest in them. But Jesus was determined to find the one who had touched him by faith. Verse 32 says, **“...Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.”** I believe Jesus knew who it was. But he asked the question so that she might come forward willingly. Jesus never fails to catch those who come to him by faith. Jesus caught her, not to reprimand her for stealing his blessing, but to deepen her faith so that she could have a personal relationship with him. Though Jesus already knew her perfectly, she did not know Jesus. So Jesus invited her to know him personally. Faith is not one-sided, but relational. In order to have a relationship with Jesus she needed to acknowledge what he had done for her publicly. In other words, she needed to make a confession of faith. The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth (33). She shared her life testimony of how she had suffered from her bleeding problem physically, emotionally and socially and how she was healed by Jesus when she touched his cloak by faith. It was not easy for her to share the shame of her past life. But she confessed the whole truth, surrendering herself to Jesus.

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How did Jesus respond? Let’s read verse 34. **“He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’”** Jesus called her “Daughter.” This means that Jesus accepted her as his own child and had a Father’s love for her. In Greek, this word for “healed” means more than physical healing; it means salvation of the whole person. She was cleansed physically, ceremonially and spiritually. She was restored to the community, and even more, she became a member of God’s family. Now she could receive God’s blessing continuously and grow as a daughter of God. Her intention had been to receive healing and leave. But Jesus helped her establish a vine and branch relationship with God. This could be her source of strength and grace in any time of need. This is the blessing that Jesus wanted to give to her.

Meanwhile, Jairus was waiting patiently for Jesus. Though the woman’s testimony was very encouraging, it seemed to be going on and on. Jairus felt that time was running out for his daughter. Fear began to creep into his heart that Jesus would arrive too late. Then the worst case scenario happened. **While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from his house and said, “Your daughter is dead”** (35). This news struck his heart like a hammer. He had had faith that if Jesus came and put his hands on her, she would be healed. But at the news of her death, his faith was shattered. Believing Jesus seemed to be useless and stupid. People advised him, **“Why bother the teacher anymore?”** It was reasonable. But in essence, it would cut his relationship with Jesus and make him all the more fearful and doubtful. These people limited Jesus’ power, thinking that death was the end and that Jesus could do nothing at this point. But to Jesus it was the very moment to help Jairus grow in faith.

At this moment of crisis, what did Jesus do? Let’s read verse 36. **“Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”** Jesus intervened immediately and protected Jairus. At that moment, Jairus’ enemy was the fear that was growing within him. Fear paralyzes people. Fear cuts the relationships between people and God and among people. Where does fear come from? Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that it comes from the devil, who holds people in slavery by their fear of death. Fear is not a mere psychological phenomenon; it comes from Satan. Satan plants fear in our hearts in many ways. In the course of raising disciples, we face

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many rejections, failures and moments of crisis. At such times fear comes to our hearts. It paralyzes us so that we may avoid facing the challenge. Fear also comes through people’s advice. Even though their words are reasonable, they make us unbelieving and negative. Sometimes, we may blame others subconsciously and speak critically of them. The devil uses these words to plant fear and doubt and break relationships. When fear is planted, it destroys a person’s faith. Causing others to stumble is a great sin. We should be very careful not to speak words that discourage others. Rather, we should encourage others by speaking words of faith. Sometimes, I become fearful when I think I will lose one of my children to the world or to the devil. Whenever one of them makes a decision that takes them away from God rather than toward God, fear tries to come into my heart. It is a battle to resist fear and trust in Jesus. Only by listening to the word of God can I overcome fear and trust in God. Then, my faith grows. What makes you afraid: the thought of marriage, failure in school, social isolation, persecution, the terrorist threat? Jesus says, **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”**

Jesus not only protected Jairus from Satan’s attack, he also deepened Jairus’ faith. Jesus encouraged him not to give up and to just trust in Jesus to the end. Jesus wanted Jairus to trust him even before the power of death. Throughout human history, no one could challenge the power of death. All people had bowed down before it helplessly. But Jesus would conquer the power of death through his death and resurrection. So Jesus said, **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die”** (Jn 11:25-26). Jesus wanted to reveal his resurrection power to Jairus.

Jesus did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James (37). When they reached Jairus’ house, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. The atmosphere was full of sorrow and the power of death was overwhelming. Jesus, the Lord of life, went in and said to them, **“Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep”** (39). To Jesus, death is like sleep. But they laughed at him (40a). Jesus put out all the unbelieving people and took only the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was (40b). **He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha kum!” It means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”** (41) Jesus woke her up like a mother awakens her little child in the morning. She got up, and began to walk

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around. At this people were completely astonished (42). They never imagined that Jesus would raise her to life! But Jesus revealed himself as the author of life and the life-giver. This Jesus deepened Jairus’ faith. Jesus gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this (43a). It was not the right time to reveal his resurrection power to all people. Only those who had faith in him could experience this. After the little girl was raised from the dead, she was hungry. Jesus told them to give her something to eat (43b).

In this passage we learn that faith is relational. It is first of all a relationship with Jesus. And it also has power to influence the lives of others. Jairus had faith to bring his daughter to Jesus with a father’s heart. Jesus was pleased with Jairus’ faith and helped him to experience the power of faith by raising his daughter from death to life. The woman had faith to come to Jesus with her personal need. Jesus helped her to confess her faith so that other people could also have faith in Jesus. Jesus wants us not only to experience his power, but to be a blessing to others. Now the fall semester has begun on many campuses, and will soon begin on others. There are many young people on our campuses who need salvation. We should see with a father’s heart and bring them to Jesus by faith. As we do so, we need to overcome fear and just believe in Jesus. Then Jesus can raise many sons and daughters to new life. Let’s hold on to Jesus’ word, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”