

Jesus' 'Laughable' Calm amidst Chaos

Message #2 in the series "In the Middle of Chaos"

Mark 5:34-43

St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown
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³⁴ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease. ³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" ³⁶ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe." ³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat. (Mark 5:34-43).

Jesus never taught in anything resembling a tame Sunday school setting. The closest environment would have been preaching in a synagogue, but many times those meetings were interrupted by the demonic shrieks of exorcisms, or by astonished reactions to miraculous healings, resulting in a crowd uproar. **Most of Jesus' teaching and preaching took place amidst noisy, pressing, agitated crowds.** Crowd control was necessary: to avoid being stampeded he'd preach from a boat (Mark 3:9) and once he barely escaped being pushed off a cliff by a disapproving audience! (Luke 4:29) The swirl of chaotic noise and activity surrounding him is a fitting metaphor for the various pressures, combative voices, threats and worries that define our lives today. Watching Jesus amidst the crowds sheds great light on how we are to react to and live in our 'crowded' lives.

Let's pick up our story (started last week) that finds Jesus in the midst of a crowd which he brings to an abrupt halt. Surprisingly, a synagogue official had come to Jesus with a request – an urgent one at that – to heal his 12-year-old daughter who was on the verge of death. Jesus quickens his pace as he turns in the direction of the official's house. But that urgency was unexpectedly halted by Jesus. His attention turned away from Jairus to someone else in the crowd.

Now, **the very last thing** Jairus wanted was to stop. Any interruptions would waste valuable time. He had come to Jesus as his last hope. It was a drastic, uncharacteristic move on his part. He wasn't someone given to desperate measures, but this was his beloved, precious daughter after all, and there wasn't anything he wouldn't do to save her. He knew that time was of the essence, and when Jesus turned to go with him, he put all his hope in getting this healer to his daughter's side as soon as possible. But now....*he stopped!*

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE GOD HAS HIT 'PAUSE'?

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU NEED HIM TO ACT RIGHT NOW!

This question might prompt you to think back to an experience in the past or even something you're waiting on right now. If so, you know and can feel exactly what I mean when I say, Jairus's heart must have sunk. He thought his prayers were answered...but now, all that stopped. Especially as circumstances look like they're gearing up for a resolution.....all of a sudden, nothing. It seems like God has hit PAUSE.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. (Mark 5:24-29)

Now admittedly, 'during the PAUSE' for a brief moment, Jairus stood transfixed as he listened to this woman's story. Although her tattered shawl gave ample evidence of her poverty, otherwise her face shown with a vibrancy, with a beaming radiance as grateful words bubbled out of her mouth. And, although she had been an outcast, a ritually unclean woman by her own account, the likes of which Jairus would never have come across before – right here and now their paths had crossed. **Two of the most dissimilar people: he rich, influential, a religious leader; she poor, marginalized, and a religious recluse – had both arrived at the same spot, for almost identical reasons.** As she described her motive, "*If only I touch Jesus, I could be made well*", he heard echoes of his own prayer that had led him here, too.

She had just experienced in her body a sensation that was exactly what she had sought for years: the dwindling of her energy, the sapping of her strength from a wasting disease had come to an end. But additionally, His words, spoken clearly as she knelt before Him; they *embraced* her. **And she was experiencing in her heart a sensation that she had long given up on.** She was healed. Yes, but even more than that.....*she was loved.* She was seen. She was acknowledged. She was heard. She was accepted. She was loved.

Jairus got caught up in her story, but the hurried arrival of messengers from Jairus's house with bad news interrupted that calm and shocked him back to reality: "*Your daughter is dead,*" they said. "*Why bother the teacher anymore?*" Jairus, distracted for the moment by this woman's story, was shocked back to reality. He had come urgently to summon Jesus as a last hope to rescue his own daughter from the grips of death. But now that hope was gone. As the excitement of this woman's tale ended; Jairus's hope ended. Annoyance at this untimely delay started to darken his mind; his daughter was gone. His worst nightmare engulfed his heart.

Jesus spoke clearly and deliberately, piercing through these tortured thoughts. "**Don't be afraid; just believe**" (Mark 5:36). The darkness of disappointment set in; his anger began to rise and blind his mind. Jesus' words aimed precisely to short-circuit that response. Jesus sought to hammer home the lesson he had just witnessed. Our English translations obscure the connection, but the same root word is used in Jesus' clarification to the woman, "*Your **faith** has made you well/or saved you,*" is used in this encouragement to Jairus, "*only **believe.***" The noun "your faith" [Greek 'pistis'] is the same root as the verb "*only believe*" [Greek 'monov pisteue'].

Jesus' words to the woman clarify for her that it wasn't her magical belief, nor her touching his robe - it was her trust and faith in Him. Jesus himself was the source of her healing. **Faith is a personal, relational utter dependence upon Him.** Jesus' words to Jairus reiterated this: - now, despite the circumstance growing worse, Jairus, what you need in this dire situation is **a personal, relational utter dependence upon me.** You need to look at this woman's example and learn from her. In other words, '*Don't be afraid only believe*' meant for Jairus, BE LIKE THIS NAMELESS, UNCLEAN, POOR WOMAN! What does it mean for you?

How willing are you to listen to God no matter what the source?

Let me clarify - I'm not encouraging you to baptize everything as a 'word from God.' Many do that and it's blamed for many errors and crazy views and errors. I'm talking about being pointed to faith in Jesus from people whom you might deem 'below you'. Like those who have lived 'less respectable lives' than you, those who have less education, even children. Let me give an example....I'm a pastor, I had six years of seminary training, even taught in a seminary for a while....but I was showed up by an 8 year old.....more than once.....

