

Mark 5:21-43  
Jesus' Power over Disease and Death  
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In our passage for today, we come to the conclusion of two days in the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ that were especially busy and eventful days. It is truly amazing how much occurred in this short period of time. And all that occurred on these two days served to give the twelve apostles a new insight into how especially special their master and teacher was and is. After all, Jesus is in some very special ways like no one else in all of human history. Jesus is the divine Person of God the Son living out a human existence through the complete human nature which He received in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is God the Son thinking human thoughts through His human mind, feeling human emotions through His human heart, making human decisions through His human will, doing human activities through His human body. Yet Jesus is able to do what other humans can't. Even in His human activity, Jesus has divine authority because His Person is divine. Thus even the wind and the waves obey Jesus because Jesus speaks with the authority of God. Jesus also has the power of the Holy Spirit upon Him without measure. At His baptism, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit beyond measure to empower Him for His public ministry. Jesus in His humanity performs His miracles not through the power of His own divine nature but through the divine power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, in Matthew 12:28:

28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Yes, this Jesus is so very special. He is a divine Person living a human existence through a complete human nature while possessing divine authority and while working miracles in the power of the divine Holy Spirit. There is no one else like Him in all of history.

Let's quickly review what had already happened during these two days to give the twelve disciples new insights into who and what Jesus really is. At the beginning of this two day period, Jesus went out to the shore of the Sea of Galilee near the city of Capernaum to teach. The crowd that gathered to hear Him was so massive that Jesus got into a boat anchored a little bit away from the shore and used that boat as His pulpit. Jesus taught in parables about the true nature of the kingdom of God, the kingdom which Jesus had come to establish. This kingdom is not the military and political kingdom of earthly glory and power which many were expecting. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is instead a spiritual kingdom that is advanced by the preaching of the good news about Jesus. In the evening after His day of teaching, Jesus told His disciples that He wanted to go to the other side of the lake. He wanted to get away from the crowds for a time because he was so exhausted and so in need of rest. The disciples took Jesus with them in their boat, and Jesus quickly went to sleep. Some of the crowd followed Jesus in small boats, but we do not read about their reaching the other side. They must have immediately turned back and fled to the safety of shore when a wind storm suddenly

arose on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was so tired that this wind storm didn't awaken Him, not even when it began to swamp the boat. Here the disciples could see Jesus in all His humanity. He had limited energy just as everyone else does, and He needed sleep just as everyone else does. Yet when the disciples woke Jesus up and asked for His help, Jesus commanded the winds to cease and the sea to be still, and they instantly obeyed. Here the disciples could see Jesus in all His divinity.

Jesus and His twelve disciples safely reached the other side of the lake, and a man possessed by a legion of demons confronted Jesus. He was a wild man whom no one had been able to tame. People had even bound him with shackles and chains, and he pulled apart the chains and broke the shackles in pieces. He lived among the tombs, and he often cut himself with stones and howled in the night. This man had been considered a hopeless case, but this man had never before encountered Jesus. Jesus commanded the demons to leave the man, and the demons obeyed, just as the wind and the waves had obeyed. With Jesus' permission, the horde of demons entered a nearby herd of swine. The pigs went berserk and stampeded down a steep incline into the lake, where they drowned. The delivered man then put on clothes and sat with Jesus in his right mind.

So far the disciples in quick succession had seen Jesus overcome two hopeless situations. First Jesus calmed the unsurvivable storm, and then Jesus tamed the untameable man. Yet the disciples' lessons for that day were not yet over. They next crossed back over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and returned to the city of Capernaum. There on this very same day

they saw Jesus overcome two more hopeless situations. One situation appeared hopeless because it involved a painful disease which many physicians had determined to be incurable. The other situation appeared hopeless because it involved a sickness that had already progressed beyond sickness to the irreversible state of physical death. Jesus has already proven Himself through His encounter with the unsurvivable storm and the untameable man. Now Jesus again proved Himself through an encounter with incurable disease and irreversible death.

Let us now examine our text. We will use three headings: the urgent demand, the tragic delay and the dramatic deliverance.

First, the urgent demand. As soon as Jesus returned to the shores near Capernaum, a crowd again gathered to Him. In that crowd was one very desperate man. He was desperate because his beloved twelve year old daughter, his only child, was at the point of death. God had used the megaphone of pain to get this man's attention and to direct him to Jesus. As soon as he saw Jesus there on the shore by the sea, he publicly demonstrated his high regard for Jesus by prostrating himself on the ground before Him.

