

Just Believe

Mark 5:21-43

Key Verse: 5:36

“Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”

Today’s passage contains two events. Jesus plants faith in a synagogue ruler and raises his daughter to life. And Jesus heals a woman from her chronic bleeding problem. At this point in Mark’s gospel, we are familiar with Jesus’ healing ministry. However, it is the first time that Jesus raises someone from the dead. Jesus teaches us that he is the Lord of life who can raise the dead. Jesus also teaches us a lot about faith in this passage. Especially, let’s learn to “just believe” in Jesus.

First, Jesus hears a father’s plea (21-24a).

Jesus and his disciples crossed the lake once again, arriving back near Capernaum, where they began. The crowd was waiting for them. Maybe the shouts went up, “It’s Jesus! He’s back!” Suddenly Jesus was surrounded by what seemed to be a sea of human beings in need. Yet Jesus did not feel burdened. Jesus was happy. Jesus was ready to serve them. Look at verses 22-23. “Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and 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.’” It was not easy for a synagogue ruler to come to Jesus. The Pharisees had slandered Jesus publicly. To identify with Jesus seemed to be opposing the religious establishment. In fact, Jairus risked his career to come to Jesus for help.

In Jairus, we see the heart of a godly father, and the heart of our Lord Jesus. To come to this world as our Savior, Jesus gave up his power and glory in heaven and was born in a manger. Jesus gave up the highest position to be our Savior. Jairus, who was willing to risk his career to save his daughter, has the image of Jesus. A man is not a father simply because he has children. A man is a father when he loves his children more than himself, and is willing to sacrifice himself for them. There is more to Jairus than willingness to sacrifice. Jairus had faith in Jesus. He was certain that Jesus could heal his daughter. All fathers are limited. Though they love their children, they cannot solve their children’s life problems. But Jesus is Almighty God and our Everlasting Father. Jesus can heal any disease and solve any problem.

Jairus came to Jesus in humility, falling at Jesus’ feet. As a synagogue ruler, he was a man of standing. He must have been well-educated, and a man of means, who exercised authority. Yet he realized that all of these things were nothing before Jesus. Jesus has the power to heal the sick and to give life. Jairus had awesome respect for Jesus as the Lord. He knew that before the Lord, he was nobody and that he absolutely needed Jesus’ help. So he pleaded

earnestly with Jesus. Jesus was moved by Jairus' sacrificial love, faith and humble prayer. Verse 24a says, "So Jesus went with him." When godly parents, or shepherds, come to Jesus in prayer, Jesus hears their humble cry.

Second, "Daughter, your faith has healed you..." (25-34).

Jesus began to make his way to Jairus' house. A large crowd followed and pressed around him (24b). Look at verses 25-26. "And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 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." This woman's name is not given. She is described in terms of her bleeding problem. Apparently, she experienced feminine bleeding randomly and frequently. This loss of blood made her body sick and weak. Moreover, according to Jewish law (Lev 15:25-27), she was unclean. She could not go to the synagogue or participate in Jewish society. As a woman, this was difficult. She was unbearably lonely. She might have felt that God did not care for her. She did her best to solve her problem. She visited the doctors again and again, spending all of her savings, yet instead of getting better, she got worse. To struggle in this way for one or two months may be understandable; yet she had suffered for twelve years.

Look at verses 27-28. "When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.'" When this woman heard about Jesus, something happened in her heart. Faith came in and began to take root. Faith came through hearing about Jesus. She didn't speak about this to anyone, but she believed in her heart that Jesus could heal her. She had a mustard seed of faith. It was not perfect or mature, but it was real and it was growing in her heart. It produced action in her life. The power of faith compelled her to leave her house, fight through the crowd and touch Jesus' cloak. It was not easy to get through the crowd. Many big, strong men were pushing to be close to Jesus. Yet, somehow this woman broke through and touched Jesus. It was the power of faith. What happened? "Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering" (29). We learn here that a mustard seed of faith unleashes the mighty power of God in Jesus.

