

## ***“From My Daughter to Our Daughters”***

*Mark 5:21-43*

New Revised Standard Version

*\*This manuscript is an interpretation of the sermonic moment. Use it as a guide for the sermon direction; because of time, not everything you read printed here is actually included in the spoken sermon.*

It is good to be held in the love of God. It is good to be healed by the love of God. And sometimes, we are held in suspense as to whether healing will occur.

Today’s scripture passage is called a Markan sandwich. One story is interrupted by another story. As the second story is played out, we are left in suspense as to what will happen in the first story. Now we’ve probably heard both of these stories enough that we relax the minute we recognize the passage because we know that both the girl and the woman end up getting healed. It’s a happy ending all the way around and so, knowing this, we kind of sit back and “enjoy the ride.”

However, there is a third potential healing in this text...one perhaps more powerful than the others. But to get to *that* healing, we have to

walk through the details of this story and understand what is at stake. We have to see it and live it moment by moment as it unfolds.

Jesus had been teaching and healing on the “other” side of the sea. I wonder how long Jairus had been waiting on *this* side of the sea for Jesus. Had he been standing at the dock all day? All night? His eyes bloodshot from staying awake, his body full of adrenaline as he scanned the waters for a sign of Jesus’ boat?

Jairus was one of the leaders of the temple. Knowing what he does for a living helps us locate him socio-economically. He is a man of relative power and means. In *this* moment though, he - no doubt - feels powerless. In *this* moment his primary identity isn’t “temple leader” it is “desperate father.” Jairus is a dad. His daughter is ill. We can assume he’s been to the ER many times and all the pediatric specialists. Nothing has

worked. His little girl is dying. And Jairus is torn. Every bone in his body wants to be right by his daughter's side. He doesn't want to leave her. And yet, he is desperate and he has heard that Jesus can heal. He doesn't know where Jesus is or when he is returning, but he's willing to risk leaving his daughter's side to go and wait for him...to be the first one to grab him off the boat. He knows that in leaving his daughter's side she may die while he is gone, but he can't not go; he can't not try every last resort for help.

Jesus gets off the boat - no doubt a bit weary from his own journey and Jairus falls at Jesus' feet and begs him, "*My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live,*" (v23). We're told Jairus begs at Jesus' feet repeatedly. We're not sure if that is just the frantic grief of a father who can't control his emotional release, or if it's because other people were begging for Jesus to tend to their needs or maybe because Jesus hadn't heard Jairus the first time. We don't know but what we do know is that he is persistent. He is an unrelenting

advocate for his daughter, and it works. Jesus begins to follow him to his home.

I wonder what *that* moment felt like to Jairus? The moment that Jesus heard his plea and was actually going with him to his home? I wonder if there was an initial wave of hope and relief before the crashing waves of fear and anxiety returned? He had Jesus...but now he had to get Jesus to his daughter. And every minute mattered. Nothing had ever been so important to him in his life. When I picture this story, I picture Jairus running, and pulling Jesus behind him...Jesus rushing to keep up with the urgency in Jairus' step.

But as much as Jairus was praying to catch all the lights green on his way home, he doesn't. In fact, it's not just that he catches a red light or two, it's that he gets caught in a stand still traffic jam of sorts. Because crowds are following Jesus; they're like paparazzi around a celebrity. I imagine Jairus was literally trying to drag Jesus through this crowd of people without losing him. "*Excuse me, excuse me...*" -

and - *“Come on, Jesus...come on, come one...”*

We learn later that Jesus’ disciples were with him too, so this wasn’t just two guys trying to bob and weave their way through a crowd...it was a small entourage.

That’s when we meet someone else who has been waiting for Jesus. She wasn’t waiting at the dock. She maybe even didn’t know she was waiting for Jesus at all...until she saw him. And then, all the sudden, 12 years of pain and isolation welled up in her and gave her the gumption she needed to reach out and try to grasp Jesus’ garment. She, too, had seen all the doctors she could afford, to no avail. She had nothing left. No money. And - unlike Jairus’ daughter - she had no community. To bleed is to be ritually unpure. To be ritually unpure is to live in isolation. Who knows what was worse at this moment - her physical suffering or her emotional pain or her spiritual isolation. She, too, was desperate. But she didn’t have a father to advocate for her. She didn’t have a friend. She had no one. But herself. She mustered

enough strength and courage to reach out to Jesus.

