

Death & Disease Defeated

Mark 5:21-43

Jesus has commanded the wind and waves, left the legionnaire demoniac clothed and in right mind, and now he comes back to help the dying and defiled daughters of Israel. This is another of Mark's sandwich stories where one story is begun, interrupted by another, and then completed. They build on and inform one another. Jairus' daughter is twelve years old and the woman has been hemorrhaging for twelve years. Death and uncleanness are reigning in Israel, but Jesus has come to transform everything.

A Dying Daughter

The Gerasenes beg Jesus to leave, and as soon as he crosses the sea he is surrounded by a huge crowd where a man begs him to come (vv17, 21, 23). Jairus is the ruler of the synagogue, not a rabbi, a prominent and productive man who takes extraordinary action, throwing himself at Jesus' feet (v22). His only daughter is at death's door but he has faith, and Jesus agrees to go with him (v24; Lk. 8:42). Daughters were not valued like sons in the ancient world when infanticide was regularly practiced, and outside the church little has changed. So this is a remarkable story about faith with huge societal ramifications. Jesus' life and doctrine compelled the church to rescue infant girls, value women, and thus sustain a higher female population than in general society, which in turn led to growth and flourishing.

A Bleeding Woman

On the way to see Jairus' daughter, Jesus is thronged by a crowd but touched by a woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years (v25). This means she has been ceremonially unclean and unable to worship and function consistently in community (Lev. 15:25-33). To touch her is to become unclean yourself. She isn't allowed in the temple or synagogue and has spent all her money on doctors who have only made it worse (v26). This woman is severely unhealthy, unclean, and destitute. She comes from behind because although she believes she can be healed by touching Jesus, she is ashamed and doesn't want to be recognized (vv27-28). Immediately upon touching him her blood flow dries up (v29). Jesus feels power go out of him and wants to know who touched him (v30). To the disciples, he's like a football player at the bottom of a fumble pile asking "Who touched me?" (v31). She is terrified—"in fear and trembling"—but comes to him and tells the whole truth (v33). Jesus responds beautifully, the only time he calls someone "daughter" in the Bible, and blesses her with holistic *shalom*. This healing is public, touches all parts of her life, and invites us to experience the same (vv23, 28, 34).

The Sleep of Death

Jesus Henri Nouwen said "You know . . . my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work." Jesus isn't done speaking when some people come from Jairus' house and callously inform him of his daughter's death (v35). He overhears this and instructs Jairus: "Do not fear, only believe" (v36). Taking only Peter, James and John in with her parents, Jesus clears the professional mourners, takes the girl by the hand and tells her to rise (vv37-41). Mark gives us Jesus' exact Aramaic quotation here just as he does when Jesus is on the cross (v41; 15:34). Jesus calls on the girl to rise, and he calls on the Father to raise him up. As wonderful as God's love and grace is in this scene for the woman and Jairus' family, its meaning reaches far further for them and us. Jesus has come to cleanse and raise the dead, and twelve is the number of Israel, God's bride and daughter (of Zion). His bride is unclean and his daughter is dead, but she will be healed and raised to new life. Fear overcomes faith in these instances and in every circumstance, including the plight of God's people corporately considered. When we die, we sleep; to wake is to be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:51). For us, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21). Get this girl something to eat (v43).

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Mark 5:22-23, 25-29, 33-36, 41-42

22 And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet 23 and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." . . . 25 Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, 26 and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. 28 For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." 29 Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. . . . 33 But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. 34 And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." 35 While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." . . . 41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

1. Both Jairus and bleeding woman have something in common that they believe about Jesus. What do they both believe (verses 23, 28)?
2. The woman and Jairus both feel a certain way at first. How do they feel (verses 33, 36)? How do they think feel after Jesus heals?
3. How long has the woman been bleeding, and how old is Jairus' daughter? Jesus has just come back from a Gentile region to Israel. Can you remember how many tribes the nation of Israel has? This number connects what Jesus is doing for these people and what he will do for his people, the nation of Israel. What will he do for us after we die?
4. Draw a picture of Jesus lifting Jairus' daughter up by the hand.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."—Mark 5:34