Jesus knew that power had gone out from him. Jesus asked who touched him. His disciples pointed out that many people had touched him. Obviously, they did not know what had happened. Only the woman and Jesus really knew what had happened. Here, Mark seems to highlight the personal nature of faith. Although many people touched Jesus, only the woman's touch released his power. Many people may hang around Jesus. But only the touch of faith releases Jesus' power. Jesus pays attention to those who have faith. Jesus was determined to find her. So Jesus stopped and looked around again and again to see who had done it. The woman was probably some distance away by then. It had been her plan to touch Jesus' garment, obtain healing, and scurry back to her own place. She was afraid of public exposure, having the mind of a thief, who had taken something secretly. Moreover, she felt quite awkward to come out of her withdrawn emotional state to make personal relationships. She felt that others would despise her, and even condemn her. She just wanted to get away as fast as she could.

However, Jesus' voice rang in her soul, "Who touched me?" The woman stopped in her tracks. She knew that Jesus was speaking to her. She had to make a decision. Should she continue to hide herself, or go back and confess what had happened? The seconds seemed like hours. People were becoming irritated. Still, Jesus persisted. Finally the woman came forward, fell on her knees before Jesus, and trembling with fear, told the whole truth. Here, the whole truth is that she was an unclean woman who had been healed by Jesus. This confession gave glory to God, revealing God's mighty power and tender compassion. Those who heard her could praise God. Those who heard her were encouraged to have faith in God.

We must acknowledge that confessing our faith is important. The woman "felt" in her body that she was healed. However she needed more than this subjective experience to have a healthy spiritual life. She needed to confess with her mouth what Jesus had done for her. Two weeks ago, Samuel Toh, Christine (Agi) Toh, and Robert Moreno were baptized publicly. It was their confession of faith in Jesus. Writing and sharing Bible testimonies is another way to confess our faith in Jesus.

After her confession, Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Jesus called her "Daughter." Jesus welcomed her into a personal, intimate relationship with him. As Jairus loved his own daughter, Jesus loved this woman dearly, as his own daughter. Jesus also said, "...your faith has healed you." Jesus did not say that his garment had healed her, or that he had healed her, but that her faith had healed her. In fact, she initiated contact with Jesus through her faith. She overcame obstacles to come to Jesus by faith. Jesus gave full credit to the woman's faith. We can obtain Jesus' blessing by faith. We don't need to languish in a state of illness. When we "just touch" Jesus with faith, Jesus heals us.

Third, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (35-43).

Jairus must have been encouraged by the woman's healing. Nevertheless, his daughter's need was urgent. He must have been thinking, "Let's go, Jesus," though he didn't say it. Then some men came to him and said, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?" (35) What they said sounds reasonable. The fact was that she had died physically. But their assumption that death was the end of everything was wrong. Their conclusion that Jesus could not do anything was wrong. Their conclusion that Jairus was bothering Jesus was wrong. It is true that we must accept the reality of death. But we must not allow the power of death to reign in our hearts in the place of God's word. If death rules one's heart, first he loses his humanity, next he becomes a slave of Satan (Heb 2:14,15). Even the noble St. Paul would have become a hedonist if he lived under the power of death (1Cor 15:32). Jairus' joy of life had been to watch his daughter blossom. His hope for the future was wrapped up in his daughter's growth and happiness. To see her suddenly die, and to think it was the end, would have made him fall into great sorrow. He

could completely lose the meaning of life. He could have become an alcoholic or a drug addict. We must keep God's word in the first place of our hearts. We must not be overcome by the power of death through the words of unbelieving people.

