

**“Family Time”**

**Mark 5:21-43**

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This morning our attention is drawn to two miracles Jesus performed. The reason we'll focus on two miracles is because these two stories overlap in Mark's account of Jesus' life and ministry, forcing us to examine them at the same time.

I am glad Mark did this. It is in comparing and contrasting these two encounters with Jesus we get a clearer picture of who Jesus was and what he was sent by God to do. It is obvious Mark felt one story without the other would be incomplete.

By the way, weaving two stories together is a trait common to Mark. Four times he begins a story only to interrupt it with another one. I find this literary style, often referred to as telescoping, to be unique and very effective.

The first story in our text begins when a prominent religious leader named Jairus approached Jesus for help on behalf of his daughter. She was deathly ill, and he was desperate.

This powerful man, who was accustomed to having people fall at his feet to beg for favors, was now the one begging. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his home to lay hands on his daughter.

Many were probably surprised when Jesus readily agreed to Jairus' request. After all, religious leaders like Jairus were already creating problems for Jesus.

They were threatened by his popularity and were seeking ways to undermine his ministry. Surely, Jesus would refuse this request and humiliate Jairus in front of his friends and neighbors by sending him away.

He did just the opposite, however, and in so doing sent a clear message to everyone gathered around him about the way he would conduct his ministry. He wasn't interested in seeking revenge or settling a score with those who rejected him, especially at the expense of an innocent child. God sent him on this mission of mercy to make hope visible to all who were struggling, including those who did not follow him.

It was while Jesus was on his way to Jairus' home that Mark introduced the second story. A woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years slipped up behind Jesus and merely touched the hem of his garment. Immediately, she was healed.

As soon as this happened, Jesus turned to the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30) The disciples were completely baffled by this question since a crowd was following Jesus to Jairus' home, and many were pressing against him.

This woman knew why Jesus asked this question, though. Her touch was unlike that of those around her who merely wanted to get closer to Jesus so they could see and hear him.

She did not accidentally bump against him as the disciples pointed out to Jesus many were doing. She deliberately slipped behind him, knelt at his feet and tenderly touched the hem of his garment, believing this humble act of worship and faith would restore her health and change the course of her life.

So, with fear and trembling she confessed to being the one who touched him in search of a miracle. Why was she so apprehensive?

I am convinced she thought Jesus would scold her for touching him. Anyone who came in contact with a woman with her condition would not be permitted to enter the temple or a synagogue for a period of time. They would be considered unclean and unfit to worship.

To her surprise, Jesus did not reprimand her. Instead, he treated her the same way he did Jairus, with dignity, respect and compassion.

“Daughter, your faith has made you well,” Jesus softly told her, “go in peace and be healed of your disease.” (Mark 5:34) With these reassuring words, this woman’s hopes and dreams for a better life came true.

At this point in the story, Mark turned his attention back to Jairus and his daughter. Jesus and Jairus resumed their journey to Jairus’ home, only to be met by his servants before arriving.

They informed Jairus his daughter had died and there was no longer any need for Jesus to come to his house. Obviously, Jesus disagreed and continued walking, encouraging Jairus to trust him.

When they arrived at the house, Jesus sent the mourners who had come to be with the family outside. He entered the daughter’s room with her parents and three of his disciples-- Peter, James and John. He took the lifeless child by the hand and told her to get up, which she did.

“Give her something to eat,” Jesus said, “and tell no one what happened here.” (Mark 5:43) Jesus had no interest in exploiting this family and selfishly using this miracle for personal gain. His attention was focused squarely on them and what they needed in that moment, not him.

**Why did Mark put these two stories together?** What do they have in common?

There is one word in both stories that connects them. It is the word, daughter, and it is key to understanding the significance of our text.

In the first story, the father of this twelve-year-old girl is the main character. Without his help, she would have never been healed.

This is why no sacrifice on his part was too great. If he had to swallow his pride, accept his limitations, embrace a humble mindset and set aside his public persona to get her the help she needed, he was willing to do it.

This proud leader of the synagogue who was one of the most prominent and powerful men in his community did what was inconceivable to most people. He begged Jesus for help.

Why? Jairus loved his daughter, and his love for her was stronger than his need to protect his image or to avoid criticism. Nothing that day was too difficult if it meant saving his daughter's life.