And the minute she touched Jesus, he knew it. And he stopped. I wonder how long it took Jairus to realize Jesus had stopped? Had he run up ahead, pushing through the people, only to turn and see that Jesus was no longer with him? Did he have to frantically push his way back through the crowd to try to find him? Or did he feel the release of Jesus’ hand from his instantly...perhaps thinking Jesus had tripped or fallen?

The way Mark tells this story, we are to feel the urgent desperation of Jairus in this moment (trying to get Jesus through the crowd) and thus also the absolute absurdity of Jesus’ stopping in a crowd to try and figure out who touched the hem of his garment. Even his disciples call him out on this, saying, *“what do you mean who touched you? Everyone is touching you!”* It’s like all the people flooding into the Super Bowl today wondering whose shoulder is brushing up against theirs!

But Jesus knew. He had felt power go out of him. Just as the

woman had felt healing wash over her body, Jesus had felt the healing too. But it's almost as if he knew that physical healing wasn't the only thing that was needed here. If it was, he would have kept going. But he stops.

Jairus must have been pleading with Jesus to hurry, pleading with him: *"You can come back later to find the person who touched you...remember my daughter is dying..."* with his heart is pounding out of his chest and sweat dripping off his brow and his anxiety making him nauseous. *"Come. On. Jesus. Pleeeeaassee..."*

Meanwhile, in the midst of Jairus' urging, Jesus remains still, looking for who touched him and asking the crowd. A woman, who has no name, comes forward. Like Jairus at the dock, she falls at the feet of Jesus, and she shares her story with him...the "whole truth" Mark says. Which we can assume includes more than just her physical suffering. It surely

includes her isolation from community as well, the loneliness and pain that no one has understood. People have been drawing away from her for 12 years and in this moment, Jesus was the first person to actually move *toward her*, instead of *away from her*.<sup>1</sup> Most people avert their eyes and look away and Jesus is intentionally sharpening his focus and looking *for* her.

And Jesus hears the woman's story. He takes the time to hear her story (her "whole truth" as Marks says). He takes the time not just to heal her, but to let her tell him her story. And yet, every minute the clock is ticking. Every minute Jairus is losing hope, crying inside, *"My daughter, my daughter..."* and all the sudden the words of Jesus' overlap with his pleas, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well..."* (v34).

Daughter? Whose daughter? That word must have jarred Jairus. And certainly the crowd as well. But what Jesus is doing

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<sup>1</sup> That alone is a theological statement. Jesus moves toward the people that the rest of us move away from. Even more, in allowing himself to be touched by a woman who is ritually unclean/unpure, he shatters purity laws. Because he doesn't run off and go to the temple to get clean. In fact he makes no such stop when

he does end up proceeding to Jairus' house. He enters a temple leader's home having been touched by a woman who has been bleeding for 12 years...and even Jairus doesn't seem to care. That alone shows how suffering is an equalizing force. It can make things like ritual purity seem pretty insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

here is very intentional. He calls the woman “Daughter” because healing doesn’t happen apart from relationship. He is including her in his family, in the community, and is naming her in an intimate way. She had already been healed physically (when she touched him), but when Jesus calls her “Daughter” he heals her emotionally and socially and spiritually as well. In front of this crowd, he invites her back into relationship, into the community from which she had been ostracized. Jesus is teaching the crowd here a lesson, not the woman. Yes, the woman needed to hear that she is beloved daughter of God, but so did the community. And so did Jairus.

The beauty of this moment is so powerful, it can almost make the reader forget that Jairus is standing right there. And the sting of the phrase “*Daughter your faith has made you well*” must have ripped through him. What about *my* daughter?

And just then, as we the reader, and maybe the bystander, had forgotten about Jairus’ pain as we were swept up in the beauty of the woman’s healing, friends

and family from his house come running up and say “*it’s too late. Your daughter is dead,*” (v35).

And then like a pin popping a balloon, all the air is sucked out of this story, and out of Jairus’ lungs too. His little girl...his daughter...is dead. And. Time. Stands. Still.

In this moment, we, the reader, feel his grief. And we are heartbroken too. Mark has set up this whole story for us to sympathize with Jairus, and we do. We realize, maybe, we were foolish to get distracted with Jesus. That woman who touched him could have waited one more day...even just a few hours really! Jesus could have gone back later to find her. And what is one day after 12 years of suffering! *She* wasn’t dying, the girl was. All those minutes were wasted. And now it’s too late.

