

JUST BELIEVE

MARK 5:21-43

If the greatest medical physician in the world entered the emergency room and decided to treat a woman's chronic condition before treating a child's extremely urgent life-threatening condition, what would you think about this physician's medical discernment and practice? And what if, while he was treating the woman's chronic condition, the suffering young child that has just been left to wait there dies? Wouldn't we expect that physician to face a tremendous malpractice lawsuit and the loss of his position within the medical community?

What Jesus does here in this passage concerning Jairus' daughter continues to shatter our preconceived notions about what God is like and how he operates. The great physician of the universe commits what is seemingly an avoidable act of malpractice, and yet he asks everyone involved to trust him and just believe.

It might benefit many of us to realize that when we come to Jesus, we will often find ourselves getting way more than we were wanting or expecting from him. And when we come to Jesus, we will often discover that it costs us way more than we were bringing and expecting to give.

As one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus was a man of status and privilege within the Jewish community. The fact that he comes and falls at the feet of Jesus and begs him to help his daughter shows that Jairus' was desperate. There's a good chance that Jairus had exhausted all his efforts to help his dying daughter, and now at the end of his rope, he runs to Jesus hoping for a miraculous healing like the ones he's heard Jesus is able to deliver.

You see, it's our desperation that often opens the door for Jesus to begin his transformative work in our lives. Jairus has come hoping for a healing, but he has no idea about the extent of what he's really about to receive.

For now, Jesus answers his request and begins to follow Jairus back to his home. But while they're on the road Jesus stops to find out about a woman from the crowd who touched him. Even the disciples thought that this was unnecessary and crazy that he would stop for this.

Why would Jesus stop just because someone touched him? Imagine being Jairus while all this is going on? What would be going through your head as Jesus stops on the road just to find out who in the crowd just touched him?

And that leads us to think about another question – How often do we feel like God has forgotten about our circumstances and that he has focused on something else or someone else instead of us? How often do we feel like God might be indifferent or slow to help us even though we are desperate for his help?

Desperation is a crucial element to our faith in Jesus but so is persistence. The challenge confronting Jairus at this point in the story is the same kind of challenge that we will find ourselves confronting at some point in our own lives – Can we continue on in faith despite the difficulty of our current circumstances? ***Although we are desperate and God seems to be delaying, can we persist in our faith and JUST BELIEVE?***

The irony of this situation is that Jairus has a lot that he could learn from the woman that Jesus addresses despite what this encounter seems to be costing him. Unlike Jairus, this woman has no name in the story and no special status within the community. However, just like Jairus, she is at the end of *her* rope. She has exhausted all her efforts and *'spent everything that she has'* but still hasn't experienced any relief or cure for her condition. Jesus was the only hope that she had left, and so she fights through the crowd just to get to him.

We can learn from this woman – ***God exercises extraordinary transformative power when there is a persistent desperation that is willing to fight for his help.*** You know you're desperate when all that really matters in your life is getting to Jesus.

This woman came to Jesus for healing, but she ends up receiving way more than she anticipated. She had assumed that she could just take advantage of his power without having to confront him personally. But Jesus won't let that happen. Experiencing his power will inevitably lead to experiencing him personally. Jesus takes the time to make sure that he is the object of her faith and not simply his power. Following Jesus is more than coming to Jesus for what you need; it's coming to Jesus for who he is.

Jesus is confirming that we must come to him for who he is rather than simply for what he can do for us. And perhaps this interruption helps prepare Jairus for what happens next.

Because as Jesus takes the extra time to address the woman in the crowd, some friends of Jairus run up to deliver the terrible news that his daughter has just passed away. They go ahead and give the logical conclusion that there is no need for Jesus to continue on to the house since the girl is now dead. Again, imagine being Jairus in this situation. What would you be thinking or wanting to say to Jesus in that moment?

But in the midst of this seeming mishap on the part of Jesus, he doesn't defend himself or his actions. He simply looks at Jairus and says, *"Don't be afraid, only believe."* Jairus had possessed enough faith to come to Jesus for help, but now his faith is being tested far beyond anything that he ever anticipated. Jesus says, *"Trust me."* And this is the pivotal moment in Jairus' life. And honestly, to truly *'trust him'* is the make or break moment in all of our lives.

Many of us live our lives assuming and claiming to trust God, but then suffering has a way of exposing whether or not we are simply trusting God on our own terms. For many of us, as long as God plays according to our rules and expectations then we can trust him. However, the moment he begins to act contrary to what we're comfortable with, we're tempted to question him. We're tempted to doubt him. We're tempted to lose our confidence in him. We're forced to face the make or break moment – Can we trust him? And even more importantly, *will* we trust him?

Fear versus faith is a life-long war that we will continue to fight throughout this life.

When disaster and devastation come suddenly and unexpectedly, how are we going to respond? Will we run to worldly distractions to numb our pain? Will we run to superficial friendships that help us forget our situation? Will we run to our work and careers to over-occupy our minds and energy? Will we run to excessive indulgence and addictions? Will we even try to run to the vain pursuit of trying to earn God's favor through religion and being a good person? Or will we run and fall at the feet of the only one who offers us any hope – Jesus the Messiah, the Savior and Son of God?

Jairus is confronted with the challenge to redirect his focus from his circumstances to the one he has placed his hope in – Jesus himself. Jesus very easily could have told Jairus right then and there what he was planning to do, but he didn't. He even could have healed his daughter right at that moment without continuing on to visit her, but he didn't. Instead, He takes this opportunity to perform a greater healing – the healing of Jairus himself.

Jesus says, *"Don't be afraid, only believe"* and then continues on his way to the house. When he enters the little girl's room, Jesus holds her hand and whispers *"Hey honey, get up."* And in this moment, Jesus is resurrecting this little girl from death in the same way that a loving parent would walk into their child's room just to wake them up in the morning. The little girl gets up as if she had just been woken from a nap and everyone at this point is completely blown away – Mark says that they are *'overcome with amazement'*. Jairus' understanding of Jesus has just been radically changed forever.

The woman in the crowd that touched Jesus had come looking for a quick-fix, but she ended up experiencing a life-altering understanding of who Jesus was. Jairus had come looking for a miraculous healing, but he also experienced a life-altering understanding of who Jesus was. Jairus asked for a miraculous healing, and he was granted a powerful resurrection.

In both of these encounters, suffering and healing was the concern of those coming to Jesus, but their own salvation was the ultimate concern of Jesus.

Timothy Keller writes:

"If you go to Jesus, he may ask of you far more than you originally planned to give, but he can give to you infinitely more than you dared ask or think."¹

Like the disciples on the sea, the violent man upon the shore, the woman in the crowd, and this ruler from the synagogue. Jesus tells all of us, "Even though your circumstances seem desperate, don't worry. Trust me. I'm good, and I'm God. I know what I'm doing, JUST BELIEVE."

¹ Timothy Keller, *King's Cross*, (Redeemer CityNet, 2011) 66.