

**Series:** Father's Day 2023  
**Title:** The Faith of A Father  
**Text:** Mark 5:21-24, 35-43  
**Date:** June 18, 2023

### **Verse 21**

After telling of the healing of the demon-possessed man in Gentile country, Mark went on to tell of two physical healings performed by Jesus. He nested the accounts within one overall narrative that is contained within Mark 5:21-43. Along with the account of the man in “the country of the Gerasenes” (Mark 5:1) it seems the physical healings were meant to portray the way Jesus’ good news (Mark 1:15) was available for the Gentile world. This is perhaps symbolized by Mark’s intentional use of the number “twelve” in Mark 5:25 and 42. Writing to a primarily Roman audience, Mark wanted his readership to know that the gospel was available to them.

The story concerning the two healings began with Mark saying, “And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea” (Mark 5:21). As we will see, the two healing incidents contained similar features.<sup>1</sup> Each involved the healing of a female (Mark 5:23, 25). The number twelve was significant in both stories, as Jesus healed a woman who had a disease for twelve years and a girl who was twelve years of age (Mark 5:25, 42). Also, both the woman and the girl suffered from conditions that would have made others ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:11; Numbers 19:11; Mark 5:25, 35). Despite such things, Jesus came into physical contact with both (Mark 5:27, 41). Finally, Mark was intentional to portray Jesus as speaking affectionately to both the woman and the girl (Mark 5:35, 41).

Notice from verse 21 that the events in our text occurred “...when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side.” Remember from Mark 5:1-20 that Jesus had previously been on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. In that region, He had miraculously healed a demon-possessed man in the Gentile region around Decapolis (Mark 4:35-41). After ministering to the Gentiles, Jesus travelled back into Jewish territory. Most likely, the scene from Mark 5:21-43 took place in Capernaum.<sup>2</sup> The entirety of Mark chapter 5 can be regarded as involving two sections — one depicting Jesus ministering to the Gentiles (Mark 5:1-20) and one depicting Jesus ministering to the Jews (Mark 5:21-43). Overall, the chapter highlights the way in which the work of Christ brought together two people in one overall covenant of redemption (Ephesians 2:11-22).

In describing the scene associated with the healings in our text, Mark said, “...a great crowd gathered about him...” (Mark 5:21). Once again, Mark was intentional to depict the ecstatic frenzy surrounding Jesus’ ministry (Mark 1:32, 37; 2:4; 3:8, 20, 32; 4:1). Everywhere the Lord went, massive crowds followed him, pressing to get a glimpse of His mighty works. On this particular occasion, Jesus “was beside the sea.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Mark*. (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Mark, Volume 2*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 122.

The sea was a special location associated with Jesus' ministry (Mark 2:13; 3:7; 4:1, 35, 39, 41; 5:1, 13). In biblical literature, a "sea" often represented humanity (Revelation 4:6). Perhaps Mark highlighted Jesus' location near the sea in our text for a reason. Maybe he wanted to allude to the fact that Jesus work of redemption had application for the entire "sea" of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles.

## **Verse 22**

Mark continued his narrative account by saying, "Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet" (Mark 5:22). In the first-century Jewish world, each synagogue had a designated leader. Such individuals were normally wealthy, well-respected members of the community.<sup>3</sup> The synagogue leader wasn't the one who taught each week. Normally laity were entrusted with leading worship and preaching.<sup>4</sup> Synagogue leaders functioned like activity directors. They were responsible for coordinating events, making arrangements for weddings, planning funerals, lining up weekly teachers, and maintaining the properties of the synagogue.<sup>5</sup> If you remember from Mark 1:21-28, Jesus had previously preached in a local synagogue. Perhaps the man in our text was the one who had invited Jesus to speak on that occasion.

Whatever the case, it is important to note that synagogue leaders often functioned as local medicine men within their communities. James 5:14 seems to make reference to such a custom. These cultural realities make the events of Mark 5:21-24 all the more meaningful. The one who was normally consulted during times of illness made an effort to seek Jesus for help. The man knew he had a need he could not meet on his own. He had likely exhausted all of his resources in trying to heal his daughter. Perhaps he had heard the healing power Jesus displayed in Mark 1:29-34; 2:1-12; and 3:1-6.

Approaching Jesus, the man embraced a prostrate position. Mark said the man "fell at his feet." In doing so, the man exhibited his desperate need for help.<sup>6</sup> It seems the man's outward posture was indicative of a saving faith in his heart. Later in verse 36, Jesus will tell the man "Do not fear, only believe." The language of that verse will use a verb construction that indicates the man possessed faith prior the events associated of verse 36.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the man first exhibited saving when he bowed before Jesus in our current verse.

