

A Gospel Which Still Preaches When Everything Goes Wrong | Mark 5:21-43

In this story, which is recorded in three of the Gospel's, we find the lives of three people wrapped together. Their individual stories complementing one another to give us one story offering hope to each of us!

The first person in the story is Jairus. He is a ruler of the synagogue, a religious leader. He's a prominent, well known & respected man in his community which can make asking for help more difficult. As a religious leader he is expected to be strong but in this story he makes himself very vulnerable before Jesus & his peers. Mark 5:22-23 says; **"he fell at [Jesus'] feet and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live."** Bear in mind Jesus was not popular with most of Jairus' peers. In Matthews account his peers have just been asking Jesus' disciples why he eats with tax collectors & sinners. Jairus comes into their discussion and asks Jesus for help, humbling himself in front of his peers.

Is there a peer group in our life who could potentially hinder us turning to Jesus in a time of need? Or do we think for some reason we can't show weakness like Jairus? It was Jairus' desperate circumstances that helped free him from pride, fear & peer pressure – things which can prevent all of us asking for help. For you it may not be a daughter or loved one on their deathbed. It may be a business, a relationship or a dream on its deathbed. It may be that life, business, ministry, responsibility, family circumstances at this moment are simply overwhelming and you don't know where to turn. Everyone around you may be questioning the validity of religion & Jesus but all you can think is; 'I need him. If he is there I need him'.

One of the great things about the Good News of Jesus is because Jesus is strong we are free to be weak, vulnerable & dependent on him... ***Because Jesus holds everything together we are free to not have everything together...*** (On the cross it didn't look like Jesus was holding everything together but the truth is he was holding the whole plan of salvation together when he hung on that cross...) He can hold your life together! In reality none of us are that strong; we might think we are, we might pretend to be, we might appear to be; but at some point in life something will happen that highlights how needy & dependant we are.

Jairus may never have come to Jesus if his daughter was not in such a desperate condition. As stubborn human beings our hearts can be naturally hard & resistant to God. So at times God lovingly permits hard things to come our way to soften our hearts & get our attention, things we can't deal with ourselves. He allows us to feel helpless so we realise our need for his help.

The second person in the story is an unknown lady. If Jairus was a prominent religious leader then this lady was the total opposite. The fact Jarius is named & she isn't communicates something in itself. She was

unknown... This woman likely viewed Jairus & his daughter as more valuable to God than her. Maybe you view others as more worthy of God's help, or you view their need as more important than yours. But you matter to God & your need is important to him. God is not weighing needs against needs to see who needs him most; no because he is more than able to meet all of us at the point of need – he cares about us all!

Note that neither Jairus nor this woman come to Jesus on the basis of merit, they come on the basis of desperation. This woman has been bleeding as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. According to the Law of Moses, a woman with a discharge of blood was considered ceremonially unclean (Lev 15:19ff). She wasn't even allowed to enter the temple. She wasn't allowed to have physical contact with anyone, including her family; if she did they also would become defiled. This woman's alienation was extreme. She was an outcast. It had been 12 long years since anyone had embraced her. Imagine the stigma & the loneliness, what that would do to a person.

On top of this Mark records she **“had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but grew worse.”** This woman's illness had cost her everything: her money, her relationships and her strength. Maybe there is someone here who can identify with this woman at some level. Your circumstances may not be exactly the same but you can identify with feeling overlooked... with being an outcast... with suffering at the hands of those who were supposed to help or care for you... with trying so many things which seem to have only left you in a worse condition.

Being a religious leader Jairus may well have thought he was more entitled to Jesus' help than an outcast who was ceremonially unclean. The woman may have thought the same but in desperation she reached out & touched Christ's garment. And immediately she was healed. Imagine that, after all she had been through one touch of Jesus' garment changed everything!

Jesus noticed power had gone out from him & he stopped & turned to the crowd & asked who touched him. The disciples pointed out there were loads of people pressing in around him. But Jesus knew there was something different about one of those people. Mark records; **“And [Jesus] looked round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”**

In many ways this lady was very different than Jairus. They stood at opposite ends of the social & religious ladder. One stood at the top while the other wasn't even allowed on the first step. Before Jesus however, they were simply two people in great need. Note how both of them fell at Jesus' feet in the story. This story is a picture of us all, before Jesus we are all people in great need of him. No matter who we are or where we come from, at his feet we find ourselves on level ground with everyone else. This is both

humbling & exalting depending on how we view ourselves, but either way it is a healthy thing for each of us to realise...

Notice how Jesus calls this woman **“daughter”**. He says **“daughter your faith has made you well”**. This is the only time Jesus calls anyone daughter in the gospel’s. How precious. Is he pointing out that just as Jairus was concerned for his daughter God is equally concerned for her? In the eyes of her culture she was not as important as the daughter of a religious leader, but in God’s eyes both this woman & the little girl were equally precious. Your value to God is not in your social status, religious attainments, or who your parents are; it is in the fact you personally matter to God. To Jairus & the crowd this woman & her needs would have easily gone unnoticed, but Jesus made a point of stopping with her. Jesus didn’t have to stop, the woman was healed already, but he made time for her. He did so to speak value, peace & healing back into her life...

