

Session 5

DECEMBER 31, 2017

JESUS HEALS

Mark 5:22-24; 35-43

Let's admit it: it's easy to have faith when the sky is blue and everything is sunny and bright. It's much harder when the storm clouds gather and we face what I call "the valley of the shadow of doubt." But it's in the difficult times that our faith is strengthened and ultimately proven. The drama that unfolds in this week's text features a religious leader facing such a valley, while surrounded by a very unsympathetic crowd. Fortunately, his faith enabled him to press on even when the circumstances looked insurmountable. Three characteristics of his faith are particularly helpful.

First, faith is intentionally humble (vv. 22-24). Jairus is no religious slouch. He was "one of the synagogue leaders;" one of several respected elders who presided over the various activities and services of a local synagogue. As such, he had knowledge of the Scriptures, authority over the membership, and prominence among the people. But nothing he had to offer could help his daughter who was sick to the point of death. In great humility, this loving father swallowed his pride and appealed to Jesus, the controversial son of a carpenter whose first appearance at His home town synagogue had caused an uproar (see Luke 4:16ff). The request he makes demonstrates two things. First, it shows Jairus' utter dependence. Obviously, the visit to Jesus was a last resort. Surely, he had tried everything. He was at the end of his rope. Now he came begging. Second, it shows great hope. The request points to the immediate future. "Come...so she can get well and live." The lesson for us is that faith requires us to admit our own inabilities.

Faith is confidently believing (vv. 36-39). This miracle story is unique in that it is interrupted by another miracle along the way. By the time Jesus healed the other suffering woman (vv. 24-34), Jairus received word that his daughter had died. Perhaps the news had been given with more sensitivity than conveyed here, but the notion that this situation was a "bother" to Jesus more than a loss to the girl's father is an absurd indication of their own spiritual condition. Their disdain over dealing with Jesus is further reinforced in verse 40, when the people laughed at His claims. Jesus didn't need to guess about what was going on, because He overheard it all. Now, quietly and privately, He reassured the stricken father. The words, "Don't be afraid. Only believe" are instructive. Jesus reminds us that fear is an obstacle to faith...and that faith is the cure for fear. The lesson for us to face our fears with a healthy dose of confidence in the One who whispers over and over, "Fear not."

Faith is intensely personal (vv. 40-43). How Jesus remained cool and calm in the next segment of the narrative is a mystery to me! Here, the Son of God is being ridiculed and laughed at. The giver of life, who would triumph over death, hell, and the grave was being mocked by skeptics who not only distrusted Him, but were disappointed at Jairus for even involving Him. Rather than make a spectacle of the situation and proving His deity to the crowd, Jesus removed the skeptics (He "put them all outside") and surrounded Himself with the faithful. There, in the quiet solitude of a little girl's bedroom, He raised her back to life. The lesson for us is akin to "not casting our pearls before swine" (see Matt. 7:6). This loving father faced a crisis. The last thing he needed was ridicule from a bunch of skeptics. When believers face the "valley of the shadow of doubt," they don't need the miserable comfort offered by a multitude of scoffers; they need the loving support of a handful of the faithful.