

The Cast | People Engaged In the Story of Jesus Christ

Urgent, Important/Chronic, Unknown

Luke 8.40-56

February 26, 2017

And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. ⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house; ⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him.

⁴³ And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, ⁴⁴ came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." ⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

⁴⁹ While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." ⁵⁰ But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, "Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well." ⁵¹ When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother. ⁵² Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." ⁵³ And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. ⁵⁴ He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!" ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

We're looking at the supporting cast (minor characters) in the story of Jesus Christ as found in the Four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Today we meet some lesser-known characters – one unnamed and obscure... the other of whom IS named and even quite important in that place/time BUT they BOTH come and go very quickly and their interwoven stories leave us with a lot to consider about Jesus Christ and His answer to fear.

This whole section that has to do with fear...and faith... And for ME as a preacher... I never have to FEAR that my listeners won't be interested in FEAR.

Fear is ALWAYS IN...it's always in style... people are always dealing with fear...and fears...the "24 hour news cycle" guarantees it...stories running over and over and over again until we are convinced that WE will be victimized by Ebola or some other lethal virus...or terrorism...that our children will be kidnapped...that we'd better buy gold...that drones are watching us... that North Korea will launch a ballistic missile...that brown bananas will kill you...and on and on and ON... FEAR IS BIG BUSINESS.

And truth is: we really don't need any help because fear is primal...It's a part of our fallen human nature that fear would distort our perception and enslave us... And fear, as we'll see, CAN be the opposite of faith. What do YOU fear and how can you be freed from the chains of fear? Let's look at: 1) Intertwined 2) Overthrown 3) Unbound

To put us back in the story, Jesus Christ tells the famous Parable of the Sower... "the crowds listening to Me are not all listening the same way...some hearts are distracted...some soils/listeners will have the seed choked out by weeds."

The crowds are so big that Jesus and the disciples have to escape by boat... there's a storm on the lake and Jesus Christ is asleep and wakes to find the disciples in a panic. He commands the wind and the waves and everything becomes calm.

Then they arrive in the bad part of town, the other side of the lake where the Gentiles live and they encounter a scary man who has lost his mind and lives naked in a cemetery...possessed by evil spirits... and Jesus rescues the man and leaves him "clothed and in his right mind" and telling everyone what Jesus Christ did for him.

Then they return to find all those crowds waiting and welcoming Him and it says they were "pressing" into Him ...Luke uses the same word from the Parable, "The seed is choked by the thorns" and the crowd is choking/pressing against Jesus and the disciples so that He can't move (42) – it's the same Greek word for choked (only two times Luke ever used this word in his two-volume work)... it's deliberate.

Then comes a distraught man...his name is Jairus meaning, "he gives light". He's a Jewish leader (Gk: archon) and the Jewish leaders have been opposing Jesus... But this leader is...desperate. And THIS could be a big win for Jesus Christ's budding organization. The disciples are probably excited, "We could really USE this guy and his support – big endorsement!"

The man is a well-known, important synagogue leader but now he's broken and begging and he falls at Jesus Christ's feet and asks for help. His daughter, right on the edge of adulthood (in that culture), she's a young woman...ready to bloom and give life...but instead she's facing death and her age only amplifies how strange and unnatural/tragic. "Please," says Jairus, "our only daughter is dying."

But as they walk the short distance, the crowd is choking them...pressing against them and choking the hope out of this desperate father...

And as the man ... the "archon", the official...who is now so powerless against sickness... powerless against the choking crowd... as Jairus tries to clear the way and wonders why Jesus isn't "parting the sea" of people so they can make it in TIME...because TIME waits for no one...and it won't wait for me!

AND Jesus refuses to hurry ("Why won't he HURRY!") and then the Rabbi stops... ("Not now, Lord, please, don't stop now!") and Jesus turns to ask an irrelevant question, "Who touched Me?"

"Lord, everyone is touching You!" but everyone denies it (kind'a funny!). And Jesus says, "No ...someone touched me in a way that CONNECTS...a way that received power from me..."

And there SHE is...she is a woman who had some sort of uterine bleeding... and the Law of Moses said that she was rendered UNCLEAN by her ailment. She was told by Jewish Ritual Law (Lev. 15.25ff) to stay away from people... It was embarrassing and left her ostracized and isolated and she had tried for 12 years (as long as the young girl had lived) she had tried to get help (Mark says she spent all she had on physicians and they only made it worse and the shame would've been unbearable.)

And there she trembles because she "touched" (4X) this holy Man and she would make HIM ritually unclean...and she's caught...a healing thief... sneaks up behind Him but she's caught...shame...shame...

And she, like Jairus, falls down at the feet of Jesus Christ. But unlike Jairus, she has no power, no status, no name... and now their lives and stories are intertwined!

And seeing that she is caught she makes a full confession of her crimes – "I know I made Him unclean... I know I stole this healing...but I was so desperate...I want to have friends and want to go to the synagogue." (I wonder if Jairus knew her...)

And...yet...Jesus Christ...far from being angry at being defiled...INSTEAD, He calls her (not thief but) "Daughter" an intimate term of embrace and tenderness.

"Daughter, your faith has connected to Me...You believed in Me...and now let everyone know – YOU ARE WELL... go in peace!" She's applauded and defended and restored to social life...she's clean!

And then...after this blessing from Jesus, "Daughter, you are well...Peace!" just then, the very opposite message comes... Blessing and Peace and then Death and Despair, "Your daughter has died...do not trouble the teacher anymore...it's too late!"

And Jesus Christ says to this crushed father, "Don't be afraid, only believe, and she will be made well."

They reach the house and there are lots of people making a racket... "weeping and wailing" (Luke) ... "noisy disorder" (Matthew) ... "commotion" (Mark)...

