

## Jesus says, “Not dead!”

Text: Mark 5:21-24a,35-43 for 7/1/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

<sup>21</sup>When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. <sup>22</sup>Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup>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.” <sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with him. <sup>35</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?” <sup>36</sup>Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” <sup>37</sup>He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup>When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup>He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup>But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup>He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup>Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup>He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Death: it is something we all recognize. We have all seen things that are dead: from bugs that stain our cars to dead animals on the side of the highway. Daily we are bombarded with death as the news media parades it before our eyes in all its various forms. Many of you have experienced the death of something or someone. It may have been a family pet, a friend, or a loved one. In that experience we come to realize that death is so final, so absolute. Once death has taken hold of something you cannot undo it.

That is what the synagogue ruler Jairus was facing. His daughter was dying, so he went to someone who he thought could help. But in the end, he was too late. As he was asking Jesus to help his child, Jairus’ friends came and gave him the bad news: Your daughter is dead. How those words must have rattled that man. Death had taken hold of his daughter, and Jairus knew that could not be undone. “Dead,” his friends had said. But Jairus’ friends would not get the last word. Jesus had something to say about this situation, and what he says to Jairus he also says to us.

Theme: Jesus says, “Not dead!”

I. Jesus’ words remove fear.

II. Jesus’ words give hope.

Death brings fear, and that fear can cause people to do some surprising things. Jairus was a synagogue ruler: a man of money, power, and a high standing in his community. Yet his power and prestige meant nothing when faced with the possibility of his daughter dying. We are told: **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”** (vs. 22, 23). Jairus was afraid his daughter was going to die, and he was helpless to do anything about it. That fear caused Jairus to set aside his self-respect and fall at Jesus feet begging for help.

Death caused Jairus to face the reality of sin. As a synagogue ruler Jairus certainly knew what God had said through his Old Testament prophets, **“The soul who sins is the one who will die”** (Ezekiel 18:20). As his daughter lay dying Jairus was faced with the reality of her sin, and he was faced with the reality of his own sin. Death proves the sin within us. Every sin we commit brings with it the consequence of death.

For Jairus, that fear became a reality. The Gospel writer Mark tells us: **Some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?”** (v. 35). Do you hear the hopelessness of the situation is reflected in the words of these men when they say, **“Why bother the teacher any more?”** These men felt that nothing could be done. They felt that not even Jesus could help at this point.

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Whether or not we care to admit it, death causes us some fear. Like Jairus, we feel helpless. One day, every one of us is going to die. There is nothing we can do to stop that from happening. When confronted with death, it hits us smack in face with the reality of our own sin. We have sinned and brought death upon ourselves. That truth frightens us. Like Jairus, we begin to feel hopeless; hopeless because when we die we know we *must* stand in God’s courtroom and be judged. Unfortunately for us, there is nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God. We cannot deny our sins, and we don’t have what it takes to pay for those sins. Sin has earned for us a death we do not want to face: That eternal separation from God known as hell.

Thankfully, Jesus doesn’t leave us in our fear. Instead, Jesus speaks words that drive out fear. Our Lord says, “**Don’t be afraid**” (v. 36). These are not the words of any mere human being. These are the words of God; God who has come in the flesh. As God, Jesus has the power to drive out our fears, because he has power to destroy sin and death. Jesus removes our fears by taking upon himself that which gives us fear: He takes on our sin and the death that goes with it. Since Jesus was sinless he should have never died. But he took upon himself all the sins we commit, and in doing so he took upon himself our death: **For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.** (1 Peter 3:18). When you trust in Jesus, you will not stand helpless before God’s Judgment seat. Jesus is your helper. He brings you to God dressed in the sinless robe of righteousness he won for you. Our Lord has promised that these things are ours. Jesus’ words remove your fear.

You no longer need to be afraid of death or God’s judgment. Through faith in Christ death becomes a door to heaven, and God’s judgment is turned into a declaration of “not guilty.” Jesus words make it clear that death is not something to fear, because through faith in Christ death leads to eternal life. This is why Jesus’ words give you hope.