On the other hand, the woman who slipped up behind Jesus to touch the hem of his garment had no advocate. No father was going to fall before Jesus and plead her case.

She was all alone, and Jesus quickly realized this. When he turned to see who touched him in a way others had not, he saw no one at this woman's side speaking on her behalf. Timidly and reluctantly she had to answer his questions and tell her story in front of strangers.

So, what was the first word Jesus said to her in this awkward situation after she spoke? "Daughter...your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease." (Mark 5:34)

Daughter? Was this woman Jesus' biological daughter? Of course not. Then why did Jesus refer to her this way?

First of all, he wanted to put her at ease. He knew she was frightened and anxious, feeling all alone and so unworthy.

In addition, Jesus knew she needed more than physical healing that day, as important as this was. Her value and worth needed to be restored. Her fragile ego needed to be mended. Her spirits needed to be lifted.

She needed to know someone cared about her and loved her like a father and a mother love a daughter. She needed to be a part of a family.

“Daughter, your faith has made you well,” Jesus tenderly said.

How long had it been since anyone called her that? How long had it been since she felt wanted and loved? How long had it been since she felt anyone cared about her? How long had it been since she felt this safe and secure?

How long had it been since she smiled? How long had it been since she slept peacefully? How long had it been since she faced a new day with confidence and hope?

“Daughter, your faith has made you well,” Jesus compassionately and confidently told her, “go in peace and be healed of your disease.”

**How does this story speak to us, especially on Mother’s Day?** I pondered this for some time last week. I’ll share my thoughts.

**Everyone needs a family.**

This twelve-year-old girl certainly did but so did this woman who had had been sick for twelve years. She had exhausted her resources trying to get help and approached Jesus all alone.

The connection we feel in the womb of our mother sets the stage for the rest of our life. At some level, we need to be nourished and nurtured until we die. We never outgrow the need for community, including family.

Everyone needs a family.

**Everyone needs a healthy, loving, supportive family who provides the best for them and brings the best out in them.** Character, maturity and responsibility are passed on to us by family members who invest in our future. There will never be a time when this is unnecessary.

This is why all of us must remain connected to family members who teach us, guide us, inspire us, challenge us, encourage us, console us, forgive us and provide a safe place for us to fall when we have been beaten and bruised by the harshness of life or have made mistakes.

All of us need others in our lives who love us unconditionally and eternally. We need to know we are never alone or have to face intimidating challenges on our own.

**Does this describe your home?** Do you have this kind of family?

Are you doing your part to make your home healthy, loving and supportive of everyone under your roof? If not, why?

What is more important to you than being the kind of person your family needs? What changes do you need to make so your home will be healthier?

I know of nothing more important than relationships. At the same time, I know of nothing more difficult to create and to sustain than healthy relationships.

Relationships are messy. This is because we are all a combination of the good, the bad and the ugly, and all of us are capable of undermining and sabotaging the relationships we cherish the most. This is human nature.

Our divine nature, though, will not settle for less than our best. It demands more of us. It requires us to go to great lengths to diagnose and to fix problems that arise.

You know what impresses me most about Jairus, the father of this twelve-year-old girl? He was willing to do whatever was necessary to give his daughter a chance to live.

He threw caution to the wind and put everything on the line. No sacrifice was too great. He would leave no stone unturned or no option on the table.

Do you love your family this much? Are you willing to look beyond personal interests in order to see what others need from you?

Is someone reaching out to you and asking you to cooperate with them so together you can address problems that are threatening your family's future? Why haven't you done it? Who needs you to love them enough to try?

Allow me to be assertive and blunt. Too much is at stake for me to be vague.

If your home is broken, fix it. If your relationships are on life support, get help.

Quit making excuses. Stop counting the cost. Break out of your shell of denial or complacency.

The deepest level of love always involves sacrifice. There is no easy way to do something hard.

Take the first steps this week toward new and better relationships. Like Jairus and the woman who approached Jesus, you may have sought help at other times and in other places.

Try again. Put down your defenses and let go of your defeatist attitude.

I am confident Jairus and this woman were glad they did. You will be, too.

Let me offer one other piece of advice. If you know someone like the woman in this story who has no family and is struggling on their own, reach out to him or her.

Open your heart, your arms and your home to them. Make them a part of your family and provide the companionship and support they need.

Do for this lonely person what Jesus did for this woman. I assure you it will change their life and yours.