And as Jesus Christ had calmed the wind and waves, He now calms the mourners...He's like a jester...a comedian...says, "Stop weeping...she's not dead...just asleep." And they laugh at Him because she was clearly dead.

And then, entering the "death room", He takes her by the hand and she sits up and walks and He says, "feed her" so that everyone knows she's not a ghost...and so she knows she's at home where she's loved and accepted...at the Table.

Now, the thing we're supposed to see in these "touching" and dramatic stories is that Jesus Christ is the King of the Kingdom (He is Jester and He is King!) and HE is overthrowing everything.

The currency we bank on like social status and influence/position mean nothing IN HIS KINGDOM... to Him, the big man with the big name and all the power is NO MORE IMPORTANT than the unknown, unclean woman who has no friends, no money and is a little "YUCK! ...Stay away from HER!"

He calls her "daughter" to show that He assigns status on a completely different basis. Before Him fall the weak AND the powerful, the great and the unknown...the clean synagogue leaders and the unclean woman... He can turn Gentile demoniacs into evangelists (8.39).

He's choked by the crowds but in the end He overturns them...He makes sport of them...He plays the fool but IT'S HE WHO HAS THE LAST LAUGH... He overturns public opinion and ridicule! Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. (Luke 6.25)

And He calms the winds and waves...and He also overturns the voice of commotion/disorder of the mourners.

He overturns sickness...the chronic kind and the acute/deadly kind.

And He can even overturn TIME... Keith Richards and Mick Jagger were almost right... "Time waits for no one...but it WILL wait for Him!" He is not bound by time and He is even able to overthrow that phrase, "It's TOO LATE." He is the "Potentate of time."

And He is even able to overthrow and fulfill the ritual Law... He is rendered UNCLEAN twice in these two intertwined stories. He is "touched" (repeated 4x) by this unclean woman...but He is the only human being whom rather than be rendered unclean... HE IMPARTS HIS CLEANNESS... It works in reverse.

He touches the little girl and to touch a corpse will make Him ceremonially unclean according to the Law but as soon as He touched the corpse...she's NO LONGER A CORPSE... He's the only one who can do that...He reverses the direction of moral contamination - (Craig Blomberg) "contagious holiness."

And all this is to foreshadow the real reason for His coming ...these healings are all signs and emblems and symbols of what the full Kingdom will be...but in order for that Kingdom to come, Jesus Christ will indeed be defiled and will indeed become infected with our disease, "God made Him who KNEW no sin to BE SIN on our behalf that WE might become IN HIM the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5.21)

He comes into the world to achieve the great overthrow of all things and to DO that, He will live the sinless/obedient life I failed to live, die the death that I deserve to die and HE WILL RISE AGAIN... ON MY BEHALF...death cannot hold the sinless Man...

The unnamed, isolated woman AND the cherished daughter of the important Jairus were both healed ...but eventually they both died... In fact all the cast members eventually died...and yet because of the "deeper magic" ...because of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, everyone who moves from FEAR to FAITH... will be resurrected to never-ending LIFE!

Now, you may be thinking, "I'd like to move from fear to faith... truth is I have a lot of fears!

"And the way I usually try to battle MY fears is to use my ... tricks! I say, 'Ah, c'mon! The chances that my child will be kidnapped are very slim...do the math..."

"Or in the midst of my social anxiety I say, 'I'm just as good as everyone else at this party...I'm just as good ... I'm just as good. I AM good enough..."

"I try to think positive things about my marriage...my retirement...my kids and their future...I try to look on the bright side...I try not to think about dying alone... about losing my job...my health ...my memory."

And let's face it...some people are more successful than others in this "thought control" thing... But if I tell YOU (and it IS the most frequently stated command in the Bible) if I tell YOU: "Do not fear that you will get cancer...don't be afraid that YOUR child will embark on a destructive lifestyle or reject the faith... I SAY UNTO YOU, 'Do not worry... be anxious for nothing...NEVER FEAR... stop fretting over terrorism...over loneliness... DO NOT FEAR!"

You might think, "T.J., that's just the problem: the more I tell myself NOT to fear...the more self conscious I get about MY fears... it's like saying, 'Stop thinking about a pink elephant' – now it's all that I CAN think about!"

But don't you see what Jesus Christ is doing here? He's coming to people in crisis...in desperation and He is casting down their fears and giving them reason to believe. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the reason we need.

It's NOT just "Stop being afraid!" Instead, it's whispering in our fearful desperate ears, "Don't be afraid – only believe! That thing YOU most fear...I have already been there and when it's YOUR turn to be in that death room... I will speak to YOU saying, 'I have RISEN...death could not hold Me and NOW THAT YOU ARE CONNECTED TO ME BY FAITH – death will not hold you."

"I will be there WITH you in that death room...and I will say, 'I am risen – now rise with Me...little girl, get up...little boy...My daughter, My son arise. The crowd may laugh at you for having this confidence...but I will have the last laugh", says Jesus Christ!

And these things you so dread... they will bother you only for a time...soon and very soon the complete overthrow of all that troubles you will be overthrown – MY resurrection proves it. Only believe.

The Gospel approach to fear is not "tricks" or mental games or denial or will-power – it's a Person.

He overcomes fear...and HE CAN PRODUCE FAITH... He can replace our fears with faith... He can overthrow our doubt...

Bring your desperation and come to Him and then keep coming...WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH FEAR whether we call it anxiety, nerves, worries, panic, phobias, or the more spiritual term "concerns." Let the Voice that calmed the storms calm the storm in you.

Invite Him...who overcame death – invite Him INTO your fears (into your death-room) and be unbound.