

Sermon: 27 June 2021,

Fear and Faith

Lam 3: 22-33; 2 Cor 8:7-15; Mk 5:21-43

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be now and always acceptable unto You O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

What is it about these two stories that made Matthew, Mark and Luke independently jam them together in very similar ways? Well, they all come from a single eyewitness account and so similarities of detail are to be expected, but while each is a remarkable story in its own right, smashed together they are greater than the sum of their parts. So, how is it that these stories improve our ability to live into the joy and the hope that Jesus offers to everyone ... whether they deserve His help or not?

Similarities include the fact that both of the afflicted parties are women, and both cases share an interest in “twelve years.” But one of the women is perhaps an older person who has suffered from a chronic and debilitating illness that has denied her the privilege of bearing children and has left her destitute; the other is only a young girl, but she is from a notable family and is soon to be of marriageable age; two ends of the same spectrum, both need healing to claim life.

The number twelve in Jewish culture is most often associated with the tribes of Israel, and usually describes “the whole nation”. I wonder if the woman in the street might represent the idea that even those entrenched in the old ways can be saved if they step away from rigid human rules and cast their lot in with Jesus, while the young girl is an example of how even youth is not a guarantee of *life* unless it’s lived in faith.

Jairus, (*Yahweh will enlighten*) the young girl’s father, a notable man has sought out Jesus as a last option. His daughter lays “at the point of death”. Despite his position as a leader chosen from within his community and the risk to his status that will come with submitting to Jesus’ authority, he has done

what was needed to give his daughter the best chance of being healed. You can imagine the stress: not knowing what’s wrong; knowing you have tried everything else ... knowing that Jesus has already proven His ability to show mercy and heal the desperately sick ... knowing the risk that goes with asking Jesus for help. But having no other option and having taken these risks, Jesus then gets diverted on the way ... putting him to the test!

“*Who touched me?*” Did Jairus also think that that Jesus had just lost it in the midst of the pressing throng? Did he become just as captivated as everyone else by the miraculous and immediate healing in the street, especially afterwards when Jesus *claimed* the outcast as His “daughter”? What was Jairus’ reaction to discovering *who* it was responsible for delaying Jesus’ journey?

Let your desire become complete so that ... you can seek a fair balance between your abundance and their need

Jairus isn’t the focus here, he’s merely a means of identifying that Jesus’ work isn’t only reserved for the wealthy and influential, or for those who get to Him first. We can’t miss the fact that Jesus was alert to *every person, every touch* ... even from the midst of a pressing crowd as they made their way up the road. He knew the woman’s *what* as well as her *why* ... Jairus could wait, this moment was hers because she wasn’t ready to surrender while there was the possibility of just touching His clothes.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases ... the Lord is my portion and my hope

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases ... the Lord is good to those who wait

But the story isn't over ... and the best is yet to come! The crowd arriving at Jairus' house are met by the professional mourners who are already in full swing ... and Jairus gets the message that his daughter has died ... "no need to continue to bother the Teacher any more!" But Jesus overhears this and says to Jairus: "Do not fear, only believe":

Going into the young girl's room Jesus takes only his three disciples and the girl's parents. While everybody else knows the girl is well beyond being resuscitated, none of the others need to know *how* Jesus' healing action works. It's a personal, very intimate moment:

He took her by the hand and said ... "Talitha cum" (little girl, get up) ... He told them to tell no-one about this and told them to give her something to eat.

We only know this story because one of the six people in the room (other than Jesus) passed the intimate details to the author at some later time ... perhaps Peter, Mark's most reliable source. Only an eyewitness could reveal the details of the quiet exchanges between Jesus and the woman in the street, and the details of what transpired inside Jairus' house. *Talitha cum* is one of very few Aramaic phrases in the NT and the fact that it has not been translated into Greek with everything else, somehow adds to the authenticity of the narrative. It's the little things that make the difference here and the contrasts and similarities help identify tiny intimate details, especially to a first century Jew.

In cases like this, the healing is physical and immediate, but no matter what ails us: physical, psychological, emotional, cultural damage ... *even we can be healed*. So, what do we learn from this that helps us to live

more strongly into the true joy and hope of the kingdom of God here and now? Despite everything that plays out against us, how are we still able to persevere in faith and claim the healing that Jesus offers to everyone? ... *Do not fear, only believe!*

To claim her healing touch, the woman in the street had to ignore the cultural isolation imposed on her by the authorities and she stepped out in faith. To claim healing for his daughter, Jairus was called to ignore the likely threat of rejection by those same authorities and step out in faith. Did the healing of the woman in the street make a difference to Jairus' faith ... his sense of resolve?

Faith and fear, hope and joy. Many of us have issues reconciling the duality in such ideas because of our real-world experience. But we need to let go of our real-world preconceptions *before* we can be freed of their limitations. Jairus and the woman in the street each together and separately, had the courage to step out in faith and hope, beyond their personal fear ... but still mindful and fearful of the Lord.

Our Lord is both big and small; Master and Creator of the universe and everything in it, including each and every hair on our head. He knows each of us by name and calls us into His service ... to love Him in faith and fear, and to love one another ... here and now ... *Do not fear, only believe!*

Amen.