

The Story – Master Over Death

Turn with me to Mark 5 as we continue our series on the big stories of the bible. If you are reading along with us we are in the first part of the gospel of Mark. Reading guides are available at the information desk if you would like to join us. We have been talking about Jesus as the Master over the storms of life, Master over demonic powers. We talked about Jesus as the Master of provision and how he fed 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish and we talked about Jesus as the Master over sickness and disease. All of these things in some sense could be regarded as enemies in our lives. Storms, both physical and emotional storms battle against us, yet Jesus is the master over every storm. Demonic forces come against us to defeat us spiritually, to discourage and torment us, yet Jesus is the master over all the forces of hell that would rage against us. Lack and poverty and hunger are enemies that try to break us down, yet Jesus is the master provider. He promised to meet our needs as we trust in him. Sickness and disease come to kill and destroy but Jesus is the master over disease as we saw last Sunday. This morning we are going to talk about Jesus as the Master over the final enemy, death.

We read part of this story last Sunday as we talked about the woman with the issue of blood that touched the tassel of Jesus's prayer shawl and was healed. This morning I want to focus on the other part of the story and that is Jairus and his daughter. Let's read the story and then make some observations. (Read Mark 5:21-43)

We are given a tender picture of a loving father whose twelve year old daughter is dying. Notice Jairus didn't say she was sick but rather that she was dying! This was an urgent situation and time was of the essence. We are seldom given the names of people that came to Jesus, but Mark tells us this man was named Jairus. He was a ruler of the synagogue so we assume he is a devout man, a religious and observant Jew. He had servants so we can assume he was a man of means or wealth. When they arrived at the house there were people everywhere crying so we can assume he was a man of prominence and influence in the community, well liked and honored. Everything points to Jairus being a good man and yet something tragic had befallen this man and his wife. Bad things still happen to good people. It has always been that way.

We don't know if there was a prior relationship between Jarius and Jesus. Perhaps Jesus had taught in the synagogue where Jairus was an official. Perhaps Jairus had only heard of Jesus the miracle worker. Regardless, when his daughter's health declined, Jairus knew to come to Jesus. He may not have known all the right steps to receiving a miracle, he may not have read

the right books on faith and healing, but he knew to come to Jesus. Humbly, he fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded earnestly with Jesus to "come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." As a father of two daughters, I can identify with the desperate pleading of this father.

Mark, who is always quick to the point in his gospel, simply writes, **"So Jesus went with him."** It is exactly what we expect. Jesus is moved with compassion for this father and for his little girl. The bible tells us God is near to the brokenhearted. There was no hesitation. Jesus went with the father. Certainly hope must have filled Jairus' heart. "Jesus said yes! He's coming with me. She's going to be all right if only we can get there in time. There is hope." And then they encountered the crowd!

"A large crowd followed and pressed around him." Have you ever been in a crowd at a ball game or some large event? People everywhere and you are in a hurry but you simply can't move. That's what was happening. They couldn't get through the crowd. The people were everywhere and not just blocking the path but blocking Jairus' daughter from the miracle she needed!

To make matters worse, at least from Jairus' standpoint, Mark tells of the interruption by this sick woman. Can you imagine what is going through Jairu's mind as Jesus takes time with this lady? "This is all well and good Jesus, but my daughter is dying! This lady has been sick for years. A few more minutes won't matter to her. Couldn't we come back and deal with her later? We are running out of time." But Jesus seems to always have time for hurting, needy people. He always has time for those who come to him in faith. Besides, God's view of time is entirely different from ours. He never panics. Delays always seem to be within the plan and purpose of God. If God isn't moving as fast as you wish, trust him anyway. It's all part of His plan.

Look at verse 35. **"While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said. 'Why bother the teacher any more?'" Mark 5:35**

There are no sadder or more final words than these. Some of you have heard those words and know what I mean. You know how this father felt. I stood at the bedside of one of my friends this past Tuesday as he drew his final breath. His wife and daughters looking at me as I felt for his pulse. "That's it. He's gone." It is so final. One moment he is breathing and although we knew the time was approaching, we didn't know it would be so sudden, so

immediate, so peaceful. The finality of it is overwhelming. It's over. Everything changes in a single moment. Death has come and nothing can change the situation. Death is final. Or is it?

"Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?" That phrase hijacked my my thoughts and my sermon. Why bother? Why bother because it's beyond hope! Haven't you felt that way? Haven't you asked that question? Why bother? It's hopeless.

Why bother going to church or serving the Lord? Does it really matter? Why bother living a life of obedience to God and his word? Bad stuff still happens and life is still a mess. Why bother? Isn't it beyond hope? Aren't the problems too great? Isn't the racial divide too deep, too wide in our nation? Why bother trying to fix things? What difference can it make when the world and our nation are so broken? Why bother when no one will listen anyway? Why bother when the dye has already been cast? The little girl is dead so why bother?

The answer is found in who we are coming to. The servants said "why bother the teacher any more?" Good point. There is no point in bothering a teacher because a teacher can't help with a problem like death. A teacher can instruct, but he can't reverse the laws of nature. He can't do anything about death. Don't bother the teacher. Listen, if Jesus is just a teacher, if he is just a first century Jewish rabbi or prophet that had a curious following, then it doesn't matter if you obey him and his instructions in the bible or not. If he is just a teacher, then we can say he has some good suggestions and all that love your enemy stuff might be okay for some people, but why bother when things are so bad in the world. Why bother?

