

New City Catechism

As group:

Ask Question 24

Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?

Answer Question 24

Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God.

Read: Colossians 1:21–22

Discuss

1. In what ways does Christ's death demonstrate God's justice and mercy?

Main Point

Mark 5 shows Jesus' power and authority over sickness and death as he heals the outcast woman and raises Jairus's daughter. These stories remind us that Jesus rules over all things with compassion, and it is not the strength of our faith but the power of the one we trust that matters. As a church, we reflect his kindness when we make space for honest grief, pray together, and point one another to the comfort and hope found in him.

Read Mark 5:21-43

- 1) What do the details of the woman's condition (unclean, outcast, long-suffering) tell us about the significance of Jesus calling her "daughter"?
- 2) Why do you think Mark records both these stories together? How do they complement and deepen our understanding of Jesus' power and compassion?
- 3) How is faith portrayed differently in the woman and in Jairus? What does this passage teach us about the object of our faith, rather than its intensity?
- 4) How can we trust Jesus' authority when we face situations of suffering, sickness, or even death today? How should the truth that Jesus has sent his comforter, the Spirit, shape our response to grief and hardship?

- 5) In a practical sense, what would it look like for us, as a church family and Discipleship Group, to reflect the compassion and kindness of Jesus to those who feel outcast, overlooked, or are suffering?¹

¹ For a helpful discussion concerning how lament can (and should) be used in community, see the article by Dr John Witvliet that I posted at the same time as this study.

- 1) The woman's condition shows how deeply her suffering had affected every part of her life. She was considered ceremonially unclean, which meant she was cut off from public worship and from close relationships. Her physical illness had left her socially isolated and spiritually excluded. When Jesus calls her "daughter," he restores her not only physically but relationally and spiritually. This title affirms her inclusion in the people of God. This helps us in our understanding that faith in Christ brings full restoration and acceptance, no matter how broken or excluded or unworthy someone may feel.
- 2) Mark connects these stories to highlight different but complementary aspects of Jesus' ministry. In both cases, Jesus meets people in moments of desperation, whether private suffering or public crisis. The stories show that Jesus' authority extends over chronic illness and even death itself. Yet they also reveal his kindness and care for individuals, whether a powerful synagogue leader or a poor, forgotten woman. Together these accounts deepen our understanding that Jesus is both sovereign and compassionate, and he responds personally to those who seek him in faith.
- 3) The woman's faith is hesitant and hidden. She believes Jesus can heal her but fears drawing attention to herself. Jairus's faith is more public and is challenged by the delay and the news of his daughter's death. Both show that faith looks different in different people, but what matters most is not how strong or bold faith appears. What matters is that faith looks to Jesus. This passage teaches us that salvation and help do not depend on the quality of our faith but on the power and mercy of the one we trust.
- 4) We can trust Jesus' authority in our suffering, sickness, or even in the face of death because he has demonstrated his absolute sovereignty over these things in his earthly ministry and ultimately through his resurrection. His power over sickness and death in Mark 5 is not just a historical fact but a present reality. Jesus reigns now at the right hand of the Father with all authority in heaven and on earth. This means that no hardship or trial enters our lives apart from his sovereign will and wise purpose. Even when healing does not come or suffering lingers, we can trust that he is working all things for our good and for his glory. Our hope rests not in the circumstances changing, but in the one who rules over them.

God has also graciously given us his Word to sustain us in these trials. Through the Scriptures, we are reminded of his unchanging character, his promises, and the sure hope we have in Christ. The Psalms, especially the psalms of lament, provide us with language to express our sorrow, confusion, and longing to God. They teach us that it is not only permitted but good to

bring our grief and pain honestly before him. The psalms show us that faith does not mean pretending all is well; rather, faith clings to God even in anguish, trusting his steadfast love and faithfulness. These prayers anchor us when we feel overwhelmed and help us to process our suffering in the light of God's truth.

The sending of the Spirit as our comforter shapes our response to grief and hardship by assuring us of Christ's continued presence and care. The Spirit ministers to us by applying the promises of God to our hearts, reminding us of the hope we have in Christ, and strengthening us to endure with faith and patience. He testifies that we are God's children and heirs of the resurrection life to come. This means we do not suffer as those without hope. In grief, the Spirit helps us cling to Christ's victory over death and assures us that our future is secure. In hardship, he enables us to grow in dependence, humility, and trust. Through the Spirit's work, we are comforted not with empty platitudes but with the deep assurance that Christ is with us, for us, and will one day make all things new.

- 5) I would encourage everyone to read the article by Dr John D. Witvliet that I uploaded at the same time as this study. It is a wonderful exploration of how lament can be used in a community. I used it as a jumping off point for the following discussion:

Lament is Meant to Be Communal

Lament is not only something we do privately; it is something God has given us to do together as his people. In times of hardship or sadness, bringing our grief before God as a church family or Discipleship Group reflects the compassion and kindness of Jesus. It reminds those who are suffering that they are not alone. It also reminds us all that God invites us to bring every part of our lives to him, including our tears, pain, and even anger.

When we lament together, we show each other that the Christian life is multifaceted. It includes the full spectrum of human emotion from joy to sorrow. Christians are not a people who pretend everything is fine. We are a people who trust God enough to cry out to him, knowing he promises to comfort us.

What Does This Look Like in Practice?

Here are some practical ways Discipleship Groups and the wider church can reflect the compassion and kindness of Jesus through lament:

1. **Make Space for Honesty:** In prayer times, encourage people to share their griefs and struggles honestly. Avoid rushing to “fix” things with easy answers. Sometimes it is enough to say, “Let’s bring this to God together.”
2. **Use the Psalms of Lament:** Read or pray through a psalm of lament together (for example, Psalm 13, Psalm 42, or Psalm 130). Let God’s Word shape your prayers.
3. **Pray Laments Together:** In your group prayer, don’t be afraid to include questions like “How long, O Lord?” or “Why, Lord?” These are faithful and scripturally based prayers, not weakness.
4. **Read, or if your group is so inclined, sing laments:** Consider using full Psalms in your gatherings/groups that express lament. These songs were developed by the people of God to be used as the people of God. This helps the group see that lament is part of healthy Christian worship.
5. **Create Opportunities for Sharing:** Allow time for members to share how they are struggling, grieving, or confused. Respond by listening, praying, and reassuring them of God’s kindness and the support of the group.
6. **Special Gatherings or Moments:** In times of tragedy, grief, or hardship, plan and allow space for silence and sorrow; too often we move past suffering. But taking the time to process our grief gives us the time to meet God in our grief, rather than waiting for it to pass by.
7. **Be Patient:** Remember, lament is not about rushing to happy endings. It is about walking with each other honestly before God, trusting him even when answers don’t come quickly.

Why Does This Matter?

When we practise lament together, we show the compassion of Jesus to those who are hurting. We remind one another that our grief and pain are seen and heard by God and people who care deeply. We also strengthen our faith community by creating space where people do not have to hide their sadness but can share it, knowing they are loved.

Lament leads us back to trust. It helps us say together, “Even though this is hard, we believe God is good, and we wait for his help.” This reflects the heart of Jesus, who invites the weary and broken-hearted to come to him.