It’s interesting how Jesus, with just five words, is able to address two different issues Jairus was struggling with. It was fear that drove Jairus to seek out Jesus. With his daughter’s condition becoming critical he knew he needed a miracle. So he comes to Jesus hoping for just that. While Jesus calms Jairus’ fears about his daughter he addresses the other issue that Jairus is wrestling with. Jesus tells him, “**Just believe**” (v. 36).

Jairus wanted to believe Jesus, even though he probably wasn’t sure what Jesus could do now that his daughter was dead. Jairus may have had his doubts, yet there were others at his house who simply refused to believe Jesus: **When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him** (vs. 38-40a). Professional mourners: they were hired to show the family’s distress over the death of a loved one. These people saw death on a regular basis, so they knew this little girl was dead. But Jesus comes along and tells them that the child is not dead, but simply asleep. To those professional mourners Jesus’ words sounded like nonsense, so they laughed at him. No one was going to fool them. That girl was *dead*. They simply could not believe anything else.

Do we always believe what Jesus says about death? How often does our human reason get in the way of our Savior’s words? When a loved one dies our human logic says, “They are not just sleeping. They are dead, and they are never going to wake up again.” Our senses and emotions get in the way. We see the casket, we feel the cold lifeless body, we smell the dirt of the grave, and we feel that emptiness. And when our senses and logic take over what do we do? We question God. “Why, God? Why them? Why now?” We feel hopeless, as our feelings get in the way of our faith. At that point death sure doesn’t seem like sleep.

Jesus addresses our doubts and our lacking faith. He does that by displaying his power. He takes our fragile faith and strengthens it first with his words. He says of the believing soul, “**Not dead**” (v. 39)! Then he follows his words up with his actions. **He took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her**

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by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). **Immediately the girl stood up and walked around [...]** (vs. 40b-42a). Jesus could have simply told the girl to get up. Instead he takes her by the hand and reveals his true nature as God. Our Lord doesn’t speak like the Old Testament prophets saying, “In the name of the God I tell you to get up.” No, Jesus says, “*I say to you, get up!*” And the girl does; she immediately obeys. Death immediately obeys and releases this girl from its grip. By his words and his actions Jesus makes it clear: He has power over death, it must obey him.

Jesus power is amazing, not only because of what he can do, but because he gives us more than we were hoping for. Mark tells us that when Jairus and his wife saw Jesus power at work, “**At this they were completely astonished**” (v. 42b). Their doubting, rational minds could hardly believe what they were seeing. Their daughter was alive. This was more than they believed was possible; it was more than they had hoped for.

Jesus does no less for you. When your rational human mind sees death and begins to doubt, Jesus says “**Not dead**” (v. 39)! Then he follows his words up with his actions. He takes all sin on himself and then lays down his sinless life to pay for it. Christ takes on your death and suffers your hell to remove your fear and fill you with hope. Jesus uses his almighty power to destroy the power of death, and then rise from the dead to prove the absolute truth of his words when he said, “**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**” (John 11:25-26). Jesus gives you more than you had hoped for. Death truly is a sleep. It is a sleep that every believer will one day wake up from. The Apostle Paul tells us: **According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise [...]** (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16). The dead will rise. You will rise from the dead, just like Jairus’ daughter. That is what Jesus is doing for you, and he says, “**Just believe.**”

To know what Jesus has done, and will do, for us is comforting. We don’t have to be afraid, because things are not hopeless. Don’t keep this comfort to yourself but share it. Do you know anyone like Jairus? Do you know someone who is struggling with the fear of death, or someone who has recently faced the death of loved one? Let them know they don’t have to be afraid. Let them know things are not hopeless. Share with them the One who can take away their fear and give them real hope through the power of his Word.

And do not just share that comfort but live that comfort. Let others see that you have nothing to fear, especially death. Let them see in you the peace of Christ; the comfort of knowing that death is only a sleep. Tell others of the comfort you have knowing one day you are going to wake up in the paradise of heaven. Trusting in Christ and his saving work you can share with others the words of Jesus, words which can remove their fears and fill them with hope.

Jesus powerful words are what sustain us when we are faced with the fear of death. Trusting in Christ we know our sins are forgiven, the door to heaven is open, and our loving Lord is waiting on the other side with open arms. Our Savior is waiting for the day when we will sleep, only to wake up with him in the heavenly home he is preparing for us. Amen.