

---

## Doug Hood's Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

September 25, 2016

Holding Onto Faith

**READ:** Mark 5:36 (Common English Bible)

*“But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, ‘Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.’”*

**MEDITATE:**

Faith is difficult to hold onto when a loved one dies. The Reformed theologian Karl Barth said that people come to church with only one question in their minds: Is it true? The promises of God, the saving power of Jesus Christ, the resurrection from the dead and eternal life: Is it true? This is the most fundamental question of faith. When those same people gather for a funeral service, gather to honor and remember the life of a loved one, the question is even more compelling: Is it true? Can God be trusted when death seems so powerful? Certainly, that is the question that occupies the thoughts of Jairus when he is told that his daughter has died.

In this poignant story from Mark’s Gospel, Jairus seeks after Jesus; seeks to intercede on his sick daughter’s behalf and ask for her healing. It is an active prayer. Prayer is seeking God – whether for a stronger relationship or to claim God’s power. Jairus is seeking God, through the person of Jesus Christ, and seeks God for the benefit of a sick daughter. Yet, messengers have now shown-up reporting to Jairus that his daughter has died. “Why bother the teacher any longer?” But Jesus overhears their report, turns to face Jairus, and says, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.” Apparently, death doesn’t seem as final to Jesus as it does to us.

It seems that for many people, the time comes when they simply quit praying, simply give-up on trusting that anything can be different. Either they sense that they can’t have what they want or that the opportunity has past. After their request has been ignored, or denied, they don’t want anything else. God has failed miserably in the role of Santa Claus and they will not consider the possibility that God’s desire for them may be something far better than what they seek. Rather than keeping their eyes wide-open for what God may be doing differently in their lives, they simply stop trusting.

Jesus seems to suggest here that when trust is lost, what remains is fear. Certainly for Jairus, news of his daughter’s death is cause to abandon hope. And when hope is gone, fear takes-up residence in our lives. But pay attention to what Jesus does in this story; Jesus remains calm: “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.” We miss the depth of meaning here if we expect the child will come back to life. What Jesus does is demonstrate a confidence that God still holds our lives, and future, in God’s powerful grasp, particularly when death seem victorious. Whether the child comes back to mortal life is not the issue. Jesus’ calmness exudes a confidence that God will come mightily to care for us if we would but surrender ourselves completely to God’s mercy and care. It is our continuing trust in that promise that strengthens our capacity to hold onto faith.

