

“Miracles In the Waiting”

Mark 5:21-43

Open your Bibles with me to the fifth chapter of Mark, and we will read in a minute beginning with verse 21. If there is one thing we don't like to do in today's fast paced, hurried culture, it is having to wait. We don't want to wait in a line at a drive thru, so we do a mobile pickup. We don't want to wait for a table at a restaurant, we do call-ahead seating. If we don't want to wait in long lines to ride something at an amusement park, we get a fast pass. The reason for this is that waiting feels like a waste of time. We have other more important things to get to. Waiting is one those things that makes us uncomfortable. It challenges our desire to be in control. Uncertainty, delays, disappointments, pain, and a sense of powerlessness create tension. It makes it seem like something is wrong, and we resent being in a place of vulnerability over which we have no control.

Now, we may not like it, but waiting is an important part of the Christian life.

There's a lot that we don't know about God, and the way that we learn who He is and what He is able to do is through Him teaching us in life's seasons of waiting.

The psalmist said:

Psalm 40:1-2—“I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.”

Isaiah 40:31—“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

What exactly does it mean to ‘wait’ upon the Lord? The Hebrew word translated as ‘wait’ has the idea of looking eagerly for something, and a sense of hopeful

expectation. Its not describing passive inactivity, but an expectant and patient dependence upon God. Waiting on God means I learn to live on what I know to be true about Him when I don't know what's true about my life. It means focusing your heart on who God is, what He's like, and why He can be trusted even in the tension-filled uncertainties of life. It is confidently trusting the Lord in terms of His character, promises, wisdom, and His timing, all while continuing to depend upon Him rather than taking matters into our own hands. And so that brings us to this text from Mark 5 in which we find the stories of two different people who both find themselves in a situation in which they are having to wait for an answer to what seems to be an unsolvable, unfixable problem. (Read)

The incidents in this section of Mark bring to a close the third major division of the gospel. The first division, Mark 1:1-39, emphasizes the theme of Christ's authority. The second division, Mark 1:40-3:6, show us His penetrating insight into our humanity. The third division, Mark 3:7-6:6, reveals something about the immense popularity of Jesus and His ministry as well as those problems and hindrances that it brought on. At this point in chapter 5, His popularity is at its highest point as people come to Jesus from every direction. They're coming from within the borders of Israel and even points beyond. We've seen how crowds of people flocked to Him and pressed all around Him everywhere He went. It was something that filled the religious leaders with jealousy and provoked demonic opposition. And so with this context as our background, once more we see the crowds coming to Jesus here in chapter 5. But from the crowds, we meet two separate individuals who come to Jesus, both of whom can be described as struggling with difficulty. Though they don't know one another, yet their stories are intertwined. They have no relationship to each other, but they are brought together in the text of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here we find a man and a

woman, one is rich, and the other poor. One is respected, one is rejected. One is a distinguished member of the community, one is ashamed. One who has a 12 year old daughter dying, and one with a 12 year old disease suffering. It is a reminder of what the Scripture says in:

Luke 1:52—“He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.”

Here is a perfect illustration of that. And it shows us that no matter who you are, suffering knows where to find you. For it is no respecter of persons. Within this text, we will see a father’s helpless plea, a woman’s persistent problem, and a child’s untimely passing. However, more important will be the Savior’s sufficient and timely provision in each situation.

1—A father’s helpless PLEA (5:21-24a)

“And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about Him, and He was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing Him, he fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, ‘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.’ And He went with him.”

When Jesus comes back across the sea and returns to the town, He is met by a large crowd. Verse 22 says that from among the crowd came one of the rulers of the synagogue, a man named Jairus.

His situation

Mark describes Jairus as a ‘ruler’ of the local synagogue at Capernaum, which means he was a high-ranking official in local affairs. He was a well-to-do person

in the community. He held a respected office, and would have been held in high esteem by the community. He is a religious leader of a different stripe, for we've seen how most of the religious leaders opposed the ministry of Jesus. None of the gospel writers describe the nature of his relationship with Jesus. It seems obvious that he had personally observed the Lord's ability to heal. It was in the Capernaum synagogue where Jesus had first healed a man who had an unclean spirit.

It must have been difficult for Jairus to come to Jesus. As one of the rulers of the synagogue, his colleagues no doubt would have disapproved of him having any contact with the miracle worker from Nazareth. For again, as the popularity of Jesus increased, so also did religious opposition against Him. No longer could He enter the synagogues, but people were coming to Him.

And so here is a man who is among a certain class, but he doesn't go along with them in their criticism of Jesus.

His desperation

Regardless of his situation in the synagogue, it was Jarius' desperation that brought him to the feet of Jesus. Verse 23 says he implored Him earnestly, saying, "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." When you have a desperation like that, ceremony goes out the window. No longer does it matter what others might say or think. When your child's life is hanging in the balance, you can think of nothing but getting her the help that she needs. I've seen grown men break down and cry over the helpless condition of one of their children.

