

Mark 5:21-43^{vi vii}

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's

father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

^{vi} **About Mark 5:21-43**

The gospel reading this week is the story of the raising of Jairus’s daughter, omitting Mark’s intervening story of the woman with the hemorrhage. Both stories speak of faith and restoration, each in a different way.

Jairus, “one of the leaders of the synagogue,” (v. 22) comes to entreat Jesus on behalf of his daughter. The terms used throughout the story may be understood on several levels: Jairus’s plea that Jesus touch his daughter, “that she may be made well, and live” may be interpreted also that she may be saved and have (eternal) life.

The faith Jesus asks of Jairus can mediate grace to his daughter. It represents the faith of the community on behalf of the individual. Jairus is challenged (v. 36) to respond where the disciples have failed (4:40).

The term “sleeping” was a common euphemism for death, but what Jesus meant by saying “the child is not dead but sleeping” is not certain—whether she was in a coma of some sort, or whether, from the perspective of the kingdom of God, even physical death is but an interlude (John 11:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). The Greek word for “get up” is one of the common terms describing Jesus’ resurrection (Mark 16:6). The injunction to silence signals Mark’s concern that the resuscitation of Jairus’s daughter cannot be truly understood until Jesus’ own resurrection—even though the proof of life, eating, is similar in both cases (Luke 24:30-31; Acts 10:41).

vii Reflection and Response

The Judeo-Christian concern for the poor and needy has become overwhelming in this day when the whole world of nations is at our doorstep. We hardly know how to respond. International economic injustices prevent the distribution of national resources on the basis of simple human need. Welfare and many other social obligations have largely become the responsibility of governmental agencies and institutions. We are not too conscious of the individual injunction to be our brother's keeper.

Still, those who live under biblical mandates do what they can to relieve human need, as they are able. "For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not." Voluntary and secret pledging may be hazardous to the Church, but it is in the spirit of what we are called to do. As Paul says, "...so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have."

The motivation for such stewardship of our resources is our response to Jesus' voluntary poverty that we "might become rich." If our gratitude and love for his life given for us is genuine, we are spontaneous givers. Paul equates liberality with our desire to fulfill the will of God, who has given us all that is necessary for our well-being. What and how we give it is really a matter between ourselves and God and reflects our relationship with God.

The passage from Mark seems incongruous with today's other readings, but it may be related squarely to our sense of gratitude. There are two open secrets in the Gospel of Mark. One is that Jesus is Lord over all life in both the natural and spiritual worlds, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. The signs of God's kingdom come in Christ are staked out all over the countryside if we can but read them in his words and deeds. The other secret is that faith alone will enable us to receive the blessings Jesus brings to the world.

For the first time in Mark's gospel, a respectable member of society "falls at Jesus' feet." Whatever mixture of motives he might have, the ruler of the synagogue also has some faith that Jesus can help his dying child. Jesus recognizes the quantum of faith in Jairus and responds to it. Our Lord is quick to respond to any budding faith, no matter how it is mixed with self-serving interests.

But the little girl dies before Jesus reaches her. Why trouble him further when death strikes in the midst of hope? We say "where there is life there is hope." But Jesus, already challenged and victorious over the violence of nature and demonic forces, goes immediately to meet death head-on and calls the daughter of Jairus out of her "sleep."

God is not the God of the dead but the living. "I am the resurrection and the life...He that believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." So Jesus vanquished death also, demonstrating that he is Lord even over the last enemy of life.

Jesus has proved how genuine is his love for us. Our gratitude moves us to find our brothers and sisters in need and carry on his gracious work.