

Humble Faith and Healing Power: Mark 5:21-43
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It has been such a joy for me to be preaching through the Gospel of Mark. This is the first Gospel that I've preached through, and Lord willing I will preach through the other Gospels as well at some point in the future. And it's really an amazing thing to spend time meditating on the life and ministry of Jesus, to immerse myself in this inspired account of what He did and what He said, to observe the authority and power that He displayed in His teaching and His miracles. This is a man unlike any other man. He is the God-Man, come to earth to usher in the Kingdom of God. And as we are going through Mark's Gospel we're seeing these things again and again. Jesus has divine authority. He has divine power. He is the One we should fear. As we study His life and ministry we should be overcome with a deep sense of reverent fear and awe. We should ask, as the disciples did, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). And the answer to that question, ironically, is given by the demons who call Jesus "the Son of the Most High God" (5:7). That's who this man is, and that's why this Gospel was written. To show again and again, in event after event, that Jesus is the Son of God, and to proclaim the Good News that comes in His person and work. The book begins, after all, with these words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

It has been such a rich experience to find myself each week studying another passage in this great Gospel, to relive, in a sense, these amazing events, to picture myself inside the story and envision what it would be like to have been there. I know that I am being changed week by week as I encounter my Lord in these passages. And my hope and prayer for this church is that we will all be changed by this. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." That's my prayer for us in the study of Mark, that we will behold the glory of the Lord and be transformed into His image from one degree of glory to another.

In the passage that we're going to study this morning, we're going to see humble faith and healing power. First we'll see the humble faith of Jairus, and then the woman's humble faith. And in the midst of this we'll also see the healing power of Jesus.

This is another passage where one story is sandwiched inside of another story. The beginning and end have to do with Jairus and his daughter, and in the middle is the story of the woman with a discharge of blood. And this morning we're not

going to get through the whole passage. We'll see the humble faith of Jairus in verses 21-24 and then the woman's humble faith in verses 25-34. And then next week we'll pick it up at verse 35 and study the conclusion to Jairus's story.

The Humble Faith of Jairus

In the previous section Jesus had been on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, in the Gentile region of the Decapolis. There He healed the man who had been possessed by a legion of demons. And because that resulted in 2,000 pigs drowned in the lake, the locals begged Jesus to leave. Now He has travelled back to the western side of the lake, to the Jewish area where He is very well known. And His popularity is seen in the fact that upon His arrival a great crowd gathers around Him. Apparently this boat ride was much less eventful than the boat ride over to the country of the Gerasenes. You remember that on their over there they encountered a severe storm, the disciples thought they were going to die, Jesus was asleep, and then they woke Jesus up and He calmed the storm. I do wonder how the disciples felt about getting back in that boat for the return trip. Did they have a greater confidence because of Jesus' power, or were they still fearful and confused and maybe trembling at what might happen next. They had been through a storm on the sea, and then encountered a storm on the land, which was the demoniac. And now they step back into the boat to cross the water again. I imagine the disciples were glad that there was nothing to report from that voyage.

They arrive now "back home," as it were, and they receive a warm welcome. They had just left an area where Jesus was not wanted, and now they return to a place where He is greatly sought after. And the situation is the same as before their trip. When they left Jesus had been teaching the crowds from the boat (4:1), and now the scene is very similar. He was beside the sea with a great crowd gathered around Him.

The text doesn't say what Jesus was doing at the moment Jairus approached Him. Maybe He had been teaching. Maybe He had been healing and casting out demons. Maybe He hadn't done anything yet except get out of the boat. Jairus probably had to make quite an effort to fight his way through the crowd to get to Jesus. These crowds did not tend to be helpful to those who needed healing, but rather they were a kind of obstacle that made it difficult for people to get to Jesus. Back in chapter 2 where Jesus healed the paralytic, it says that the friends of the paralytic "could not get near [Jesus] because of the crowd," and therefore they tore through the roof of the house where Jesus was preaching. Surely Jairus faced no lesser challenge. He had to maneuver through this great crowd, but he was determined to get to Jesus.