Charles Swindoll — *"Nothing can bring parents to their knees faster than a critically ill child. When the condition lingers and grows more intense, feelings of*

helplessness and desperation drive them to consider almost anything. We ignore our own prejudices as we seek advice from complete strangers. We forget our own pride and dignity as we search for anything that will bring relief to our little one. We spend any amount of money necessary, we travel any distance, and we sacrifice any possession for the hope of a cure. Our desperation knows no bounds.”

What a lesson we have here, because this man is afflicted because his child is sick with a life-threatening illness. We see that position, power, or privilege do not exempt people from problems. Problems affect us all and brings us down to earth. They not only serve to put us in our place, but they serve to put Christ in His place. Notice how Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus. Often, that is what happens when we come to a desperate place. It is in our desperation that we are driven to the feet of Jesus. And so its in that sense that life’s problems are beneficial to us and serve a purpose.

The psalmist expressed it this way:

Psalm 119:71 — “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes.”

In other words, it was only from that place of desperation in the midst of my affliction that I came to know something of the Lord. Once he was on the ‘back nine’ of his ordeal, Job said of God:

Job 42:5 — “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You.”

Jairus had heard what Jesus had done in the lives of other people, but now personal desperation was bringing him to the Savior’s feet. Because the fear of

loss was touching the one thing that he thought had been out of bounds. In his case, it was his ‘little daughter.’ His baby girl was sick to the point of death, and there wasn’t a thing in the world that daddy could do for her. He’s in a helpless condition.

When that happens, and the thing that we fear the most takes hold of us, here is the lesson from Jairus—we need to do the same thing he did, and that is to simply fall at the feet of Jesus with our problem. It might be to fall at the feet of Jesus with your family, or with your spouse. It might be to fall at the feet of Jesus with your job situation, or with a health scare. That’s what Jairus does here.

Which brings us to a second thing in the text:

2—A woman’s persistent PROBLEM (5:24b-34)

“And a great crowd followed Him and thronged about Him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, ‘If I touch even His garments, I will be made well.’ And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in Himself that power had gone out from Him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’ And His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the crowd pressing around You, and yet You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ And He looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’”

Verse 24 says that Jesus goes with Jairus, and there was a great crowd that followed Him and thronged about Him. In what seems like an interruption as He is on His way to deal with one situation, Jesus is met by a woman who has her own separate problem.

Her condition

Verse 25 tells us about the woman's problem, and how she had had an issue of blood for twelve agonizing years. That should stand out to you. Notice how the number 12 is a recurring theme between both of these people. Jairus has a daughter who is 12 years old, and this woman has been wrestling with a disease for 12 years. For 12 years, Jairus had a daughter who had been the apple of his eye, the joy of his heart. Now, she was sick and at the point of death. But this woman had been living with a debilitating condition for the past 12 years. Not only would this issue have been a cause of great distress and pain, but it would have also made her ceremonially unclean according to Mosaic law. And because of that fact she would have had to keep her distance from others, almost as if she were a leper. Other people were forbidden from contact with her. She would have been prevented from attending the local synagogue. Verse 26 says the woman "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse." So that in addition to her health being gone, her wealth was too. And so to put it in perspective, this had been her condition for 12 long years.

If you've ever had a prolonged health issue, you can most definitely identify with her. Maybe a long bout with cancer, or some other physically debilitating issue. Or, maybe you know the pain of prolonged mental anguish over something.

Maybe you know something about:

- The exhaustion of prolonged suffering
- The disappointment of unanswered hopes
- The loneliness of isolated existence

If Jairus' crisis has come on suddenly, the woman's crisis is one that has been ongoing. You know what it is like to pray not for hours or days, but for years over a chronic illness, a prodigal child, a difficult marriage, infertility, or unanswered questions. But in no way does the length of a trial lessen the compassion of Christ. Some struggles are longer than others, but regardless of the issue, His grace is sufficient in our weakness.

Her confidence

Verse 27 says, "She had heard the reports about Jesus." This woman had heard the reports of all that Jesus had been doing. She had heard of how He healed others of their diseases, and she was determined to get to Him, so she "came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment." Her internal dialogue is recorded in verse 28, "For she said, 'If I touch even His garments, I will be made well.'" She's not approaching Him openly like Jairus, but is trying to keep it as discreet and private as possible. In her mind, Jesus doesn't even have to know that she's there or even acknowledge her.