I came home late from a disappointing, combative elder's meeting only to see the light on in my daughter's bedroom. This was way past her bedtime, the lights were off everywhere else in the house. So, I quietly entered the house and gingerly made my way up the stairs to peer in through the door to her room which was slightly ajar. She was sitting on her bed and she had lined up all her stuffed animals and dolls on her pillow. She was explaining to them, "I don't mean to be

negative and to make you feel bad, but even though I love you all, I don't love you like I love Jesus. I love you all, but He loved me and died for me, so I love him first and love all of you next." It made me think of the C.S. Lewis quote about loving God first enables us to love others fully and appropriately. But it was a great example for me to follow, especially because church meetings sometimes bogs you down with other issues besides loving Jesus! That's why I believe the apostle Paul writes to Timothy a young pastor, "*Remember Jesus Christ!*" (2 Timothy 2:8) because sometimes church leadership distracts you from your first loyalty!

How willing are you to listen to God no matter what the source?

How willing are you to listen in the PAUSES?

How willing are you to listen to God even when anger blinds you when God's delays?

The 'pause' pulsates with potential...

Like the synagogue leader, be humble to hear God point you to Jesus even from the least likely of sources. Our story continues....

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him. (5:37-40).

They arrive at their destination, Jairus's house. The crowd is left behind but Jesus' select group is greeted by a commotion inside. The noisy crowd is replaced by the noisy weeping and wailing of the assembled, professional mourners. This was a Near Eastern custom, and the synagogue leader's wealth and clout are evidenced not only by the quick arrival of these 'death professionals' but also the size of the group. Their presence and loudness would convey the heaviness, sadness, and pain that the community shared in this family's loss.

Death was inevitable. Once it arrived, we're only left to mourn the loss. Even when death is anticipated, there is a finality and irretrievability that hits us hard. Jesus' remark "*she's just asleep*" although brief and open to interpretation succeeds in exposing the hypocrisy of the mourner's sincerity. Mocking laughter replaces their fake grief. Jesus' remark, in the very least means

DEATH IS NOT PERMANENT.

DEATH IS NOT THE FINAL WORD.

DEATH FOR THE BELIEVER DOES NOT LAST.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was.⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her some-thing to eat. (Mark 5:40b-43).

They're greeted by a loud, fawning commotion about death. But then they enter the girl's bedroom where they witness what few others do. Jesus performs his most amazing, miraculous healing to date – he raises the dead. And yet, it is a quiet, unspectacular, common domestic scene. Jesus speaks tenderly to the child, with words that a father would whisper to wake a child from a noontime nap, "Honey, get up!" And as effortlessly as a father raises her from her bed, Jesus lifts her from the realm of death and back to the land of the living.

If we see miracles as intended to prove to people that Jesus is the Son of God that will prompt them to place their faith in him, then – let's admit it – *this miracle is staged all wrong!* Why not welcome everyone into the bedroom? Why not blow away the mocking crowd of mourners? Why does Jesus seem to downplay the miracle? By his words and by limiting exposure by admitting only a few to the room he's not doing a very good job of marketing himself.....

In a very real sense, this healing is a partial climax in the gospel of Mark. It traces the trajectory of the ministry of Jesus which deals with expelling evil, previewing the kingdom through preaching and healing and finally, reversing death.

EXORCISM – PREACHING – RAISE JAIRUS' DAUGHTER + HEALING

Jesus' ministry likewise will follow the same contours of these opening chapters – Jesus ministry begins with an identification with sinful people through baptism which is followed by a time of temptation and testing in the wilderness where he binds the strong man. Next, he proclaims the restoration of the kingdom and illustrates it with healings. The crowning achievement is his resurrection where the reign of death is overturned.

TEMPTATION
In the Wilderness

PREACHING + HEALING
restoration of kingdom

RESURRECTION
Life

In one sense, it is not shocking that when God arrives on earth, he wins every battle he takes on. and Jesus ruling from the cross dispenses life through his own death. Jairus who defies public sentiment to cling to Jesus is granted a miracle that

foreshadows Jesus' full ministry which is not simply victory over death - but life through death – through Jesus' death.

Jairus' faith is stretched. Jesus expands his categories of the possible. He hoped for healing but never dreamed of resurrection. Jesus tries his patience. Jesus asks him to humble himself and learn faith from someone less 'learned' and important than himself. Jesus teaches him faith focuses on Jesus' ability not my inability or lack of capabilities.

JESUS DOES NOT JUST LEADS US - HE BLAZES THE TRAIL

God does not simply fix. He has deeper intentions beyond our wildest hopes. The woman longed for healing, Jesus provided wholeness: physical, social and psychological. Jairus wanted his daughter healed, he received her back and received so much more. Fighting off disappointment, clinging tenaciously to Jesus, he learned much more of Jesus' sufficiency. He learned God doesn't just heal, he tackles our troubles and transforms our needs into a platform to build our faith in Him.

Let us pray:

Jesus, You rounded off much of Your own teaching with the tagline: "*He who has ears let him hear.*" We pray that we truly hear Your truth. We pray we clearly understand and treasure Your guidance and then whole-heartedly yearn to follow, obey, love and serve You. Thank You that You don't stand at a distance but have come close in Jesus and dwell within us by Your Spirit. Expand our faith to 'see' and appreciate Your involvement. Expand our faith to trust You during the 'PAUSE' those periods when You seem delaying answering our prayers. In Your Name and to Your glory we pray.