The final person in the story is Jairus’ 12 year old daughter. Just as Jesus finishes speaking with the unknown lady the bad news arrives that the little girl has died. Jesus leaves no time for unbelief to settle & declares; **“Do not fear, only believe.”** Then he goes to Jairus’ house where they’re met by the mourners. He asks them; **“Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.”** They laughed at him. Jesus then asks everyone except Jairus, his wife & Peter, James & John to leave... They went in where the child was. Jesus took her hand & simply said **“Little girl, I say to you, arise.”** And amazingly up she got!

Notice that Jesus said **“she is not dead she is sleeping”**. When he said this Jesus was not offering a different diagnosis. He was introducing a whole new perspective on what it means to die. Death is only a temporary thing like sleep. As 1 Thess. 4:14 says; **“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”** The context of those words is the return of Christ & reunion with loved ones & we are told to comfort/encourage one another with these words. The girl coming back to life was also only temporary. It was not the ultimate solution. Even though Jairus & his daughter had a happy reunion here, eventually they would be parted again by death, but only for a time...

This helps remind us all healing which takes place in this life, no matter how spectacular, is a temporary solution not the ultimate solution; it’s a foretaste of the kingdom which has come in part but not in full! Ultimate healing & resurrection includes a new body which is disease proof, aging proof, depression proof, sin proof, tragedy proof. This is the certain hope of every person who puts their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. If God heals a person now they still have an aging body prone to sickness & weakness. Our lasting & ultimate & greatest hope then is in resurrection after death. Whether or not God

heals a person now we can still have this ultimate hope that one day we will be in the fullest sense!
Because he has been raised we also will be... This is Christian hope!

This is what we need to understand. All these stories are recorded for us are in the context of the bigger gospel story. None of them are the ultimate story but they all point to it in some way. Theology goes wrong when this is forgotten. Theology goes wrong when we try to force this to be every story. The reality is most stories don't go the way this story goes here. A family & community in Islandeady find themselves heavy with sorrow & grief because a story did not go this way. This is the reality of life as we know it now & it is also the reality of the context this story happened in. The context is not that Jesus raised every little girl or boy who died in Israel when he walked this earth. The context is he raised one little girl, one young man & one grown man, the others that died he did not intervene with. Why? We don't know why! Only God knows why. He could have but he didn't... In Acts 12:1-19 why was James killed while Peter got released? Could God not have rescued James as easily as Peter? Why? We do not know but Luke did think it was important enough to note that every story does not end like Peter's. How would James' mother have felt? She was there in the house when Peter came wrapping on the door having been miraculously delivered, but her son never came home.

The story of this little girl being raised makes us long that this could be the ending of every such story. It makes us long for that & it makes ask God questions... & we don't get all those questions answered in this present life. However what we do get is good news that still works when nothing else does!

The gospel is still good news even in the midst of tragedy. This is why we long to see the gospel planted deep in the soil of our communities, this why we want to see it as the deep foundation in every life & family. So that when the storms rage the house still stands, & hope still shines. This is where all false gospels collapse while the true gospel remains & shines as a beacon of hope – declaring the hope of the death, burial & resurrection of Christ & what it has secured – our resurrection, our loved ones resurrection & the resurrection of everyone who only believes.

The true gospel is a gospel that still preaches when everything goes wrong. It preaches on the most joyous occasions & it preaches in the most tragic circumstances & often in shines most brightly in the latter. True Christianity still works when nothing else does – that is how you know it is true. If it does not hold true when people need it most then what kind of gospel is it? There are false gospels out there that will promise the world but they crumble to bits when you need them most. If our gospel does not hold true when people need it most then we have nothing to offer a broken & hurting community & world.

In Christ no one ever goes home without hope. We can't always understand why, we don't have all the answers, but we do always have this sure hope to cling to. This story helps points us to this great future hope, the fact Paul adopts Jesus description of death underlines this. Oh how we long that this story could

be every story, but the present reality is that it's not. However in the truth that this story in part of the bigger gospel story we find great hope & comfort. This story on its own brings little comfort or hope to the bereaved, especially those bereaved by tragedy. In fact it probably raises more questions like 'why not my loved one', 'if you did it for one why not all?' However within the bigger gospel story this story points to the great hope of the Christian faith – resurrection is coming; **“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”** (1 Cor.15:20)! Since Christ was raised we also will be with glorious new bodies which tragedy & death can never mar. **“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words”** (1 Thess 4:16-18). **“Then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”** (1 Cor. 15:54-55).

This is the bigger gospel story, this is Christian hope! This is the hope we want to see firmly planted in every heart. So people (who matter to God) have this Rock of Hope in the most tragic seasons of life. Where do you turn when you're prayers & why's are not answered? You turn to the bigger gospel & you're reminded ONE DAY THEY WILL BE ANSWERED, FOR THE BIGGER GOSPEL STORY IS A STORY WHICH CAN BE EVERYONE'S STORY. As story which tenderly whispers to us even in tragedy; **“Do not fear, only believe... The child is not dead but sleeping.”** And so we hopefully wait for the day when Christ will say **“Talitha cumi”**.