I'm convinced that there is more going on here, however. It is evidence of the woman's faith in the way that she come to Jesus. In those days, Jewish men wore tassels on their fringes of their robe. The word in Hebrew for it is 'kanaph.' It is this 'kanaph' that the woman reaches out and touches. Matthew's account says that she touches the fringe of His garment. And I don't believe this is by

accident, but that it reveals the faith that she has. For instance, there was a well known prophecy concerning the coming Messiah which said:

Malachi 4:2—“But for you who fear My name, the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings.”

The word ‘wings’ there translates the same Hebrew word ‘kanaph’ which means fringe, edge, or corner. I believe the woman understood the Scriptures about the Messiah, and so she reasons, “If I can just reach out and touch the edge, the ‘kanaph’ of His garment, I will be made well.” This is not superstition on her part, there’s nothing in the garment itself, but it is faith in the power of Jesus to heal her of her condition. She’s confident in Jesus. And the fact that she is coming up behind Him so as not to cause a scene, this may be out of her own personal embarrassment and the fact that she is ceremonially unclean. Maybe she felt too unworthy to approach Jesus directly like the synagogue ruler had done. But no matter, her act demonstrated faith and humility.

Her cure

Upon touching Jesus’ garment, notice verse 29 says, “And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.” Her condition had been prolonged, but her cure is immediate. And she’s aware that she has been made whole. But if she thought that she could slip off silently and unnoticed, or blend back in with the crowd, she is mistaken. Look at verse 30, “And Jesus, perceiving in Himself that power had gone out from Him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’” The disciples are dumbfounded at the question. There are crowds of people all around them, and yet He wants to know who touched His garment. And so He stops as the woman humbly comes forward to make herself known. Now, Jesus

knew exactly who she was. He asks not for His sake, but for hers. She opens up and tells Him the ‘whole truth.’

Jesus wanted her to move from secret healing to public restoration. For 12 years she had lived in shame, isolation, and ceremonial uncleanness. But by honestly telling the whole truth, she stepped out of hiding and into the light of Christ’s grace. Her confession became an act of faith, as she too falls down before Him. In response, Jesus did not rebuke or embarrass her. Instead, He tenderly called her “Daughter,” and says, “Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

If I can make some application here, true healing begins when we come honestly to Jesus. He already knows the whole truth about our sins, failures, fears, and history, but He invites us to confess them so that we might experience not only His forgiveness but also the assurance of His love and acceptance. As long as we hide, shame holds its grip on our lives. But when we bring the whole truth to Him, His grace brings restoration, peace, and wholeness. And that’s what Jesus does for her.

Meanwhile, Jairus has been standing there. To him, this must have been an unnecessary interruption as far as he was concerned. His need was greater! For as hard as it must have been for her, this woman had suffered for 12 years, what would it really matter if she waited just another hour or two? His daughter was on the verge of dying. But what everyone else might have seen as an interruption, Jesus saw a woman in need (Matt. 9:22; Luke 8:47).

Do the interruptions in your life seem unnecessary? There is no problem like that one we’re currently facing. It is hard for us to be sensitive to the pain in another person’s life as we’re struggling in the midst of our own. And yet Jesus turns our

perspective inside out. His grace can turn our pain into a platform by which we minister to others who are facing their own issues.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

There’s a father’s plea, a woman’s problem. And third, notice:

3—A daughter’s untimely PASSING (5:35-43)

“While He was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’ And He allowed no one to follow Him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when He had entered, He said to them, ‘Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at Him. But He put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with Him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand He said to her, ‘Talitha cumi,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And He strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.”

As Jesus is speaking with the woman, someone come from Jairus’ house with tragic news, “Your daughter has died, so why trouble the Teacher any further?” As in there’s nothing more that can be done. Death is the end of the story, for it

is the one thing that can't be escaped and that has the final word. Right? The whole thing just underscores the finality and awfulness of death, the point where human efforts end and death takes over in a situation. I've been with families in those situations where a loved one has been hanging on to life, but the moment comes when vital signs cease, and the nurse says, "She's gone." Tears well up in our eyes, a gurney is brought in, and the body is taken to the funeral home. You sense this same finality at a funeral when the final words are spoken at a graveside, a casket is lowered into the earth, and loved one walk away wondering how life will ever be the same. It all seems so very final. An atheist philosopher of the last century said:

Bertrand Russell — *"The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death. Very brief is the time in which we can help them, in which their happiness or misery is decided."*

That's a pretty bleak outlook on life, isn't it? In the mind of an unbeliever, nothing can prevent 'omnipotent Death.' It isn't a matter of if, only a matter of when. We only get so many trips around the sun, then life is over, and its curtains for us all. Why bother the Teacher any further? For there's not a thing in the world anyone can do about death. And I suppose that would be true if Jesus were just a 'Teacher.' But He's more than a teacher. He's the Word made flesh, the One who spoke life into existence, and the only One who has the power to undo death itself.

