The Lord of Life Confronts/Overcomes Death

The text before us this morning is not difficult to relate to. If you have ever had a child who was very sick or in the emergency room; a parent or spouse who is gravely ill, perhaps even dying, you know the pit of fear and terror that grows in your gut.

And so it was for the synagogue ruler Jairus, whose daughter was very critically ill and at death's door. It is easy to imagine the sense of desperation growing for him as he watched his little one, his precious daughter, growing sicker and weaker by the day--none of the medicines have worked and she continued to grow worse.

But then, there is a ray of hope. He learns that Jesus is nearby, the One who had healed so many, the one who could be the Christ/Savior. Maybe there was still a chance for the daughter whom he'd give his very life for.

And then there was sense of elation with Jesus said yes, He would go to his daughter! For the first time in who knows how long, there was hope.

And again, it is easy to imagine the mixture of joy and fear, fear that the help would come too late, especially with the difficulty and the slowness of pushing through the great crowd of people that were pressing around them.

And then Jesus stops. He stops to help another, one who had been suffering for 12 years. This woman had spent her life savings on doctors and medicine to stop the bleeding, but nothing had helped. But we are told that she had enough faith that if she just touched Jesus' garments, then she would be healed. And it worked. She touched Jesus' clothes, and was healed. Jesus then having felt power going out from Him (the very same creative power of God that had knit together and continues to hold together the world), stopped and asked who had touched him, with the purpose of getting the woman to confess her faith. Jesus then replied, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Now though this interruption may have only lasted a few moments, it must have seemed like eternity to the desperate Jairus! It would be like your loved one being transported to the hospital, and the ambulance stopping to pick up someone else while ever second counts. Here Jesus was healing this woman He called "daughter" while his lay dying! How tormented and anxious he must have been.

And then the most dreaded news of all reaches him - his daughter had died. The world had ended. The pain, the heart wrenched from the body. Jesus had just healed this "daughter",
and his had been allowed to die – it’s not fair!! The help, the healing was at hand, and yet it was apparently not to be. The pain and grief would be overwhelming.

Jairus was also told to no longer bother the teacher. His daughter was dead – what’s the use in troubling Jesus more over her. But this was no bother for Jesus for He had come to confront and overcome death, and more to the point, the cause of death, our sinful guilt. Jesus would confront not just the death of this daughter, but the death that all of the daughters and sons of Adam have inherited. The healing they had just observed, and the soon to be seen dead being raised were like all the miracles of Jesus, pointing to the Big Miracle of the Cross, where Jesus would endure the death eternal we faced in order to pay what we never could pay, namely our life. And His Resurrection would prove that Life would overcome death, forever!

And so, Jesus quickly ignored this report, and spoke the Word of comfort to Jairus to strengthen his faith--"DO NOT BE FEARING, JUST KEEP ON BELIEVING". Hadn't Jesus heard? She's dead. If He hadn't stopped maybe she would still be alive. If only....and we all can go through those kinds of emotional lashings against our Lord; to question His love and care of us in the midst of trials and suffering. And yet our Lord assures us that nothing occurs in our lives without His knowledge and control--that He causes all things to work for our eternal welfare--as so was the case here in our text. And so Jesus' Word strengthened Jairus' faith to endure this (just as He strengthens ours through the same means). It comforted and enabled Jairus to continue to follow and hope in Jesus even in the midst of the greatest and final enemy of death.

And we read that when they came to Jairus' house, they encountered a large noise of wailing and mourning. It was the custom of the Jews to hire pipes and professional mourners/wailers (woman to loudly wail at the death and funeral). The poorest of Jews would do this, and with the wealthy Jairus' daughter dying, the number of wailers would have been great. The weeping and wailing, the tears, and broken-hearted family members would have been hard for Jairus to endure as well.

And Jesus immediately stated: **Mark 5:39 ESV "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping."** Now these were professional mourners--they would be able to recognize death quite easily. And Jesus comes out and says that she is not dead, but only sleeping?!? O come on!! And they begin to laugh and ridicule Him. (These professional mourners could apparently easily shift from wailing and tears to ridiculing laughter). And that was the laughter and ridicule of unbelief--the way of the world which can weep a few days at
death then laugh at the sacred the next. It is the laughter of all those who reject the gospel and laugh at your faith in Christ alone. And Jesus chased them out, for the miracle of the resurrection was for believers only, (unbelievers will be raised on the last day, but only to be eternally cast out in never-ending suffering and death).

And indeed the child was only sleeping, just as any deceased believer's body is sleeping. This “fallen asleep in Christ” gives us that wonderful image and reminder this child's body and all those who have fallen asleep in Christ will wake up. It reminds us that death is not final for the Christian, and that the dead in Christ will rise up! (We'll come back to that in a moment).

And then, with no one else but Peter, James, John, Jairus and his wife, Jesus tenderly takes the daughter's cold hand and speaks the words to the girl "Talitha Kum", "Little girl, I say to you, arise". And note the power of Jesus’ Word—that immediately, the dead girl's spirit returns and she gets up and begins to walk around. Can you imagine what that moment must have been like for Jairus. His little girl whom he thought was lost, had been graciously returned by the powerful Word of God.

Folks, this very morning we have seen the same miracle take place. Though Kevin has been a vibrant and beloved son, nonetheless, he had been born like all of us, spiritually dead. But here in the water of his baptism Jesus spoke His Word to him, gave him His Name, washed away the stain of his sinful guilt and connected him to the power of His resurrection. He said, Little boy, I say to you, arise." And he did. In that Blessed Sacrament, he was raised up with Jesus and given new eternal life in Him. Now he is able to live and walk in His new life daily under the watchful eyes of his parents.

And so it was for each of you fellow baptized children of God. Though you had been sick and dying, indeed were dead in the guilt of your sin, Your Lord came to you and healed you. Raised you up onto life! Death has lost its sting for you – it cannot truly touch you.

You need not fear it, indeed, you have already been killed with Christ and raised to new life with Him. Also, you know by Jesus’ Resurrection, that even death itself has been changed into a freeing doorway, an exit from this vale of tears. And, on the Last Day, when we hear the powerful voice and word of our Lord saying to us "I say to you, rise little child" that our very bodies will be raised up and changed for eternal blissful living, and therefore will be forever reunited with the body of believers around Christ.

People of God, knowing these things will help us to be able to face the fear and ugliness of the death that daily pursues
us, and even the ridiculing laughter of those who reject our hope. By focusing on our Lord's Word and sacraments, His strong and healing presence of Life with us, He will be able strengthen and comfort us just he did for Jairus in our text. Yes, death is all around us. It is something that looms before us, and will touch our lives. But all praise to the Lord of Life who has confronted and defeated our enemy and used His death and resurrection to give us Life over death for eternity, and has given us His powerful Word and sacraments to comfort and strengthen us in the face of death. And thus were are able to Live - to love and care for one another, and even those around us in our daily lives.