It’s at this moment that Jesus’ utter sense of calm and confidence is jarring and if I’m Jairus, it’s probably offensive. “*Do not fear, only believe,*” Jesus tells Jairus. “*You want to talk about belief right now? My daughter just died! I’m not*

*afraid...I'm angry! I'm sad!  
I'm bereft!"*

In this tense moment, Jesus manages to free himself from the crowd except for a handful of disciples and Jairus and they make their way to his home. People are weeping. Jesus asks them why, saying the child is merely sleeping. I think I might have felt insulted by that comment...as if I didn't know if my own loved one was dead or alive and here this stranger who hasn't even walked in the room yet he assumes he knows more than I do? (The audacity of Jesus in this passage is astounding. Later we understand it as compassionate authority, but in that moment to those people it made no sense!)

In any case, it's into all these emotions that Jesus walks. Calm. Assured. And to this young daughter, he reaches down, and touches her hand, and says, "*Talitha cum,*" "*Little girl, get up!*" (v41). And she does. And it's in *this* miraculous moment that Mark the gospel writer, reveals that the little girl, Jairus' daughter, was 12 years old. 12! And the lightbulb goes off...or at least it should! She had been alive as

long as that woman had been bleeding.

And all the parallels of this story hit us.

The girl is 12 years old. The woman has been bleeding 12 years. The girl is from a powerful household. The woman has no household. The girl has a father to advocate for her. The woman has no one to advocate for her. The differences of age and class hit us, but more powerfully, the similarities hit us too. That despite their differences, suffering is suffering. And they are BOTH daughters in God's sight. Jesus is trying to get Jairus (and therefore us, too) to move from caring about MY daughter only to caring about OUR daughters collectively. Jesus wants us to see all the suffering...to see ALL who deserve healing.

It's not a far leap for us to imagine the desperation and fear and pain that Jairus felt for his daughter. People will do anything for their children. It's "*my daughter*" he pleads to Jesus.

And this is what Mark is doing with this “sandwich” of healing stories. He wants us to sympathize with Jairus first, to see things from his perspective, and as the story goes on...the hope is that we’ll begin to see things from Jesus’ perspective...that we won’t just see the suffering of that we ourselves and our loved ones or our tribe or our political party are going through, but that we will see the suffering of *all God’s children*.

“*My daughter*” Jairus pleads to Jesus. But what about this other woman? Isn’t she someone’s daughter too? Yes, she is.

You see, Jesus cares for the particularity of Jairus’ pain and grief. He hears Jairus’ plea, “*my daughter...*” - AND - Jesus shows us there are other daughters out there too. It seems it’s far easier for us to care for those in our own family or group than it is for us to care for those who are outside of our family and group. But to Jesus...these two individuals...one a woman, one a girl...are both daughters. Both have pain. They are from

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<sup>2</sup> This week in history, the Senate voted not to hear witnesses or see evidence in the impeachment trial of

different classes socio-economically, but they are one class in God’s eyes...they are beloved. And both deserve and need healing. Both need an advocate. Both need a community. And both can stand and walk on their own with a little help...but we have to see them both, in order for them to both stand up!

And perhaps this is the question of the week for us as a country,<sup>2</sup> and really for us as a people of faith: ***How do we move from seeing the world in terms of “my daughter” to seeing it in terms of “our daughters?”***

Because, to me, this is the third healing that Jesus is inviting us to in this passage. The healing of our collective vision and a move to compassion...the healing of our collective soul. We are blind. And we are willfully blind, it seems. Only seeing who want to see and choosing not to see others. We can only be healed as a nation when we see as Jesus sees...

Jesus doesn’t negate the particularity of Jairus’ suffering

President Donald Trump, thus effectively ending the hearings.

and his daughter's pain...he just holds it in equal regard to another woman's pain...one that didn't have someone to call her daughter and that the community needed to claim as daughter.

We have been living in an "us" versus "them" world for so, so long. When will we see that it is "we"? *Together!*

When will we see that it's not just about *my* daughter getting into a certain school, it's about *all our* daughters all getting an education? When will we see that's not just *my* daughter who deserves to live in this country, but *all our* daughters who deserve to simply live...no matter what borders they were born within? When will we see that it's not just *my* daughter who needs a raise, but *all our* daughters who need a job and equitable pay? When will we see that it's not just *my* daughter who needs a cure, but *all our* daughters who need clean drinking water and vaccinations and food and hope?

In this passage, Jesus shows us that in order for *my daughter* to be healed - maybe - *our*

*collective daughters* need to be seen and healed first. Maybe he's trying to show us that one healing cannot come without the other.