Verse 36 says, "But overhearing (ignoring) what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.'" Don't let the fear of loss and what

seems to be a hopeless situation overwhelm your heart. Believe in Me! It is the same thing that He says to grieving Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus:

John 11:25-26—“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

As they make their way to the house, Jesus allows no one to follow except Peter, James, and John. There's a crowd of mourners outside the house, and people weeping and wailing loudly. In verse 39, Jesus says to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laugh at Him! The word used there means to deride, to mock, to laugh scornfully. I mean it is absurd to suppose that someone who has died is only sleeping. They misunderstand what Jesus is saying and what He has the power to do. He is redefining, not denying her death. He is referring to it as ‘sleep’ because He is about to wake her up!

They laugh at Him, but verse 40 says Jesus puts them all outside (By the way, that's what you have to do with unbelief. Don't give any ground in your heart. Don't let it take up any headspace). He takes the child's father and mother and His disciples, and He went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand, He says to her, “Talitha cumi,” which is Aramaic for, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” Literally, He says to her what her father would have said to her each morning, “Sweetheart, time to get up.” And the text says that she immediately got up and began to walk around to everyone's amazement.

“Amazement”—word is *‘ἐξίστημι’* which means to be beside oneself

Let me give you some closing lessons for application. Two desperate people in this text, both of whom learn some things about God. From their story, we learn:

- *A lesson in God's timing*

Both of these individuals had to trust God on His schedule rather than their own. The woman had waited 12 years for healing before Christ finally transformed her life in a single moment. Jairus, however, faced the opposite challenge. His need was urgent, yet Jesus stopped to minister to the woman, allowing what seemed like a disastrous delay. It would seem that every passing minute reduced the chance of his daughter surviving, and the delay ended with the devastating news that she had died. Yet what appeared to be Jesus' interruption was actually the setting for an even greater display of His power.

God's delays are never evidence of His indifference. He is always accomplishing multiple things at once. And when we find ourselves waiting on Him, it is not that He's withholding His goodness, but that He's preparing us to experience it in a way that is greater than we could have imagined.

- *A lesson in God's wisdom*

Faith is not only entrusting to Christ our situation, but it is trusting Him when He seems to be working in ways that we don't understand or can't see. He always knows more than we do. What seemed like a needless interruption was actually part of God's perfect plan. Though His timing seemed confusing, His wisdom accomplished exactly what each person needed. It reminds us that God sees the big picture, and even when we don't understand His delays or decisions, we can trust that His wisdom is always perfect and His purposes are always good.

- *A lesson in God's ability*

This passage reveals that nothing is beyond the power of Jesus! Physical illness, prolonged suffering, or even death itself. What was impossible for

physicians and hopeless in the eyes of others was completely within Christ's authority as the Son of God. God's power is never limited by the severity of our circumstances. No matter the nature of the need, Jesus is sufficient, and He is fully able to do what no one else can accomplish.

Tim Keller says when you go to Jesus for help, two things are always true:

- You get far more from Him than you ever thought you would

Jairus went to Jesus in hopes that his daughter would be healed, but what he got was a resurrection. The woman with the issue of blood went to Jesus in hopes that she would be healed from her infirmity, what she got was full restoration. We go to Jesus thinking we need one thing, only to have Him load our wagon down with far more than we ever thought possible.

- You give far more to Him than you ever thought you could

Jairus came thinking he would have to trust Jesus just enough to get home, hoping that somehow his daughter wouldn't die before he got back. Little did he know what would happen. It would be a test of his faith far beyond anything he anticipated. Or the woman, she came to the Lord for healing. But she wanted just 'a touch and run.' In no way did she anticipate how Jesus would single her out from the crowd. And in both cases, it is more than simple healing that Jesus is looking to accomplish in our lives. He wants to bring us into a relationship with Himself. That's what He wants to do in your own life right now.

In the text, Jesus is touched by a woman who considered to be unclean, and Jesus takes the hand of a child that had died, which would have rendered anyone else unclean. It illustrates the whole point of the story. Jesus takes on our uncleanness so that we can be given His cleanness. He who was sinless

became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It illustrates the purpose for which He came as the Servant in fulfillment of Isaiah:

Isaiah 53:4-5—“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we stemmed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.”

He is the Great Physician who heals the sick, and in our case, there is no condition worse than sin. The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ! For He became mine and your sin on the cross. He was plunged into death in our place so that we could be plunged into His life. Death will not have the final word over us because it did not have the final word over our Savior. For 2 Timothy 1:10 says that Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. But you have to receive Him in faith. Some of may be in your own place of ‘waiting’ today, for whatever reason. If so, be encouraged from this text. He sees what you cannot see, knows what you do not know, and He is accomplishing purposes far greater than you can imagine. So do not give up, do not run ahead of Him, and do not lose heart. Keep trusting, keep praying, and keep obeying, because those who wait on the Lord will discover that He is always faithful, always able, and always on time.