One thing that makes this a surprising story is the fact that Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue. Now, he was not a scribe or a Pharisee, but he was intimately involved in the life of the synagogue. He was a lay leader who was given responsibilities that ranged from building maintenance to the planning of worship services. So he would have been very aware of the stir that Jesus was causing in the community, and he certainly would have known how the Pharisees felt about Jesus, that they were already trying to figure out how to kill Him. In spite of all this, Jairus battled the crowd to get to Jesus. He didn't care what the religious establishment said. He didn't care what his friends said. He had seen enough of Jesus and heard enough about Him that he wanted to seek His help. This is humble faith. A prominent man in the community, a leader in the synagogue, comes to such a controversial figure and pleads for help.

Look at how Jairus approached Jesus. In verse 22 it says that when he saw Jesus, "he fell at his feet." In the parallel passage in Matthew 9, Matthew uses the Greek word *proskyneō*, which can be used to indicate worship. This man fell down at Jesus' feet, showing his reverence and worship of Jesus. Maybe Jairus had been in the same synagogue on that Sabbath when the people were astonished at Jesus' authoritative teaching and then also amazed to watch Jesus cast out an unclean spirit, as it's recorded in Mark 1. Maybe Jairus was there to see the paralytic healed in Mark 2. And even if he wasn't he would have surely heard the scribes grumbling about that blasphemer who claims to forgive sins. Jairus also would have heard in Jesus' teaching and preaching the clear call to repent and believe in the gospel, because the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

With all of this knowledge and awareness of who Jesus was and what He did and who He claimed to be, Jairus came and fell at Jesus' feet imploring Him to come and help. It's humble faith.

The content of his request is in verse 23, "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." The man is at the point of desperation. This is his only daughter, as Luke tells us (Luke 8:42). And Jairus is desperate to save her. He has confidence, a humble faith, that Jesus is the One who can do something about this situation. He trusts that if Jesus would come and lay His hands on his daughter, that she will be made well and live.

It's not uncommon for faith to spring from desperate situations. We're going to see this in the next story as well. And maybe that's where you're at this morning. God, in His goodness, cuts away certain things that are precious to us, in order to bring us to the point of falling down before Him and pleading for help. Don't begrudge the difficulties of life, the heartaches of life, the

health problems of life, because God is using these things to cultivate in us a humble faith. He wants us to bow before Him in humility and brokenness so that He can then show us His great power.

If you're not yet a believer in Jesus, if you do not yet embrace the Gospel as wonderful and true, it may be that one of the things you've used as an objection to Christianity is suffering. Maybe you find yourself questioning how people could talk about Good News when there is so much suffering in the world. How could there be a good God who is in control of everything and the world still be the way it is? And more likely than not the question is more personal than that. How could all of this Christianity stuff be true when my life has been so hard? I want to encourage you today to look at your life and look at the world from a new vantage point. Could it be that God's intention in your suffering is to bring you to the place where Jairus was? The reality is that there's no better place to be than at the feet of Jesus. And therefore whatever it takes to get us there is worth it. I hope that in your pain, in your suffering, in your heartache, whatever it may be, that you will pursue Jesus with all your might and fall down at His feet asking for mercy. I hope that we will all exhibit humble faith in the midst of trials.

The Woman's Humble Faith

Next, we see the woman's humble faith. Verse 24 says that Jesus went with Jairus, and the great crowd followed. This was the nature of Jesus' public ministry. As He moved, the crowd moved, and we can assume, slowly. Large groups of people do not move quickly. And if you put yourself in the place of Jairus you can begin to imagine how agonizing this must have been. His emotions soared when he realized that Jesus was responding to his request. But now he's likely getting a little anxious as the crowd is slowing things up. It reminds me of the feeling I get when I'm stuck in traffic and therefore running late for an appointment. As I look at my watch and look at the cars in front of me, I start to get anxious. Well, for Jairus it was much more than an appointment that he was eager to get to. It was his dying daughter, and his concern was that she might die before Jesus could get to her.

What happens next would have been all the more agonizing. They were moving along slowly, but then there is an interruption. Picture yourself driving through one of Pittsburgh's beautiful tunnels at about 10 mile per hour, and you're feeling kind of anxious because you're running late, and then the traffic comes to a complete halt and you eventually put your car in park and you don't know when you'll start moving again. Multiply that by

about a thousand and you'll approach the level of anxiety that we might experience in Jairus's situation.