The love for our own kin is powerful. The fierceness a parent feels for their daughter or son and the lengths to which they will go for healing and for protection for them is amazing. So can we see that as a teacher for all of us? Can we use the love we feel for those in our own family and in our own 'group' as a means of understanding how God sees ALL people? And then, in turn, channel it so that we are able to see all people as well?

Our country needs healing, and I think that healing will only come when we stop seeing through the eyes of political parties and what is good for me and what preserves my power...and instead we start seeing through the eyes of the common good and what is dignifying and empowering for all.

And when we see that ALL daughters are not being healed...we must stop our rushing and pushing...and we

must listen. Take the time. Hear the stoires. Hear all the truth. The WHOLE TRUTH. We must keep listening until we can see another's pain as our own pain...or until we can let go of our power for the sake of uplifting another.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his letter from a Birmingham jail: *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.*”<sup>3</sup>

This sounds so biblical...just like the Apostle Paul talking about how we are all One Body in Christ, and indeed, in the paragraph preceding the one in which this quote appears, King mentions that, like the biblical apostle Paul, he feels compelled to go wherever there is need of his help. He then states that all people in the United States are tied together in a web of mutuality in which an injustice in one place threatens justice anywhere. This means that once

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<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail;" (16 April 1963), accessed on 2 Feb. 2020 at [https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html).

people of ill intent see a group get away with an injustice, they are emboldened to try it somewhere else or to do it again. The more times people, for whatever reason, get away with further injustice, the more easily it can spread. It can even start to seem normative.<sup>4</sup>

It is true. We are part of an inescapable network of mutuality...but we get entwined in that net when we only look down at just the part of the net that *our* fingers are grasping. If we don't look up and out, we'll tangle the net everywhere in an attempt to just keep our part of the net safe and away from harm. And what drives this is fear. Plain and simple. Fear and scarcity perpetuate our pleas for MY daughter, without also hearing the pleas of all OUR daughters around us.

The good news of the gospel that we can see Jesus live out in our text today is that God's love isn't scarce. It is abundant. There is enough for all. It's not a race for more land or more money or more power for more,

<sup>4</sup> D. Reynolds, accessed on 2 Feb. 2020 at <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/in-letter-from-birmingham-jail-what-is-the-380393>.

more, more for me and less for you. No. God's kin-dom is about there being enough for all. Period. End of sentence.

The good news of the gospel in this text today is that Jesus sees *all* daughters equally. So can we use the compassion we have for our own children and channel that towards all of God's children? Can we move from seeing the world in terms of "*My daughter*" and instead see it as a world of "*our daughters?*"

It means that some things near and dear to us may actually die, before they are raised again in a new way. What kind of self-sacrificial love does it take and what kind of faith does it take to not prioritize our own healing, our own privileges over and above the healing and privileges of others?

It takes the faith of Jesus. The eyes of Jesus. The compassion of Jesus. The grace of Jesus. The forgiveness of Jesus. The whole truth of Jesus.

And I don't know about you, but it's hard to see the world as Jesus sees it. It's hard to give up "being right" or focusing on

what benefits me most and instead think of others first.

Jesus' compassion is like no other. Thanks be to God. For if it was like ours, we'd be done for. But we have the capacity to have the compassion of Jesus. Encounter by encounter. Day by day. Can we see the world and love the world as we love our own home and family...our own company or football team or political party?

If it seems too big and too impossible to do...just take it one day at a time, one conversation at a time, one vote at a time, one encounter at a time. We have to believe it is possible. Jesus shows us that it is!

We have to stop and listen...and keep listening...we have to take the time to see beyond our own perspective...we have to hear the "whole truth"...we have to take the time to advocate and stand beside and lift up the stories of those who are getting lost in the crowd. They are reaching up and out for us, no doubt. They have gumption and courage and a voice. But what does it say about us when *we*

don't stop and listen? When we rush past and ignore and silence? When we pretend the net we are holding is just to catch more people like us instead of to realize we are all connected in a network of mutuality...we are all connected as Christ's body...we are all daughters and sons of God?

All I've heard this week is how our nation's leaders have let us down. This is true. Our leaders have let us down. Remember too, that YOU are a leader. And we follow a man who says it is possible to love our neighbor as ourself and who actually shows us what that looks like.

So what do you say? Will we step up and lead as Christ has led us?

Our daughters are depending on us.

Amen.