

“Talitha, Koumi”

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Mark 5: 21-43

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Wherever Jesus went, crowds followed him. In this story from Mark, I wonder, which character did you identify with most? Jairus or his messenger, or the bleeding woman, maybe one of the disciples, or someone in the crowd who was afraid to approach Jesus, because they felt they weren't good enough? Or maybe, if you are always being interrupted, you identify with Jesus.

Friends, one of the amazing things about scripture is that it is living and can speak to each of us individually where we are at. If I were to survey the room, I am certain that there would be different things that jumped out at each of you. I struggled this week as I tried to really put myself into the shoes of the various characters in the story. The story looks very different through a variety of lenses. As we look a little more closely at today's scripture, I invite you to consider this idea: how do we keep from becoming impatient and controlling when we are fearful that our own perceived needs are more important than another's?

Last week Rev. Diane told us a story about Jesus out in a boat with his disciples. A storm came up, the disciples freaked, and wondered why Jesus wasn't helping them. Jesus asked them "Why are you afraid? Don't you have any faith?" How was your week? Who were you because of Jesus? Did you catch yourself lacking faith, like the disciples, or did you notice Jesus, in your boat, bringing a sense of calm to whatever storm you were facing?

Today we are continuing on in the book of Mark and we are looking at 2 of three individuals from chapter 5 that believe, to one degree or another, that Jesus cares, and that he can do something for them.

Within today's reading we are exposed to one of the unique writing devices that Mark uses, called 'the markan sandwich' -- the idea that there are two stories, one uniquely placed inside the other. Mark gives greater meaning to both stories by comparing and contrasting two similar but very different stories. I believe there is a clear message for us today. Perhaps I have reimagined scripture a little, and I invite you to join me in doing that.

Dramatic Dialogue in character of Jairus

My name is Jairus. I am an important leader in the synagogue. I have a place of influence and others come to me for wisdom. However, when I'm not working I am a family man with a beautiful wife and an amazing 12-year old daughter that I would do anything for. Hard to believe she's 12 years old -- she could get married any day. I could go on all day about how wonderful she is. But today I had to do something I never imagined doing. I needed to do the unthinkable for my daughter who was unwell ... I had essentially used up all my health benefits trying to get doctors to help my daughter who seemed to be at death's door. I was desperate. I knew that Jesus was in town, and I had heard stories about him and his supposed ability to heal. And so I went to interrupt him in the midst of this big crowd and threw myself at his feet, begging him to come with me and heal my daughter. I was desperate. I was so afraid my daughter would die before I got home. But I also knew that approaching Jesus might cost me my job.

You see; me and my boss, and many of my peers talked badly about and criticized Jesus for who he said he was and what he was doing. But, today it was different. I was desperate. I couldn't imagine my daughter dying, and was prepared to do whatever it took. And so in public I begged Jesus to come with me. Thankfully, Jesus did.

We were making our way through the crowds toward the house, when all of a sudden Jesus stopped, looked around and accused someone of having touched his robe. He said that power had been taken from him. All I was thinking was, good grief, weren't people bumping into him all the time? What made this so special? I just wanted to keep going, I wanted Jesus to keep moving. My daughter was obviously more important than whoever was in the crowd, after all she was just 12, and I was so afraid she would die.

But Jesus didn't move. He continued to look around, asking his disciples and the crowd who had touched him...finally this woman, with a look of fear and trembling on her face, timidly stepped up to him and told him her whole story. I just couldn't believe it. Here was this woman, an unclean woman, according to Levitical law, who had been bleeding for 12 years. She just interrupted Jesus, who was supposed to be going to help my daughter. I just kept imaging the worst, even though Jesus was right there

with me. But she chatted on, she told him she had seen doctors and specialists in town, and all they could do was take her money and really she said they just made things worse. She said she just knew if she could only touch his robe, that maybe she'd be healed. The audacity of that woman! Did she not know her place? She was not even supposed to be in town given her bleeding. Some even said she was a gentile, and yet, Jesus looked at her with grace and compassion and said "You are now well because of your faith. May God give you peace. You are healed, and you will no longer be in pain". That was it.....

