

Mark 5:21-43
Talitha Cum
WRCoB 2.2.20

There is a story that comes out of Nigeria
From early in the 2000's
That has stayed with me.

There was a missionary couple from Switzerland
Who served the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.

They had a young daughter who became ill.

Fever . . . most likely malaria.

They treated her.

She got worse.

The local clinic did all it could
But the little girl continued to go downhill.

Finally, in desperation, they drove the 8 hours to Jos
To get her to a hospital
That could offer better medical care.

Can you imagine the sense of urgency?

To drive the long 8 hours
With your little girl burning up with fever?

Their little daughter died on the way.

They drove the remaining distance
With the dead child in her mother's lap.

They buried her on the compound where Judith and I lived.

A little stone marks her grave.

~~

In today's scripture, I feel the same urgency in Jairus' voice.

He pushes his way through the crowd
To where Jesus stood
And falls down before him pleading

**Mark 5:23 NLT "My little daughter is dying," he said.
"Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so
she can live."**

I can't think of anything more gut wrenching
Than this particular scenario.

Leaving the side of his daughter's bed
To go in search for someone to help
Worried sick while he was away.

Yet, as Jesus accompanies Jairus, he stops.

Someone touched him.

Jesus asks who it was.

Astonished, the disciples respond . . .

Mark 5:34 CEV “Look at all these people crowding around you! How can you ask who touched you?”

Meanwhile, Jairus has lost his composure.

Come on, Jesus, please hurry up!

My daughter is dying . . . please!

~~

Nonetheless, Jesus stops.

He wants to find out who touched his garment.

It was a woman just as desperate as Jairus was.

She suffered from menstrual bleeding.

A condition that lasted for 12 years
That would eventually kill her.

A condition considered unclean by Jewish law
Preventing her from touching
Or being touch by anyone.

A woman so desperate she spent everything she had
On physician’s care and medical treatments.

THIS WAS HER ONLY CHANCE.

If I could but touch the hem of his garment, I’ll be well.

Jesus felt the power leave him.

Mark 5:34 NLT And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”

~~

By this time, Jairus is beside himself.

He looks up and sees people he knows
Coming from his house to him.

And what he feared more than anything, they confirmed.

Mark 5:35 NRSV Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?

~~

Mark does not describe Jairus' reaction.

I can imagine him dropping to his knees
With a feeling like he's just been kicked in the chest.

But Jesus says to him
Do not fear, believe.

Don't' be afraid? Believe what?

Believe that life still makes sense
Even after losing your 12-year-old daughter?

Believe? Believe what?

That God took her because he wanted another angel?

That she's better off . . . a blessing in disguise.

That one day he'll understand?

Believe? Believe what?

Some other glib comment from his friends
Why his lovely, little daughter has died?

There is no belief in Jairus' pain.

~~

Dispersing the crowd

And forbidding anyone to follow
Except Peter, James and John
They proceed to Jairus' home

His compound was crowded with mourners
Weeping and wailing.

Jesus and his disciples enter the house
With the mother and father.

And into the room where the little girl lay
Cold, pale, and still
Her little arms folded over her breast.

Jesus reaches out and takes her hand
And speaks to her in the language he knows best
Aramaic, **Talitha cum**, *little girl, rise up!*

And she rises . . . from the dead!

~~

Beyond all hope . . . she rises.

The miracle of all miracles . . . resurrection from the dead.

She rises up

A rush of warmth and color

Flushing her face and arms.

~~

What incredible joy

What tremendous relief

What absolute astonishment

They all felt.

The mourners started to talk all at once.

I'm telling you, man, she was dead!

No question about that!

Then Jesus touched her and now this.

I've never seen anything like it before.

Just who is this Jesus!

And of course, we like them are astounded

That Jesus gives strict orders

Not to let anyone know what happened.

Honestly, how could they not share

The most amazing thing they had ever seen?

~~

The story of two daughters.

One who suffered hemorrhaging for twelve years

The other dead at twelve-years.

Two daughters . . .

One who touched the hem of Jesus' garment
The other whom Jesus touched.

The power of life surged through them both.

~~

We do not know what Jesus means
When he said to the crowd

Why do you weep . . . she is not dead . . . she is sleeping.

If she had actually died

Then Jesus raised her from the dead . . .
A miracle above all miracles.

If she was just asleep, in a coma, unconscious
Unable to awaken

Then Jesus healed her.

Take your pick . . . either way

The story is of the life-giving power of Jesus.

And either way . . . mattered little

To the woman who suffered for 12 years
Or the parents of the 12-year-old.

They cared little how it happened

But just that it happened.

The woman was well . . . was made clean

To touch and be touched
After a long twelve years.

The parents . . . they had their daughter back . . .

She was alive

She was well

She was with them.

~~

Now please don't ask me how this could be.

I don't know.

And please don't ask me the difficult question

Of why some live and some die.

Why God heals someone's little daughter

And why God does not heal someone else's.

Why some people live to an old age

While others die an early death.

Why decent, upright people die a horrible death

At the hands of evil people

And evil people live to a ripe old age.

I cannot answer that question.

I do not know.

But that's the reality of it, isn't it? That's life.

~~

But this I do know . . .

I know the life-giving power God gave to Jesus
Is not only about this life
But about the life to come.

~~

Like the missionary couple in Nigeria
Who lost their little daughter.

Shortly after she died
They returned to Switzerland
Leaving behind a small grave

A testimony of the sacrifice of those who served.

And yet, is that the end of the story?

No!

Because the moment their little daughter breathed her last
As their car raced from Mubi to Jos
Something else happened

A hand reached out from the other side of death
And a voice not heard by the living whispered

Talitha cum

Little girl, wake up!

And she opened her eyes to see the face of Jesus
To feel the touch of his hand
To hear his words
Welcoming her into his kingdom.

Are we not promised eternal life when Jesus touches us?

Are we not eternally healed?

Jesus' words to Jairus are the words for every believer

Do not fear, only believe!

~~

All the stories of people touched by Jesus end well!

They do live happily ever after.

Maybe not here in this life . . .

But most certainly in the life to come.

Do not fear . . . only believe.

Talitha Cum

To God be the Glory!