This man was Jairus, a ruler of a synagogue in Capernaum. This man was to an old covenant synagogue what a ruling elder is to a new covenant church. He was one of a plurality of elders who oversaw the life and worship of a local assembly of God's people. Many of the religious leaders in both Galilee and Judea opposed Jesus. Yet Jairus responded to Jesus' miracles not by opposing Jesus but by seeking His help. As the Puritans used to

say, the same sun that hardens clay softens wax. Jairus expressed a very confident faith in Jesus. He said that even though his young daughter was at the point of death, he was confident that she would be healed if only Jesus would come and lay His healing hand upon her.

Jesus agreed to go with Jairus, and that brings us to our second point, the tragic delay. I use the word "tragic" because this delay prevented Jesus from reaching the young girl before she died. The going was slow as it was because the crowd thronged Jesus. That made their journey slow enough, but then something happened to slow them to a standstill.

There was someone else in this crowd who was desperate, and she too was seeking healing from Jesus. For twelve years, she had suffered from some sort of bleeding. In verse 29, her condition is called an affliction. The word in the original Greek which is here translated "affliction" can also in a more literal sense refer to a whip lash or a scourge. This must have been a very painful disease. There were also social consequences to this disease. Under the old covenant rules of ceremonial defilement, this disease made this woman ceremonially unclean. This forced her to live a somewhat isolated life. She was not allowed to attend religious worship. People also avoided her in ordinary life because anyone she touched became ceremonially unclean for a time. She had gone to many medical doctors, but they all determined her condition to be incurable. She only continued to get worse. Perhaps some of the primitive treatments which these various doctors has prescribed over the years had contributed to her physical decline. All the doctors

had accomplished was to impoverish her through the expense of their treatments. She had lost her wealth along with her health.

Like Jairus, this woman believed in the healing touch of Jesus. Unlike Jairus, she wanted to be healed anonymously without speaking out and making herself known. We mustn't judge her too harshly for this because she lived in a different time with different customs from the ones we are accustomed to. In the culture of her day, women were expected to be silent in public. She reasons that all she has to do to be healed is to touch the hem of Jesus' robe. Because the crowd is thronging Jesus, no one will notice. No one will ever know it even happened. She will use the cover of the crowd to remain anonymous.

For a time, everything appears to go as planned. She touches the hem of Jesus' robe, and she can feel the healing. She can sense that her flow of blood has dried up. This affliction had been some sort of painful scourge, and she could tell when it ceased to afflict her. All seemed to go as planned, but then Jesus immediately stopped and turned around and said, "Who touched Me?" The disciples responded rudely to Jesus' question and implied that it was a foolish question to ask. Why would Jesus ask who had touched Him when this crowd was pressing against Him on every side? Here is the reason Jesus asked the question. The woman felt the effect of the healing power as it entered her body, and Jesus felt the healing power as it left Him. Jesus was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit had responded to the faith in the woman's touch. In His human experience, His knowledge was limited. In His life as a member of the Godhead, He knew everything, but in His human life with

a human mind, He knew only some things. One thing Jesus did not then know in His human experience was who had touched Him and been healed.

Again, why did Jesus stop and ask who had touched Him and experienced His healing power? There is a simple reason. When God blesses us with a deed of mercy, God expects us to respond by blessing Him with a word of worship. And God expects us to worship Him and to thank Him not only in private but also publicly in the presence of others. God expects us to confess Him before men and to worship Him with others. This is one of the problems with the private and individual religion which some prefer over public worship with the people of God. Jesus says that whoever confesses Him before men, He will confess before the angels of God and before His Father in heaven. There is a place for private worship but not to the deliberate exclusion of public worship with other Christians.

We must here commend the woman because when Jesus calls out for the one who had experienced healing to identify herself, the woman responds. She gives testimony before the crowd about the great thing that Jesus had done for her. Jesus responds by calling her His daughter. This is the only time that Jesus uses this title of affection with anyone.

