

Mark 5:21-43  
A Touch from the Master's Hand  
WRCoB 1.28.24

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 at the local clinic  
But the little girl didn't improve.

In fact, she got worse.

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?

Having to drive eight 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 Brethren compound  
Where Judith and I lived.

A little stone marks her grave.

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I sense the same urgency in Jairus' voice.

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

"My little girl is dying"  
"Please come and heal her"

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 to his home  
Where his daughter lay extremely ill, he stops.

Someone touched his robe.

Jesus asks who it was.

Astonished, the disciples responded

**Mark 5:31 CEV “Look at all these people crowding around you! How can you ask who touched you?”**

Meanwhile, Jairus is beside himself.

“Jesus, please, please, please hurry up!

“My daughter is dying . . . please!”

~~

But Jesus stops anyway.

He wants to find out who touched his garment.

It was a woman just as desperate.

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 touched 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”

Jesus felt the power leave him and said to her

“My daughter, your faith has made you well.”

But the life went right out of Jairus

When he saw people coming from his house

And what he feared more than anything, they confirmed.

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

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Mark does not describe Jairus' reaction.

I can imagine him 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

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 lay dead?

There is no belief in Jairus' pain.

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Dispersing the crowd  
And forbidding anyone to follow

Peter, James and John proceed to Jairus' home

His compound was crowded with mourners  
Weeping and wailing.

Jesus and his disciples enter the house.

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

Beyond all hope, she rises.

The miracle of all miracles, she rises  
A rush of warmth and color  
Flushing her face and arms.

~~

What incredible joy  
What tremendous relief  
What absolute astonishment  
They all felt.

Everyone started talking at once.

“I’m telling you, she was dead!  
No question about that!

Then Jesus touched her and now this.

Never in my life, have I ever seen the likes of this!

Just who is this Jesus!”

Jesus gives strict orders  
Not to let anyone know what happened.

Seriously?!?

How could they not share  
The most amazing thing they had ever seen?

The story of two daughters.

One who suffered for twelve years  
The other dead at twelve-years.

Two daughters  
One who touched the hem of Jesus' robe  
The other whom Jesus touched.

The power of life surged through them both.

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

No one understood what had just happened  
But it mattered little

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 of isolation  
From those she loved and who loved her

The parents had their daughter back  
She was alive, she was well.

~~

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 not someone else's little girl.

Why some people live to an old age  
While others die an early death.

Why some decent, upright people die a horrible death  
At the hands of evil people

And some evil people live to a ripe old age.

I cannot answer those questions.

I do not know.

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But this I know.

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

I know the life-giving power of Jesus  
Is for here and now and for life ever after.

I know the life-giving power I received  
When I became one of his children.



Only believe, Jesus says, only believe.

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

Shortly after she died  
They left Nigeria to return 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 sped from Mubi to Jos  
Something else happened

A hand reached through the thin veil  
Between this life and life eternal life  
And a voice not heard by the living whispered

***Talitha cum***

*Little girl, rise up!*

And she opened her eyes to see the face of Jesus  
To feel his touch, 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!**

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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.

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Jesus' life-giving power is for everyone  
Whether they die at a ripe old age  
Or die young.

It is the power that gives value to a person's life.

The power to heal and transform.

Have you ever read the poetry  
By the Brethren poet Myra Brooks Welch?

Let me read one for you.

*The Touch of the Master's Hand*

*'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer  
Thought it scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin,  
But held it up with a smile.*

*"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"  
"A dollar, a dollar. Then two! Only two?  
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"*

*"Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;  
Going for three..." But no,  
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man  
Came forward and picked up the bow;*

*Then wiping the dust from the old violin,  
And tightening the loosened strings,  
He played a melody pure and sweet,  
As a caroling angel sings.*

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer,  
With a voice that was quiet and low,  
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.*

*"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?  
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?  
Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice,  
And going and gone," said he.*

*The people cheered, but some of them cried,  
"We do not quite understand.  
What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply:*

*"The touch of the Master's hand."*

*And many a man with life out of tune,  
And battered and scarred with sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd  
Much like the old violin.*

*A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,  
A game — and he travels on.  
He is "going" once, and "going" twice,  
He's "going" and almost "gone."*

*But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd  
Never can quite understand  
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought  
By the touch of the Master's hand.*

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In death, in life, in the bread and in the cup  
We find the life-giving power of Jesus.

For communion is not only a time for remembrance  
But also, a time for repentance and renewal.

For we discover mercy, grace, and love  
Hidden in the elements of the bread and cup.

Consider these words, our invitation to communion.

Jesus was always the guest.

In the homes of Peter and Jairus,  
Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna,  
he was always the guest.

At the meal tables of the wealthy  
where he pled the case of the poor,  
he was always the guest.

Upsetting polite company,  
befriending isolated people,  
welcoming the stranger,  
he was always the guest.

But here,  
at this table,  
Jesus is the host.

Those who wish to serve him  
must first be served by him,  
those who want to follow him  
must first be fed by him,  
those who would wash his feet  
must first let him make them clean.

For this is the table  
where God intends us to be nourished;  
this is the time  
when Christ can make us new.

So come, you who hunger and thirst  
for a deeper faith,  
for a fuller life,  
for a better world.

Jesus Christ,  
who has sat at our tables,  
now invites us to be guests at his <sup>2</sup>