Let me read verses 25-34 and then talk about the woman's humble faith.

Read Mark 5:25-34.

Verses 25-28 are one sentence in the Greek. There are 7 participles that describe the difficult predicament of this woman. Like Jairus, she finds herself in a desperate situation. Also, like Jairus, she comes to Jesus for help. She exhibits humble faith. But that's about all that she and Jairus have in common, which is part of what makes these stories so interesting. Two individuals who, in the world's eyes, have absolutely nothing in common: both of them come to Jesus in desperation. Jairus is from the top rung of society. This woman is from the bottom rung. Jairus is named. The woman is not. Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue. The woman would have been excluded from the synagogue because of her ceremonial uncleanness due to her discharge of blood. Jairus would have had means. The woman was broke because she spent all her money on physicians. Jairus was respected by others. The woman was an outcast.

And both of them come to Jesus and are helped by Jesus. This is a reminder to us that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of all peoples. No matter what your status in society, no matter where you live, no matter what your income level, education level, career, ethnicity, gender, we are all exhorted to follow the example of Jairus and this woman to come to Jesus with humble faith.

I love the diversity in this church, and I pray that we will continue to become more and more diverse. And the reason I get so excited about diversity in the church is because it shows the power of Jesus to change lives. It shows the authenticity of the Gospel. It shows that we're not just a club. It's a testimony to the world that even though we may not have much in common in the world's eyes, we have the most important thing in common, which is our faith in Jesus. We may not look like a family from an earthly perspective, but we are a family in the most profound sense. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a story about two very different individuals who both come to Jesus. And my hope is that all of us here will come to Jesus and together humble ourselves at His feet, even with all of our differences.

Notice in verse 33 that the woman, after being summoned, fell down before Jesus just as Jairus had done. What a beautiful picture of what happens when we come to Jesus. It doesn't matter where you came from, what you've done, your position in society, we all bow down side by side before Jesus. Jesus is the great equalizer.

Well, this woman's predicament is severe. She has been in this condition for 12 years. She has suffered from a discharge of blood, and the doctors have not been able to help her. They were able to take all of her money, but they could not take away her ailment. In fact, as it says at the end of verse 26, her condition had actually grown worse.

This woman had heard reports about Jesus, which is what prompted her to seek Him out. She must have heard about Him healing people and casting out demons and teaching with authority. And now she comes to Him for help.

Look at how humbly she approaches Jesus. Verse 27 says "she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment." She was ashamed because of her uncleanness, and she didn't want to make a scene. She also knew that this was a risky move on her part because she was jeopardizing the ceremonial cleanness of everyone around her. Anyone she touched would become unclean as well. So she was trying to sneak through the crowd under cover. She was humble, even humiliated, but clinging to a deep faith in Jesus. In verse 28 she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." James Edwards, in his commentary on Mark, says that "to act on what one hears about Jesus is always in Mark the sign of a disciple, and this the woman does."¹ She is acting in faith, based on the reports she had heard about Jesus. And this is the profound point of these two stories that are woven together here. Humble faith. Seeking the mercy of Jesus in the midst of one's desperate situation.

The woman was healed immediately, and she knew immediately that she had been healed. This is the healing power of Jesus. And He perceived the healing power going out from Him. Jesus is the God-Man, and He possesses this divine omnipotent power. And here this power flows out of Him in response to humble faith. Another aspect of this to realize is that when she touched His garment, it did not render Jesus unclean. Rather than her uncleanness making Jesus unclean, His power healed her and cleansed her. It's like the leper in chapter 1. Jesus reached out His hand and touched him. And instead of Jesus becoming unclean, the leper was cleansed. For this woman, she must have been overjoyed to be cured of this problem she had been dealing with for 12 years.

Again, her intent was not to make a scene. She came in a humble and lowly way. But Jesus wanted to highlight her faith. He didn't want this to go unnoticed. And so He stopped even though He was on a very important errand. And this shows us something about Jesus, that He is interruptible. What would have caused Jairus such agony was to Jesus the most natural thing to do.