Jesus also tells the woman that her faith has made her well. We know that this statement is true because Jesus said it, but we must also seek to understand what Jesus meant by this statement. We do this by interpreting this statement in the light of what the Bible says elsewhere. When we do this, we come to

some helpful conclusions. First, the faith that healed this woman was her faith in Jesus. An undefined and vague faith or a faith in any object other than Jesus would not have healed her disease. Second, the woman's faith was the channel of healing and not the source of healing. Jesus, the object of the woman's faith, was the source of healing. Jesus was the source and faith was the channel.

I stress this because some interpret Jesus' words here not in the light of the Bible but in the darkness of false philosophy. Some teach that faith is a power more ultimate than God. They teach that God gets His power from faith and that we can have godlike power ourselves through faith. That understanding is totally wrong and dangerously wrong. No, there is nothing more ultimate than God and there is nothing more powerful than God. God never is dependent on anything outside of Himself for His power. And faith is not a source of power for us. That is interpreting faith as some sort of magic. No, Jesus is the source of power for us, and faith is merely the channel through which we access that power.

Now at this point in the narrative, some people come from the house of Jairus with a message: his daughter has died. There is therefore no need to trouble Jesus any further because it is too late for Jesus to do anything. Jesus ignores this message and tells Jairus that He needs to continue to put His faith in Jesus. He mustn't respond to this bad news by ceasing to trust in Jesus. He must instead expand His faith from believing that Jesus has power over sickness to believing that Jesus has power even over physical death.



At this point, Jesus forbids the crowd to follow any further. Jesus even allows only three of His twelve disciples to accompany Him. These were Peter, James and John, the inner circle of the twelve. Why did Jesus do this? Jesus knew what He was about to do. He was about to raise someone from the dead. And He did not want this widely known at that time. Remember back in chapter one, Jesus healed a leper and warned him not to tell anyone. The leper instead told everyone he could about the wondrous thing Jesus had done. The result was that for a time Jesus had to stay out in the country and had to stay away from Capernaum. Jesus did not want something such as this to happen again. So He limited the number who would witness His raising this girl from death.

As this small party reached the house of Jairus, they encountered the professional mourners. Jesus told them not to continue their loud wailing because the child was not dead but asleep. What Jesus meant was that the young girl was not dead in the way that physical death is normally experienced because He is about to raise her back to life and in that sense to awaken her as if from sleep. Yet Jesus said this in a vague way that did not tell these people about the miracle He was about to perform. When they would later see the young girl alive again, they would probably assume that she had never really been dead after all but had only been in a deep slumber.

Jesus enters the room where the girl's body lay with only her mother and father and Peter, James and John. He takes the girl by the hand and commands her to get up as if she were merely asleep. The life giving power needed to obey the command

accompanies the words, and the little girl arises and walks to everyone's amazement. Jesus then strictly warns everyone to keep this secret for the time being. No one is to know what happened.

Let me now make one comment on the side. In this text, Jesus healed two females, one a mature woman and the other a little girl. The text brings out something which both these females had in common, and it is the number twelve. The woman had been sick for twelve years and the girl was twelve years old. Why did the Holy Spirit choose to include this detail? I have a suggestion. The number twelve is symbolic for the people of God because there were twelve tribes in the old testament and there were twelve apostles in the new testament. In addition, the Bible compares the people of God to a woman. Israel is the wife of Jehovah in the old testament, and the church is the bride of Christ in the new testament. I think the healing of this woman and the raising of this girl from the dead are historical facts which also illustrate what Jesus came to do for His people. When Jesus came, old covenant Israel was like a diseased woman who was also defiled. Her religious leaders had not been able to heal her because their traditions made void the word of God. Jesus came to heal and cleanse old covenant Israel, and I see an illustration of this in the healing of the woman. Jesus also came to give life to new covenant Israel. This occurred on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two when Jesus poured out upon His church the Holy Spirit in new covenant fullness. I see an illustration of this in the raising of the girl from the dead. So much for my aside.

Let me close by pointing out that Jesus as the God-man who is filled with the Holy Spirit is the hope of the hopeless. This is what the disciples learned over this two day period. Jesus calmed the hopelessly unsurvivable storm. Jesus tamed the hopelessly untamable man. Jesus healed the hopelessly incurable disease. Jesus reversed hopelessly irreversible physical death. What is your hopeless situation? Is it some sin in the past which you think is beyond any forgiveness? Is it some trial that is burdening your life? Is it some predicament which your sinful actions have gotten you into? Whatever it is, I refer you to Jesus because Jesus is the hope of the hopeless.