

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Christ the Rock Ev Lutheran Church
Farmington, NM
July 2, 2017

Mark 5:21-24a,35-43 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." 24 So Jesus went with him.

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.

"Jesus Overturns Life Expectations"

The phone rings and you know it has to be something serious. It's worse than you expected. So as soon as you hang up, you slip on your shoes, search for your keys and immediately head for the hospital. You're not sure what you can do, how much you can help, but at least you can be there.

As a pastor, there have been plenty of times when the phone rang at any hour of the day or night with a medical emergency. I'm sure you've had your share too. It's a pretty powerless feeling. If it is so serious that they have to go to the hospital and the doctors aren't even sure what they can do or how to treat the problem, you're not going to start giving them expert advice all of the sudden. You have to have more realistic expectations. Maybe you can just be a source of strength and comfort for your loved one hooked up to machines with tubes dangling all over.

That's nothing compared with the agony experienced by Jairus. We learn about him in Mark chapter five. It's one of the worst, most helpless feelings when your child is sick and isn't getting any better. When you are holding that little one in your arms and she keeps coughing, can't stop coughing. Everything you try, everything you know how to do, every remedy at your disposal won't change her sickness. Instead, she gets worse. But still, you have to do something. You have to find some help.

Jairus did the right thing by turning to Jesus. We don't know anything about Jairus other than his high-ranking position in the synagogue and his daughter's illness. We don't know if he turned to Jesus as a first resort or a last resort or somewhere in between. But we do see that Jairus comes to Jesus in humility: **"when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet."** (Mark 5:22) He is confident that Jesus can provide healing for his daughter: **"He pleaded earnestly with him, 'My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.'"** (Mark 5:23)

Jairus is a great example when we remember the fear of the disciples out on the lake in last week's section from Scripture. We know what it's like to have our own idols. Our hearts naturally, automatically gravitate toward our own solutions. So Jairus is the perfect antidote with his humble confidence in Jesus. And the short simple response of Jesus is a great confidence booster: **"So Jesus went with him."** (Mark 5:24) And here is our first takeaway from this episode, it helps us align our expectations with the reality of Jesus. No negotiations with Jairus. No hesitation. Jesus simply goes. Maybe Jairus thought it was a long shot to appeal to Jesus. Maybe he had realistic expectations. But Jesus overturns life expectations. Jesus goes with you into your pain. Jesus doesn't avoid pain. He doesn't ignore you in your painful moments. He goes with you. He is there with you.

You may know that Martin Luther wrote his Small Catechism as a simple summary of the basics of Christianity. But you might not have learned that he wrote it to address the appalling ignorance of average Christians and trained clergy. One day when he was instructing a peasant, he asked him to recite the First Article of the Apostles' Creed. The man began "I believe in God the Father Almighty." But before he could finish, Luther interrupted him, "What is 'Almighty'?" The peasant shrugged and admitted he didn't really know. "You're right," Luther responded. "And neither do I. And neither can the wisest Bible scholars explain God's power and might. But continue to believe in all simplicity that God is your beloved and faithful Father, who, as the Only Wise, can and will help you, your wife, and children in every hour of need."¹

No doubt Jairus traveled along with Jesus, still a little anxious, but relieved to have the Almighty Messiah going along with him. But you know what happens when you have a sense of urgency and are depending on other people. You always face delays. Maybe you wondered why we skipped from Mark 5:24a all the way to Mark 5:35. It isn't because we wanted to skip over the controversial parts. Actually, we skipped that part to stay on track with one story instead of mixing two. In those verses in between Jesus performs another miracle, an almost accidental miracle healing a woman with a serious bleeding issue after she just reached out and touched Jesus. So Jairus doesn't want to feel selfish, as if Jesus can't help other people in their need on his way to help his little girl. But he also knows his daughter is just barely hanging on. So this wait must be extra agonizing.

Then he gets the worst news a parent could ever hear. Here's the tragic development: **"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**

¹ Quoted by Donald L Deffner, Concordia Pulpit Resource, vol 1, no 3.

anymore?” (Mark 5:35) No doubt Jairus is shaken. He had come to Jesus in humble confidence. Now that confidence must be shaken. Why? Why the delay? Why now? Why him? Why did it have to end this way? He knows Jesus could have helped his daughter if he had gotten there in time. She could have gotten better if only Jesus had been able to provide his healing touch. But now?

Jairus can't help agree with the messengers, even if only reluctantly, silently. What's the use of bothering the teacher any more? As long as there is life, there is the possibility to improve life. Change life. Make it better. And that is a logical reason for turning to Jesus. You know that feeling. You have faith in Jesus. You acknowledge his power. You know he can help you, make your life better, take care of your problems. But you are also a realist. You know when it is time to face the facts and come to grips with reality. You know that feeling of not wanting to bother Jesus. Sometimes there is nothing more anyone can do. You have to be realistic with your expectations about Jesus. You have to have realistic expectations for life and what Jesus can do with life.

But Jesus is never bothered. Not even when you have given up hope. Jesus never admits defeats or throws up his hands at a lost cause. In fact, Jesus wants to take your expectations for life and do the exact same thing he did with Jairus. He wants to take your modest expectations and turn them upside down. He says: **“Don't be afraid; just believe.”** (Mark 5:36) Jesus isn't concerned about how much you might be bothering him, he's just focused on developing fragile faith.

