

“One Word Changed Her Life Forever”

Mark 5:21-43

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

First Baptist Church

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This morning our attention is drawn to two miracles Jesus performed. The reason we'll focus on two miracles is because Mark intertwines the stories describing them, forcing us to examine them at the same time.

I am glad Mark did this. It is in comparing and contrasting these two encounters with Jesus we get a clearer picture of who Jesus was and what he was sent by God to do. It is obvious Mark felt one story without the other would be incomplete.

By the way, weaving two stories together is a trait common to Mark. Four times he begins a story only to interrupt it with another one. I find this literary style to be unique and very effective.

The first story in our text begins when a prominent religious leader named Jairus approached Jesus for help on behalf of his daughter. She was deathly ill, and he was desperate.

This powerful man who was accustomed to people falling at his feet begging for help was now the one begging. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his home and lay hands on his daughter.

Many were probably surprised when Jesus readily agreed. After all, religious leaders like Jairus were already creating problems for Jesus. They were threatened by his popularity and seeking ways to undermine his ministry. Surely, Jesus would refuse this request and send a clear message to his enemies by doing so.

He sent a message all right; it just wasn't the one most people expected. Jesus' decision that day to help Jairus let everyone know he was sent by God to show mercy even to his enemies. He was not interested in seeking revenge, especially at the expense of an innocent girl he could help.

It was while Jesus was on his way to Jairus' home that Mark introduced the second story. A woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years slipped up behind Jesus and merely touched the hem of his garment. Immediately, she was healed.

As soon as this happened, Jesus turned to the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" The disciples were completely baffled by this question since a crowd was following Jesus to Jairus' home, and many were pressing up against him.

This woman knew why Jesus asked this question, though. Her touch was unlike that of those around her who merely wanted to see and hear Jesus. Reluctantly, she confessed she was the one who had touched the hem of his garment in search of a miracle.

I mention her hesitancy because I am convinced she thought Jesus would scold her for touching him. Anyone who came in contact with a woman with her condition would be unable to enter the temple or a synagogue for a week. They were considered unclean and unfit to worship. For a religious leader, this would be devastating.

To her surprise, Jesus did not reprimand her, but treated her with dignity, respect and compassion. "Daughter, your faith has made you well," Jesus tenderly told her, "go in peace and be healed of your disease." With these reassuring words, this woman's resilient hopes and dreams came true.

At this point, Mark returned to the original story. When Jesus and Jairus resumed their journey, some of Jairus' servants approached Jairus to inform him his daughter had died, which meant there was no need for Jesus to come to the house. This did not deter Jesus, though, and as he continued to walk with Jairus he told him not to be afraid.

When they arrived at the house, Jesus told the neighbors who had gathered to mourn to go outside. He entered the daughter's room, along with her parents and Peter, James and John. He took the lifeless child by the hand and told her to get up, which she did.

"Give her something to eat," Jesus said, "and tell no one what happened here." Mercifully, Jesus had no interest in exploiting this family and selfishly using this miracle for personal gain.

What intrigues you the most about this story? For me, it is the way Jesus addressed the woman in the second story who touched the hem of his garment.

"Daughter, your faith has made you well," Jesus tenderly told her, "go in peace and be healed of your disease."

Was this woman really Jesus' daughter? No, she was not.

Then why did he refer to her this way? The first story holds the key to understanding Jesus' reason for calling her 'daughter'.

Who was the person in need of Jesus' healing touch in the first story? It was Jairus' daughter.

And what did Jairus do for her? He set aside pride and protocol to get her the help she needed. This proud and powerful man dropped to his knees in front of Jesus, and he didn't care who saw him.

He wanted his daughter to live more than he wanted his reputation and standing in the community to remain intact. He was willing to give up everything for her, which he probably did.

On the other hand, the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment had no father to plead her case. She was all alone. After twelve years of trying to find a cure, she had no money or friends left. No one like Jairus was going to be her advocate.

So, Jesus looked at her and uttered the sweetest word she had ever heard, daughter. How long had it been since anyone called her that? How long had it been since she felt wanted and loved? How long had it been since anyone spoke a kind and hopeful word to her? How long had it been since she felt anyone cared about her?

“Daughter, your faith has made you well,” Jesus tenderly told her, “go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

What do you think Mark wanted us to take away from these two stories? For me, it is this.

Be there when your children need you. Love them at their best and their worst. Like Jairus, set aside pride and protocol when necessary. Walk alongside them. Encourage them. Support them. Give wise counsel. Never give up on them.

At the same time, respond to everyone you meet as if they were a member of your family. Treat them with dignity and respect. Walk alongside them so they will not feel alone, even if your paths cross for only a short time.

Listen to their story. Speak kind and hopeful words. Offer to pray with them and for them. When it is appropriate, give them financial help.

Through these two stories, Mark urged his readers to be on the lookout for the lonely and disfranchised. He wanted them to follow Jesus’ example the day he adopted a stranger into his family.

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Who needs you to love them this much this week?