## **Verse 23**

Prostrate before Jesus, the man made a straightforward request. Mark says the man "...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 5:23). Notice

---

<sup>3</sup> Schnabel, 123.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, 161.

<sup>6</sup> Schnabel, 124.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 166.

that the issue with the man's daughter was one of physical sickness and death. The purpose of the miracles in Mark 5:21-43 was to show Jesus power over the human body. Remember, all of Jesus' miracles served as signs to communicate important spiritual truth (Hebrews 2:3-4). The calming of stormy waters indicated that Jesus was creator God (Mark 4:35-41) and the healing of the demoniac near Decapolis proved that He was Lord over all spirits (Mark 5:1-20). In accordance with Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53:4), Jesus' healing of human bodies in our text revealed His power to reverse the greatest consequence of sin — death!

In pleading for help, the father in our text spoke of his "little daughter." The Greek of the text used diminutive language. Mark's intent was to depict the pitiful state of the girl.<sup>8</sup> The girl was "at the point of death." Literally translated, the original language literally meant "having the last." It seems Mark used a first-century expression that might have been similar to our "at death's door" or "fading fast."<sup>9</sup>

The man's little girl was dying and she was helpless. Modern minds should be careful to not be calloused to the scene in the text. One can easily read such Bible narratives with little feeling of sympathy. Though hundreds of years separate contemporary Christians from the events of Mark 5:23, one should not be careful to remember that a real man experience the real pain of the loss of a real daughter.

In recounting the man's request for the girl to "be made well," Mark used a verb that is commonly translated "to save" in the New Testament. In fact, the word is one that was famously used of Christian salvation (Mark 10:26, 52; Romans 10:9, 13; Ephesians 2:8). The gospel writer likely used the term to indicate that the miracle served as an object lesson to communicate important gospel truth. Jesus' acts of physical healing conveyed His ability to heal people spiritually.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Verse 24**

Having received the man's faith-filled request, Jesus responded by following the man to his house. Mark said, "And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him" (Mark 9:24). The phrase "And he went with him" served as a transition in Mark's narrative concerning the two healings.<sup>11</sup> Editorially, Mark included a second story within his overarching narrative. He used a literary construction known as a nested story. Both stories were meant to portray the same spiritual reality — Jesus can fully heal and restore spiritually sick people.

In providing a transition to the story, Mark once again reiterated the way large crowds followed Jesus. The language of verse 24 was strong. It indicated that the crowd was so heavy that Jesus could hardly move or even breathe.<sup>12</sup> Such details will

---

<sup>8</sup> Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 298.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, 162.

<sup>10</sup> Brooks, James A. *The New American Commentary: Mark, Vol. 23*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 93-94.

<sup>11</sup> Brooks, 94.

<sup>12</sup> Robertson, 298.

play an important part in the second story, as Jesus will identify a lone woman within the bustling crowd (Mark 5:32-33). For now, the press of the crowd should be seen as increasing the anxiety of the desperate father. Can you imagine his worry as the thronging mob surely made it more difficult for Jesus to get to his dying daughter?

### **Verse 35**

Mark returned to the story concerning Jairus' daughter by saying, "While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" (Mark 5:35). Imagine the grief and loss that filled Jairus' heart as he heard the announcement. Also think about the frustration that man must have felt. Could Jesus have saved his daughter if the crowd hadn't slowed them down? What about the woman with the hemorrhage? If Jesus hadn't stopped to help her, Jairus' daughter might have been saved!

Take note of the question contained within the report Jairus' received. Many think the question — "Why trouble the Teacher any further?" — contained an air of sarcasm. It seems the person from Jairus' house was frustrated that Jesus was unable to heal the young girl. Perhaps the individual was annoyed that Jesus took so long in getting to the house. Jesus had been slowed by the crowds and by the woman with an issue of blood. If He would have hurried, He would have likely been able to help the girl.

### **Verse 36**

Mark 5:36 said, "But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.'" The fact that Jesus overheard what was said gives further witness to the raucous nature of the crowd in our story. Because of the press and the shouts from the crowd, Jesus was hardly able to hear what was said. Regardless, Jesus responded with care and compassion toward the grieving father.

Jesus told Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe." The original language of the New Testament employed a command that prohibited an action in progress. Jesus' words could be translated, "Stop being afraid!"<sup>13</sup> Upon hearing the news of his daughter's passing, Jairus' heart and mind had been filled with nervous anxiety. What was he going to do without his little girl? How would his wife cope?

Fear is a persistent theme in Mark's gospel. Think about the fear of the disciples during the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:4). Real the terror of the townspeople after Jesus healed the demoniac in the region of Gerasenes (Mark 5:15). Mark wanted his readers to know that the Son of Man has a way of assuaging all human fears. Because of who He is and what He has done, human hearts can have bold confidence in Jesus.

However, it is important to note that human fear isn't defeated in a vacuum. One must embrace a certain virtue in order to eradicate the emotion. Faith is the key to overcoming fear. Note how Jesus told the man to "only believe." Jesus gave a similar instruction to the woman with the hemorrhage in Mark 5:34. In calling the man to believe, Jesus encouraged the man to exhibit the same type of faith that had been

---

<sup>13</sup> Rogers Jr., Cleon and Cleon Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 78.

seen in the woman (Mark 5:34). Ultimately, faith is at the heart of the Christian life and the kingdom of Christ. Recall the content of Jesus' preaching in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Interestingly, Mark depicted Jesus as using a present tense imperative in Mark 5:36. One could translate His words as "...only keep believing." It seems that Mark wanted his readers to see the need for an ongoing faith. Yes, faith is required for the initial forays into the Christian life, but faith is required throughout the entire Christian experience. Indeed, Christianity can be described as a life of faith (Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7). Though Jairus initially believed in Mark 5:22, Jesus knew he needed to keep believing. Perhaps Jesus injunctive to Jairus had special meaning for some of Mark's original readers. Persecution was making some weary. They needed to stick to the faith they had exhibited in the early days of their Christian experience. All believers of all generations need such faith. It is an ongoing dependency on the person and work of Christ that brings spiritual strength and sustenance in life.

### **Verse 37**

After encouraging Jairus to trust, Jesus made way to the man's house. Mark said, "And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James" (Mark 5:37). In taking only three of His disciples, Jesus began a practice of including a close inner-circle of disciples in important events. He would later take the same three to a mountain top for His transfiguration (Mark 9:2). In that instance, Jesus probably restricted his inner-circle to James, Peter, and John because of the way the Transfiguration communicated special truth for the future leaders of the church. In the events surrounding Jairus' son, Jesus likely didn't want a large crowd accompanying Him for the healing. A spectacle concerning the son's healing may have only increased the plots against His life (Mark 3:6). Later in Mark's gospel, we will see that Jesus similarly sought privacy in other healing incidents (Mark 7:31-37; 8:22-26). Jesus' aim in doing such things was to conceal His identity to a degree in order to keep His death in alignment with the Heavenly Father's sovereign plan.

### **Verse 38**

Mark 5:38 described the scene when Jesus arrived at Jairus' house: "They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly." The people present were most likely family members, extended relatives, neighbors, and professional mourners. The use of paid grievers was a cultural custom. Roman society actually had a trade guild for the craft. The Mishnah mandated that even the poorest of people were required to hire grievers in times of grief. Perhaps Mark intended to allude to the way Jesus' ministry abolished misguided, man-made religious customs.

### **Verse 39**

Arriving at Jairus' home, Jesus asked the crowd, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." (Mark 5:39). Jesus probably addressed the mourners in such a way in order to encourage the father. He wanted the man to know that his daughter would be raised (Mark 5:36). Jesus' concern for the man is evidence of His compassionate toward us. Our Lord is a loving Lord. Just as

he sympathized with Mary and Martha at Lazarus' death (John 11:35), He sympathizes with us in all of our struggles. Unlike other gods of antiquity who were often depicted as cruel and petty, the Bible reveals that Jesus is kind and compassionate. One has remarked, "The gods of the heathen are generally represented as terrible and mighty in battle, delighting in bloodshed, the strong man's patrons, and the warrior's friends. The Saviour of the Christian is always set before us as gentle, and easy to be entreated, the healer of the broken-hearted, the refuge of the weak and helpless, the comforter of the distressed, the sick man's friend."<sup>14</sup> Know that Jesus loves you. He is moved with compassion by your difficulties and weaknesses. Scripture says, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15).

In encouraging Jairus, Jesus said, "The child is not dead but sleeping." In the New Testament, sleep is often used as a metaphor for physical death.<sup>15</sup> When Lazarus died, Jesus said the man was merely "asleep" (John 11:11). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul spoke of "those who are asleep." He also said, "We who are still alive at the Lord's coming will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). To the Corinthians, Paul said, "Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Jesus' use of the word translated "sleeping" revealed that the healing of Jairus' daughter, like the miracles before it (Mark 4:35 and 5:20), had an important "sign" lesson (Hebrews 2:3-4). Through healing the young girl, our Lord demonstrated that He has power over death. Every dead person will someday be resurrected to stand before God (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

#### **Verse 40**

In response to Jesus' announcement, the crowd around the house mocked him. Mark said, "And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was" (Mark 5:40). The laughing within our verse involved ridicule. The King James Version translated the original language as meaning "they laughed him to scorn." Most likely, the professional mourners misunderstood Jesus' use of metaphor. They thought He was saying that the girl was in a coma. As a result, they laughed at Him and made fun of Him. Can we really blame the mourners for their actions? They had seen a lot of death, and they had never seen anyone resurrected. Certainly they didn't anticipate such a possibility.