And yet, if those obstacles weren't enough, problems keep popping up for Jairus on his journey with faith expectations on Jesus. As they come back to the home of Jairus, they are greeted by a crowd of mourners. They're not trying to make a scene, just offer appropriate sadness over the death of this little girl. They were just doing what was culturally acceptable, showing respect to this grieving family. But Jesus challenges them: **“Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”** (Mark 5:39) Ever want to lighten the mood on an unusually sad situation? Jesus doesn't crack jokes at funerals, but that's how the crowd took it. It might have been the only way to turn their mourning to laughter. Jesus' assessment of the situation was so laughably absurd, so obviously outside the bounds of reality, they couldn't help laughing out loud.

And there are times when it feels downright foolish to keep trusting in Jesus. It seems laughable to hope he can still help. But that's the nature of spiritual warfare. The most important part of warfare is to not let down your guard, not forget that you are in the middle of a battle. Because you can be sure the enemy hasn't forgotten, they weren't planning to let down their guard. Those are the times Jesus still tells you to hang on. Don't hold onto yourself or your faith. It's not important how strong you are or how much faith you have. Jesus says: **“Don't be afraid; just believe.”** (Mark 5:36) Put your trust in Jesus. Have absolute confidence in him. Even when those expectations seem foolish. Actually, human accusations of foolishness only highlight Jesus' true power and compassion.

Jesus clears the room. Jesus takes with him only the little girl's mother and father and his three closest disciples. He comes to the girl with his touch of compassion and word of

healing: **“Little girl, I say to you, get up!”** (Mark 5:41) And just like that she comes back to life. She’s completely healed. She is restored without any recovery time. She is alive and walking. Jesus overturns expectations for life.

The touch of Jesus and the Word of Healing overturn all expectations. Jesus doesn’t scold the father and mother and instruct them how to be better believers. He just reaches out to cancel out death. He doesn’t encourage doubters to look inside to overcome fear. He simply speaks the word that makes it all better. And Jesus doesn’t tell you to sample all the solutions that sound best to you and pick whichever religion or philosophy works best for you. Jesus is the solution. Jesus overturns life expectations.

A young man told about growing up in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, where he and his family were serving as missionaries. “Tremendous thunderstorms occurred there. As a small child I was quite frightened of these storms which often came in the middle of the blackened night. In the darkness I would cry out, ‘Mom, come quickly! I’m scared.’ And immediately mom would come and wrap her loving arms around me in the darkness. I remember her saying to me as I still shook with fear, ‘It’s all right—God is here with you.’ And I would reply with a whimper as I clung even tighter to her, ‘I know God is with me, but sometimes I just need God with skin on.’ God with skin on—God in the flesh! That is what our God is like.”

See, Jesus knows pain. Jesus knows your pain. But Jesus experienced pain on a level you will never know. Jesus absorbed the sting for all the times your confidence was shaken, for all the times you gave up hope, for every episode when you felt foolish for still trusting in Jesus. And Jesus isn’t bothered to pick up your burden. That’s exactly what he came to do. It’s not a bother if it is his mission. And Jesus embraced the foolishness of the cross to overturn your expectations for a happy and successful life. Jesus was laughed at and ridiculed all the way to his very last breathe. And when Jesus walked out of the grave on Easter morning, he overturned every realistic expectation for life. Through his resurrection, Jesus gives life, so much more than the life you expected from him.

There will come a time when you need healing. You will need healing for a son or daughter like Jairus did, when sickness doesn’t go away, when a loved one is robbed of life and doesn’t come back before your eyes. You will need healing for an important relationship that seems broken beyond repair. And your resurrected Savior says to you: **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”** (Mark 5:36) Believe Jesus will overturn your life expectations.

And if Jesus can provide the answer to death that is so elusive to every other religious leader, scientist, doctor or philosopher, then you can go to him and stay with him just like Jairus did. If Jesus can do what no one else has ever done or can do, then you can listen to him when your pain feels like it’s too much. Trust in him when it seems like a waste of time to bother him. Go to him in humble trust when everyone else says you’re foolish.

Jesus didn’t raise Jairus’ little girl just to get attention. Jesus points head to his ultimate defeat of death by raising that little girl. By his own death and resurrection he takes away

the sting of death. He gives renewed life through faith in him. He promises a restoration that will be full and complete in heavenly bliss.

The old man had a visitor. His grandson had come to see him one last time before the old man died. "Grandfather," he said, "how can you still cling to your faith when you've faced all this trouble in your life? How do you know God really loves you?" "My dear grandson," he replied, "it's because of all this trouble that I'm sure Jesus loves me. Through it I've learned to depend solely on him for all my needs. In these times of trouble, I've learned to take hold of Christ with all my might. He has helped me and kept me in every time of need. If there's one thing I could leave you with, it would be to *hold on to Christ!* He will never disappoint you" (see Mk 5:36). Through this episode dealing with the little daughter of Jairus, Jesus teaches you to come to him no matter what your expectations. And when you do, Jesus overturns your life expectations. Amen.