Because at the very same time Jesus said this to her, one of my messengers appeared from the crowd and said to me, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer"? And in that second my emotions just exploded! I was so angry that Jesus had just wasted time on this woman, trying to fix her when no one else could. I was losing it. After all, I'd just been told my daughter was dead.

But Jesus heard what my messenger had said, and even in my distress, I heard him say, "Don't worry, just have faith, do not fear, just believe. Let's keep going, I got this". So we pressed on toward the house. I was so devastated. I was told my daughter was dead and yet, Jesus told me not to worry. What was he talking about? Why had Jesus just wasted his time on that woman? After all, I was an important religious leader. I couldn't have my life interrupted this way. Was it possible that he knew something I didn't?

As we approached the house, my anger and devastation was met by my friends and family crying and making so much noise. And then, as if he lacked all empathy, Jesus asked them why they were crying, and he told us she was just asleep. Who was I to believe, the messenger who said she was dead, or Jesus, who said she was just asleep?? It made no sense.

My friends just laughed at Jesus. And yet he took three of his disciples and my wife and I into my daughter's bedroom. I couldn't believe it. He looked at her, took her by the hand and said to her talitha koumi ! which means "little girl - get up!" Unbelievably, she got right up! Then Jesus told us to get her some food. Wow, will she have a story to tell in the future!

So that is my day. It has been a crazy day, so much has happened. As I stop now to reflect, I realize that simply by my title and position I was able

to work my way through the crowd easily, and I was able to get in close enough to Jesus to get his attention. I was afraid I was going to lose my little girl and so I got impatient with Jesus and even more frustrated with this woman who interrupted my plan. However, today, for the first time, I think I get what others were saying,...

Jesus hasn't come to do the bidding of the influential and powerful. I saw first-hand today that Jesus has come to turn upside down and give value to that which the establishment has declared of no value.

I saw today a woman, who had a bold active faith, reach out to Jesus. I saw Jesus establish a personal relationship with this woman that I had no time for. Jesus did not become flustered as people pushed in and demanded something from him. First I interrupted Jesus and then this woman, and who knows what was coming next in his day. I have a lot to learn.

Friends, I am just as guilty as Jairus sometimes. Sometimes I am so busy focusing on my own desires / perceived needs or even real needs to see that Jesus has got this, whatever it is for me ... that I fail to trust that Jesus is walking with me. I become consumed by my own stuff. What about us as a church -- are we focused on Jesus bringing life to something we feel is more important, or are we open to see the interruptions that need his attention?

Folks, what personal things or situations are we demanding that Jesus come and fix? Are we willing to have those plans interrupted? I am not saying we can't bring our stuff to Jesus - because, the coolest thing is we can. We all have the chance to approach Jesus with our stories and our pain, and i don't know why Jesus does not heal us like he healed the hemorrhaging women, but I do know he says to each of us -- get up, move beyond your state of slumber and see and hear what i am doing, even in the midst of your own pain.

What do you need Jesus to help you get up from? What is Jesus calling you to move and do?

I can't help but recognize that we are coming to the end of Indigenous History month. It's devastating what we have learned this month ... forget learn, we already knew it; our heads were just in the sand until there was

proof. It is also the end of Pride month, the end of a month where a Muslim family was needlessly killed, simply for their faith. A man in Saskatoon, girls in St. Albert and, it is the Sunday before Canada Day, a day where perhaps a pause is more important than a party.

We live in a world where all too often the voice of the well positioned, the influential, the voice with the most money, or the voice that draws attention to itself is most often heard.

Jairus was an influential leader who pushed right through to Jesus, to beg him to come and help him, impervious to the needs around him. And yet in the end, I think perhaps his faith grew, as he saw this brave, broken woman reach out to Jesus in faith.

It is my prayer that we can go from here today, recognizing in the midst of our own pain, that Jesus is with us. Let's be open to the interruptions that come our way, and aware of those places where Jesus longs to see healing happen in and through us.

Thanks be to God! Amen