

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 5B (Proper 8B)
June 27, 2021
Mark 5:21-43

Do Not Fear, Only Believe

Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet 23 and implored him earnestly, saying, "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." (Mark 5:22-23 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

It's nothing new that we suffer fear and sorrow and grief. We are beset with illness, disease, and death, among acquaintances and friends, in our families, and even in our own bodies. In the midst of such trials we need a Savior, One who can bear us through such difficult times, One who can deliver us safely to Canaan's shore. And thanks be to God that He gives us such a Savior.

In today's Gospel we hear of two people suffering such trials. First there's Jairus who suffers fear and grief that his daughter will die if Jesus doesn't get there in time. Adding to his distress is the interruption of the woman with a flow of blood. Did this delay prevent Jesus from saving his daughter? It seems so, especially when the news arrives, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" We can only imagine his grief and anguish.

And yet, Jesus was not done with him – or his daughter. "Do not fear, only believe," He says. And He speaks this to us as well.

Now it's quite unsettling when you realize that Jesus does not cater to your every desire, spoiling you by giving you whatever your heart craves. That's not the way our Lord works. Instead, He deals with His Church, with all of you, by killing you—killing you so that, having been put to death, you might truly live in Him. It's His way to make you nothing—so that He might recreate you to be everything that He is: holy, righteous, and blameless in the eyes of Our Father in heaven.

This is what happened when Jesus was called by Jairus to come to the bedside of his dying daughter. And while it seemed that Jesus was too late to help, the reality is that things were as they needed to be. You see, when that young girl breathed her last, when her heart stopped beating, when that little twelve-year-old girl became nothing but a lifeless corpse stretched out on her bed, then she was the perfect patient of that great physician of soul and body. He who came not for the healthy but for the sick, came, above all, for the dead. He who is the way, the truth, and the life is helpful only to those who have fallen off the way, into untruth, and into death. As our Lord God made Adam from the dead dust of the earth, so also He remakes the

fallen sons of Adam and the fallen daughters of Eve. He remakes them. He remakes you, but only if you are dead as dust.

And so you are. For though your heart may be as healthy as an Olympic athlete's, it is that heart, your heart, which daily spews forth the sickness of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, and slanders. Although you keep up a good appearance to people in church, and with your co-workers, your friends, and maybe even your family, inside you there is jealousy, greed, malice, and every form of evil. And even if you are able to avoid gross, outward sins, even if you keep your darkest fantasies hidden away in your mind, they cannot be hidden from the eyes of the almighty judge. You are not nearly as good as you think you are, or as you'd like people to think. Indeed, you are worse than you are capable of knowing. For like all men, you love those who love you back, but those who oppose, curse, or hate you—they you ignore (at best) or hate (at worst). And in so doing, you prove yourself no better than the Pharisees or tax-collectors. When things don't go your way, when someone steps on your toes, when you think you deserve something that is given to someone else, then your self-love produces thoughts that, if reflected on a screen, would make even the roughest men hide their faces in shame. These things are true and you know them to be true. And if you don't, you deceive yourself.

So repent, Beloved, for if you know that your self-loving heart is a place of death, if you confess that to be true, blessed are you, for you have joined the ranks of Jairus' daughter. You are one whom our Lord will raise. For to know that a herd of wild beasts roams in your mind, to confess that your heart is a sewer that reeks of self-love, to say "Amen" to this painful truth, is to stretch out on that bed beside that twelve-year-old girl and die with her. Blessed are you who die with the daughter of Jairus. Blessed are you who don't live the lie but die with the truth—the truth that in yourself you are as dead as dust.

Blessed are you who die with the truth, for it is the truth Himself who has come to set you free from death, to free you from your sin, to heal your body and soul, and to raise you up to newness of life. As Jesus took the daughter of Jairus by the hand and said to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise," so also He takes you by the heart and says, "Oh, my child, I forgive you. I say to you arise. I love you. You are mine. Come off the bed of death, the bed of sin, and live again. The worst of your sins, your darkest of desires, your pettiness and self-love and greed and lust—they are no more. They are gone. They are destroyed. I have taken them into my flesh. They were crucified with me. They have become nothing that I might make you to be everything in me."

And that woman? She had been as good as dead as long as Jairus' daughter had been alive. She could not worship in the synagogue or temple because she was unclean. Imagine, not being able to go to church, to gather with the people of God, your family, to stand in the presence of God to receive His gifts and sing His praises. Imagine spending everything you have to get back to church, but not finding a cure for your disease. Imagine believing in Jesus so much as to risk pushing your way through the crowd just to get close enough to touch His garment. And having come in contact with Jesus, she is healed.

Then the unthinkable happened. Jesus asked who touched Him. It really was laughable because the crowd was pushing in on Him. And yet, Jesus is not looking for information. He is looking to provide even more healing. Knowing she had been discovered, she “came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.” She confessed. Then Jesus said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” She had received the healing she sought and more. She was at peace with God. She could go to church again!

Blessed are you, O sinner, for Jesus is the friend of sinners; blessed are you who are dead in transgressions, for Jesus is your resurrection; blessed are you who are sick, for Jesus is your healing. He did not come down from heaven to reform you, to teach you how to win the favor of His Father, or to show you some secret way of salvation. He came down from heaven to die a hellish death out of love for you. He came down from heaven to take on your nature—to have bones and blood, skin and hair, a soul and body just like you—and, as a man, to do for you what you could not do, indeed, did not want to do, for yourself. He came to keep the laws you have shattered, and to have His obedience reckoned to you. He came to have a clean heart, a pure conscience, a perfect faith and love, and to place all of these on you and in you. He came to become all sins of all sinners on that bloody tree. He becomes your lust that you might become His love. He becomes your greed that you might become His charity. He becomes your ugliness that you might become His beauty. And in this blessed exchange, He makes you to be the sons and daughters of God. He is merciful, not counting your sins against you, but grabbing those sins and injecting them into His flesh, that in His flesh He might destroy them.

Because He is your Savior, you belong to Him. You are His, and nothing will change that. In Him you live, in Him you are forgiven, in Him you are just as the Father wants you to be. Like Jairus’s daughter, you have died, but you have also been raised by the hand of Christ. Like the woman, who was as good as dead, you have been healed in body and soul, restored to Him in purity. And now and ever, you stand alive, clean, and forgiven in His presence. That is His promise to you, a promise to which He is everlastingly faithful. So in the midst of fear and sorrow and grief, do not fear. Only believe and the great Physician will raise you up and restore you. To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener