

## **Mark 5:21-43**

5:21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea.

5:22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet

5:23 and begged him repeatedly, "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."

5:24 So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

5:25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.

5:26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.

5:27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,

5:28 for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

5:29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

5:30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

5:31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'"

5:32 He looked all around to see who had done it.

5:33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

5:34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

5:35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?"

5:36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

5:37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

5:38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

5:39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."

5:40 And they laughed at him. Then 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.

5:41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"

5:42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.

5:43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

### **Sermon: They Had Names You Know!**

*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

*We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

*Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

I spent the better part of fifth grade memorizing the opening of the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address. These are good words. Really, really, good words. And their power still stirs me when I hear them spoken aloud.

But as I read today's text, I can't help but wonder: Where are the unalienable rights for hemorrhaging women? And how perfect can a

union ever be if it doesn't protect little girls with fatal illnesses? And no matter how steeped in liberty, or how dedicated to our proposition of equality...will our sisters in this world ever be free if we don't give them so much as a name?

I'm not here to indict our forefathers for the sins of patriarchy. We don't have enough time for that today – but it sure would make a good Bible Study, and if you want, I'd be happy for us to explore the topic in depth. And I'm not here to indict the men of the Jewish side of first-century Galilee either.

Today, I'd rather focus on a man who decided to claim personhood over gender, and whose ideas of radical love and equality are still sending shock waves through our world.

So...let's get to the text. And let's get to that man who doesn't act as most men do, but rather, who acts like all men should.

The text tells us that Jairus was a leader in the synagogue. And he was wealthy, too. His twelve-year-old daughter was very sick, so sick she was close to death. And grieving, Jairus falls on his knees, and begs Jesus to heal his little girl. Jesus obliges, and they begin to make their way to Jairus' home.

On the way, they encounter a crowd, all clamoring for Jesus' attention. There's a woman among them. She's been sick for twelve years, suffering from a hemorrhage that won't heal. It's a malady, that because of patriarchal rules, prevents her not only from a sense of normalcy and intimacy with her husband, but also prevents her from worshipping in the Temple.

And there's an added twist. She's seen too many incompetent physicians and specialists over the years. Her once vast wealth has been drained away by malpractice, and pharmacy bills, and co-pays. She's been pushed to the margins – just another number left to fend off the consequences of an over-sized doughnut. And even if she wanted to complain to her local representative, she can't. Remember, women didn't have names worth recording in stories back then, let alone rights.

And because she's been diminished in stature, this woman doesn't think she has the standing to plead for healing face-to-face with Jesus – that's only reserved for important people like Jairus. But unlike Jairus, this woman doesn't put her faith in the power of men, she puts her faith in the power of God. When Jesus passes by, she touches his robe, and her whole world changes in an instant. She can feel that she is healed. And so can Jesus!

And Jesus turns to find who has done this. Not out of anger, but out of curiosity. *Who is it that is SO bold, and SO faithful, and SO strong, that she would do this?* And his gaze meets hers, and trembling with fear – not fright, but more like the trembling awe of the shepherds in Luke's gospel – she says, "It was me, Lord." And Jesus says, "Go in peace, daughter, your faith has made you well."

And you may not think this is a big deal. But it is. Jesus doesn't heal people like some mechanic tinkering with machines. Jesus doesn't take a ticket, complete his job, and say, "Next." Jesus sees the hurt AND the humanity in every person he meets. And Jesus offers God's healing and God's peace.

Of course, Jairus is stuck in a world bent on privilege. And he's anxious now. Every moment Jesus tarries here with this "person," or with all these other deplorables, is a moment he's not healing my daughter. And Jairus'

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worst fears are realized. Word reaches him that his daughter has died. And a faith that was SO public and SO pronounced just an hour ago has now disappeared.

But, as I mentioned to you earlier, Jesus doesn't act like most men. Thank God!!! Jesus doesn't ask for a loyalty oath. Jesus doesn't hold grudges. Jesus displays a sense of humility. And creativity. And vision. And a little flexibility, too. Jesus says, "She's only sleeping. Follow me and see." And somehow, someway, with hands of healing, Jesus helps this little girl come to by saying, "Talitha cum," or "Get up, little lamb." And she does. And there is new life. Complete with God's blessing and God's peace.

This is the kind of world Jesus intends to build one relationship at a time: a place where both the marginalized and the privileged, the young and the old, the named and the unnamed, the believing and the doubting, the public and the private, EVERY PERSON, is offered God's presence, is offered God's healing, is offered God's peace, is offered all of God's possibilities.

The kind of world Jesus invites us into doesn't have quotas. It's not a zero-sum gain. There's a grace that's inexhaustible. And a table that'll fill you up fuller than a smorgasbord. And there's no need of labels, save one: Child of God.

And it seems to me, Mark's story is kind of ironic. Here is a writer, recounting for us the story of someone who is challenging every social norm; not just challenging them, obliterating them. But Mark's author is still stuck in a world, much like Jairus, where there's a fear that too many people, with too much access to what Jesus is offering, is a bad thing. And so lesser folks, hemorrhaging women, and dying girls are stripped of their names.

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Well don't you go believing for a second, they didn't have names. They did. They were me and you, even if their narrator was short on detail. But if it helps, let's give them what Mark's author wouldn't.

How about Grace? She's the kind of woman with the courage to reach out and demand (with the most amazing sense of humility!) the peace, and the blessing, and the healing, and the dignity that have always been hers.

And how about Dawn? After twelve years in a frail body, a budding teenager is offered new life, as fresh, and as expectant as a new day. And in her, is the hope for the kind of world that will be.

They've got names, no matter how hard those who write their histories seek to diminish them.

In Caesar's world, and Pharaoh's, too, and even in Jefferson and Lincoln's worlds, Grace and Dawn, and billions of their nameless sisters were not afforded the pursuit of their happiness, nor the promotion of their general welfare, nor the declaration of their equality. Not in spoken word. And most assuredly not in written word.

Some of that has changed. But certainly not enough. And while many women of privilege have secured their rights and their dignity, there are still far too many in this nation and in this world, who are counted as less than.

But in God's world, there are no fractions. People are whole. No matter what. And if we are to be helpmates in the coming of God's kin-dom, we've got start working for a world where all PEOPLE, are endowed with certain unalienable rights – In spoken form. In written form. In living form.

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Men, we've got to start being men who act like Jesus. White men, straight men, rich men, educated men, documented men, healthy men, Christian men, American men, privileged men – we've got to start acting like we live in the Galilee, bound not to the nonsense of powerful systems, but bound to the bright and beautiful love of God. And we've got to start faith-ing it – that is, we've got to start doing more than talking about it – we've got to start faith-ing that God's love is enough for us. That it's bigger, and better, and brighter, and more wonderful than being part of a boys' club. And that there's enough, more than enough of God's love to go around.

And women, you've got to keep shouting your names, Grace and Dawn, and Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony, and every name of every mother and daughter and sister and aunt and niece and cousin, until the stories give you your due. We need to hear them. Our sons need to hear them. And our daughters, too. Because every time we call a name, we acknowledge the worth and dignity of every person. And every time we know the person behind the name, we catch a glimpse of God in our midst: Children of God who are good, decent, worthy, unique, beloved products of God's creative spark.

Sisters, brothers, kindred, all, we need to be people who live like Jesus. And if we can live in such a way, then one day soon we'll know a place where all persons are granted life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

May it be so. And may it be soon! Amen.