#### **Verse 41**

Mark described what happened as Jesus healed Jairus' daughter, saying, "Taking her by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha cumi,' which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise'"

---

<sup>14</sup> Ryle, J.C. *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Volume 2, Mark*. (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 78.

<sup>15</sup> Brooks, 94.

(Mark 5:41). As with the woman who had the hemorrhage (Mark 5:27), Jesus made physical contact with the girl. Touching a corpse rendered one unclean under the Mosaic Law (Numbers 19:11). In taking the girl's hand, Jesus did what He did for us. He embraced her uncleanness to make her clean. Scripture says, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

In speaking to the girl, Jesus spoke in Aramaic. Such was the tongue spoken by the Hebrew people after the Babylonian captivity. Thus, it was the language Jesus used in teaching, preaching, and everyday conversation. The authors of the New Testament translated most all of Jesus' words into Koine Greek.

For some reason, Mark chose to transliterate (not translate) the words Jesus uttered to Jairus' daughter. The phonetics of the words had a tender and soft sound. Mark apparently wanted to convey Jesus' tenderhearted care for the girl. The Aramaic word for "little girl" was an affectionate term of address. It literally meant "lamb." It was often used of youth. When used of a girl, it was perhaps similar to our modern "little princess" or "precious girl."

Mark's use of the word rendered "arise" was significant. Elsewhere in the the New Testament, the same terminology was used of Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 28:6-7; John 21:14; Acts 3:15; Romans 4:24). It was also used of the future resurrection of God's people (1 Corinthians 15:52). It seems Mark wanted to link the healing of Jairus' daughter to those significant events. He wanted to convey that the miracle was a sign and wonder (Hebrews 2:3-4) that pointed to Christ's work of providing resurrection hope. Maybe some of Mark's readers had lost loved ones because of persecution and death. Perhaps Mark wanted to encourage them with truth concerning the resurrection. Believers always have hope because of Christ's victory over death. Scripture says, "God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power" (1 Corinthians 6:14).

## **Verse 42**

In response to Jesus' touch and command, Jairus' daughter got up. The Bible says, "And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement" (Mark 5:42). As with the previous verse, the original language was used of the resurrection elsewhere in the New Testament. "Walking" was evidence that Jesus' miracle had completely restored the young girl.

Mark's mention of the girl's age ("twelve years") fulfilled his purpose of depicting the scope of Christ's work. He referenced the number twice within his nested narratives (Mark 5:25, 42). He did so in order to depict Christ's work as having application for two groups of people. Elsewhere in the New Testament, two twelves are used to speak of the way Christ died to provide redemption for a complete group of open from both Gentile and Jewish peoples (Revelation 4:4).

Mark described the response of onlookers with strong language. He said they were "overcome with amazement." At sight of the healed girl, cynicism and sarcasm gave way to awe. The original language spoke of an amazement that involved a degree of confusion. It portrayed a disposition of utter bewilderment. One has

translated the text as saying, “They were quite beside themselves with amazement.”<sup>16</sup> Such language revealed that Jesus’ miraculous feat accomplished the purpose of providing “wonder,” in accordance with Hebrews 2:4. Whereas the miracle provided a “sign” (Hebrews 2:4) regarding the resurrection, it also provided a wonder through the way it generated awestruck wonder at the power of Jesus.

### **Verse 43**

After performing his miracle, Jesus gave two instructions. Mark 5:43 says, “And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.” The first command was yet another instance in Mark’s gospel of what is known as “the Messianic Mystery.” At times, Jesus was cautious concerning news about His deeds spreading. He purposely worked to dampen Messianic expectations and rumors (Mark 1:43; 8:30).<sup>17</sup> He knew that Messianic furor could result in people either killing Him or crowning Him as an earthly king. He wanted to avoid such things and commit Himself to the work the Lord had for Him.

Jesus’ second command was for the people at Jairus’ house to give the resurrected girl something to eat. Our Lord’s instruction demonstrated His concern for human physical needs (Matthew 6:30).<sup>18</sup> However, it also was a means of proving that the girl had been fully restored.<sup>19</sup> According to ancient superstition, some might have claimed that the girl was merely raised in a spiritual sense. They might have said that her resurrected form was merely a phantom or ghost. The act of eating would have debunked such reports. Interestingly, Jesus Himself would eat during one of His post-resurrection appearances to demonstrate that He had truly been raised (John 21:15).

---

<sup>16</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III.

<sup>17</sup> Schnabel, 129.

<sup>18</sup> Brooks, 95.

<sup>19</sup> Brooks, 95.