¹ James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, page 164.

Jairus knew that their time was short, but Jesus was not constrained by time. He is omnipotent, and therefore He is never anxious. The fact that the girl is about to die does not concern Him, because He can raise the dead! Isn't that an awesome thing to see about Jesus? You don't ever have to feel like Jesus doesn't have time for you. Jesus is never overburdened by the needs of His people. He meets every need exactly as He sees fit. And if you ever feel like He's running late, or He's running low on funds or He's not being attentive to your needs, then you have to understand that you're mistaken. Just because Jesus is attending to the needs of others doesn't mean He can't take care of you, too. And just because He isn't taking care of you in the way that you want Him to, doesn't mean that He has forgotten. Jairus may have felt like Jesus forgot about him at this point. But we're going to see later in this passage that Jesus did something even greater than Jairus could imagine. Jesus responds to a myriad of needs, all at the same time. In the midst of such an urgent mission, Jesus stops to speak to this lowly woman. This is a comforting thing for us to know about our Lord.

And it is also something for us to emulate. We need to be interruptible. How often do you feel like the next task on your to-do list is way more important than the conversation your spouse wants to have with you, or the questions that your children are asking, or the need that a friend or neighbor might have? So we cut off the conversation, we get annoyed with the questions, we ignore the needs. I had to confess this to my son, Noah, the other day. I was feeling anxious about various tasks and responsibilities, and in my anxiety I wasn't being a very nice person. I got angry with Noah for something that wasn't his fault. And so I had to ask his forgiveness, and we talked a little bit about anxiety and sin and faith. Those situations remind me that I need to be more like Jesus. I need to be interruptible. I need to rest in Jesus and trust in His power and His plan and realize that the interruptions He brings into my life are more important than my to-do list. His agenda trumps my agenda, and I need to be sensitive to that and submissive to that.

Jesus' willingness to be interrupted is a key feature of this passage. And it's another example of something Jesus did that seemed absurd to others but made perfect sense in Jesus' purposes. It's like Jesus sleeping in the storm. The disciples thought He was crazy, and that He didn't care about them. But Jesus was providing for them a picture of perfect faith. And He was about to show His power to them by calming the storm. Here, too, the disciples speak rudely to Jesus when He stops to see who had touched His garments. In verse 31 they say to Him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" They were not interruptible. They were not patient. They were not

trusting. Instead they were annoyed, and so they snapped at Jesus, only to show again that they weren't yet with the program. They couldn't conceive of any good reason why Jesus would stop while on the way to heal Jairus's daughter.

But Jesus persisted in looking to see who had done it. And the woman came to Him. And look at how she came. Verse 33 says that she came in fear and trembling. Here's another display of fear in the face of Jesus' power. The disciples were filled with great fear after Jesus calmed the storm. The people were afraid when they saw the demoniac healed. And now this woman is afraid and trembling as she approaches the One who healed her.

It says she "told Him the whole truth." She didn't hold anything back. She must have explained to Him about her suffering and about the things she had heard about Him and her desire to be healed and her belief that even by touching His garments she would be healed.

Jesus' response is tender and poignant. He calls her daughter and commends her faith. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." When He says, your faith has made you well, the Greek word is *sōzō*, which can mean healed in a physical sense or saved in a spiritual sense. It seems that here, in the connection with faith, that Jesus means to tell her that her faith has saved her. She is now a child of God. He calls her daughter. She is part of His family now. And she can now depart in peace and free from the suffering that has dominated her life for the past 12 years.

This is the story of humble faith, radical faith. And the lesson for us is to foster this kind of humble faith in our own lives. Both Jairus and the woman fell at Jesus' feet, broken and needy, desperate for His help. That's us. Whether we realize it or not, whether we have urgent health problems or not, we are all desperate and needy. We are sinners who have rebelled against God and therefore deserve His righteous punishment against our sin. And our only hope is Jesus Christ, who died for sinners like us. Trust Him. Run to Him. Fall down at His feet, and plead for mercy.

Interestingly, the woman becomes a model of faith for Jairus to observe at the very moment when his faith is going to be tested. And that is what we'll look at next week.