On Friday night Dr. John Armstrong gave us a very insightful lecture on evangelizing postmoderns. He helped us to look at American culture objectively, through the eyes of the Waodani people. To them, recent mass murders in America are similar to their practice of spearing their enemies to death. To them, American culture looks like a culture of death, similar to their culture before the gospel came. How could a culture of death spring up supposedly Christian America? Dr. Armstrong suggested that a key event was the 1973 Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion. When the human life of helpless unborns was not valued, the culture of death began to grow. To live in this culture we are constantly bombarded by those under the power of death. We are assaulted by skepticism and cynicism, which foster despair, and lead to destructive hedonism. Living in this society, it is easy to become like a walking dead person. We can go through the motions of life without exercising any real power or having any real hope to do great things for God. Like Jairus, we are being assaulted by unbelieving words.

Look at verse 36. "Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'" First, Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." Jairus' real enemy was fear in his heart. This fear comes from Satan, who gives the spirit of fear. If Jairus had succumbed to fear, he would become Satan's prisoner. But Jesus said to him, "Don't be afraid." This is a repeated teaching of Jesus. Jesus does not want us to be afraid no matter what the situation may be. President Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." He understood that we must fight against the fear in our hearts first, before we can win the victory over the world. We must realize that fear is like spiritual poison. We are very careful not to drink or eat poison. We must also learn to treat fear with the same attitude. We must not allow fear to enter our hearts. We must never give in to the devil's fear under any circumstance.

Jesus also said, "just believe." It means that faith and only faith should be in our hearts. There should not be any fear, doubt, or reasonable unbelief, but only faith in our hearts. It was time for Jairus to fight a spiritual battle in his own heart. He had to decide to listen to Jesus' words, "just believe," and not to the devil's lies through reasonable unbelief. Jesus did not say specifically what to believe. Yet Jesus implies that Jairus believe the truth about God according to the Bible. There are several Bible truths about God that we must hold in our hearts all the time as absolute. First of all, we must believe that God is the Almighty Creator God, and the Ruler of heaven and earth. Secondly, we must believe that God loves the world, including us. Thirdly, we must believe that God is good and that God always does what is good (Ro 8:28). When we believe these truths, we can be right with God. We can have inner victory, no matter what the circumstance may be. This is the way to experience the mighty power of God over the world.

Look at verses 37-43. These verses tell how Jesus raised the little girl to life again. Jesus did not let the crowd follow him this time. Only Peter, James and John were allowed to follow. When they came to the house, there were many people mourning and wailing loudly. Jesus told them that the child was not dead but asleep. To Jesus, the child was not dead. To Jesus, the death of the body is like a sweet sleep. It is the end of hard labor in a fallen world. It is entry into the presence of God where there is love, joy and peace. The child was not in anguish, and the child had not simply vanished. The child's spirit was with the Lord and in the presence of holy angels, resting peacefully. She had gone to the best babysitters in all creation. When the wailing people began to laugh at Jesus' words of truth, Jesus put them all out. Jesus allowed only the child's parents and his three disciples to go in where the child was.

Jesus took the child by the hand and said, "Talitha koum!" which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Jesus called her as a parent calls his child to get up in the morning. Then the little girl stood up and walked around. She was living among them once again. Jesus is the Lord of life who calls the dead back to life again. Jesus said in John 5:28,29, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." A day is coming when Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again, will come back to this world. Jesus will give a word of command and all who have ever lived and died will come out of their graves. Death will be swallowed up in victory. Those who just believe in Jesus have everlasting life in the kingdom of God. Because of this, we have victory all the time and are more than conquerors in this world.

In this passage we have met two very different people. Jairus was a man; the woman was a woman. Jairus was an influential leader; the woman was a social outcast. Jairus came openly before all people; the woman came secretly. Jairus came on behalf of his daughter; the woman came with her own problem. Jairus' problem was an emergency; the woman's problem was chronic. Though they are so different, they had faith in common. To Jesus, faith is what really matters. Jesus blessed them on the basis of their faith.

Jesus really wanted to impress this faith that just believes on his disciples. Jesus had chosen them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. But they were ordinary men with many weaknesses. They would face continual spiritual warfare, many hardships, and insurmountable obstacles. But they could conquer the world when they just believed in Jesus. We can change the culture of death in America to a culture of life by just believing faith. It begins in our own hearts.