But if he is more than a teacher... If he is the Master like we have been saying, like the bible says he is. If he can calm a storm with his word; if he can cast out demons and evil forces; if he can heal the sick with his touch or his word; if he can lay down his life for us on the cross and then three days later rise from the dead, be seen alive by the disciples and by hundreds of other people and then ascend bodily into heaven, then perhaps we have the answer to "why bother." Bother him, ask him, call on him, trust him, have faith in him, serve him because he is not just a teacher, he is the eternal Son of the Living God. If he is the master over everything, including life and death, then our choices matter. We should bother to obey the Lord and his word. We should bother with serving God and being faithful because he is master over all! Why bother? Because it does make a difference. It makes an eternal difference!

Why bother with serving God and trusting him and remaining faithful when disappointment comes, when death comes, when things don't turn out as we expected? Why

bother? Why bother to work so hard and give yourself on behalf of others when they go right ahead and make foolish and sinful choices? Because it may not be just about that one person you are trying to help. It may be about others that are watching. Why bother? The answer may be found not just in what happens to the little girl, but what happens to Peter, James and John as they watch Jesus raise this girl from the dead. The answer may be found in what happens to that Mom and Dad who witness a miracle and will never be the same. Or perhaps it's about the people in that town who gather to mourn and end up discovering Jesus is more than a teacher or a miracle worker, Jesus is the master over life and death!

Why bother? Because it's about more than you can see! It's about more than you think! It's about life and death and about who is ultimately in control in our life and our circumstances. It's about eternity and hope and the fact that everything changes when Jesus comes on the scene.

Why bother? It's simple. Because Jesus is here! Because Jesus is the master over everything, even death! Why bother? Because if Jesus is here there is hope, regardless of how bleak the circumstances. If Jesus is here there is hope, regardless of how hopeless the situation. Why bother? Because Jesus is here and he says, "Don't be afraid, just believe.

"Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.'" Mark 5:36. Believe what? Believe Jesus is all you need! Believe what Jesus says. Don't be afraid. Standing in a cemetery where their brother Lazarus was buried, Jesus said to Mary and Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Believe me. Believe in me and you will live, even if you die!" Believe what? Believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Believe that because he died and rose again, we too shall live even if we die. Believe that our loved ones who died in the faith are alive and well in his presence. Believe what? Believe that all things are possible to them that believe, to those that put their faith and trust in Christ. Don't be afraid, just believe. Believe that he causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Believe that he will never leave you nor forsake you. Believe that nothing can separate you from God and his love, not death nor life, not angels or demons, not things present or things to come in the future, nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Just believe and trust and obey and keep on believing!

"Don't be afraid, just believe", Jesus said. This is where we always want to grab hold of this verse and put the responsibility on the father. Did he have enough faith to get his miracle?

Do you? “To get your miracle, you need to do these things. You need to have faith and put your faith into action. Ignore the facts and start confessing the word. Speak the word and you will see it come to pass.” You know I don’t believe in ignoring the facts. I’ve seen people walking around sick saying, “I’m not sick. I’m the healed of the Lord. The devil just hasn’t taken the signs down yet.” Yeah, well, first of all, I don’t think that’s in the bible and second of all, don’t cough and sneeze on me and my lunch because the facts are, you’re sick! When God heals you, you’re healed. Jesus honors faith, but he doesn’t need you to play games with the truth.

Faith isn’t about our ability to take all the right steps, faith is about constantly looking to Jesus and trusting him. David Garland in his commentary on Mark wrote, **“Faith can be imperfect, it can be bold, it can be halting, it can be brave, it can be laced with fear and trepidation. What counts for it to be effective is for it to be directed rightly to Jesus and God.” ...David Garland**

That’s what Jairus was doing. He came to Jesus, pleaded with him for help and never stopped looking to Jesus. When they had to stop for the woman to be healed, Jairus just kept looking to Jesus. In spite of interruptions, he kept looking to and trusting Jesus. I think Jairus was thinking, “I don’t know what you are going to do now, given what the servants said, but I’m going to keep looking to and listening to you, Jesus!” That’s what faith does!

“Ignoring what they said.” Jesus ignored their report because he knew what he was about to do. The reality Jesus sees and the reality Jesus knows is different from ours. Our circumstances may seem as final and hopeless as death itself, but faith lets us hold on to His reality, His truth, His promise. Don’t be afraid. Just believe and keep looking to Jesus!

Jesus approaches the house and sees the crowd outside, weeping and wailing. He asks what all the commotion is about and tells them, “The child is not dead but asleep.” A couple of things about this statement. First of all, the crowd knew the difference between dead and alive. She was physically dead, they knew it, so they laughed at what they saw as a ludicrous statement from Jesus. When Jesus said she was asleep, he was not implying what some call “soul sleep”. The biblical glimpses we have into heaven show the saints of God busy with activity rather than sleeping. I believe what Jesus is implying is that death for a child of God is not something to be feared but by comparison is more like falling asleep. Like sleep, it is restful (we rest from our labors). Like sleep it is not fearful (I’m not afraid of taking a nap this afternoon. I’m looking forward to it). Finally, by saying she was asleep, Jesus let us know that death is not final! I’m

planning to wake up from my nap this afternoon and awaken in the morning and in the same way I'm planning someday to shut my eyes and wake up in heaven and in the presence of the Lord. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, death has lost its' terror and its' hold on the child of God. Death isn't final, it's a transition, a doorway from here to there. Although this event happened before the cross and the resurrection, Jesus knew the victory that was coming. For the child of God there is nothing to fear, not even in death because He is Master over life and death!

Jesus took Mom and Dad, Peter, James and John into the room where the body of Jarius' little girl had been placed. Tenderly taking her by the hand, Jesus said in Aramaic, "Little girl, get up." Immediately she stood up and began to walk around. Jesus told them to give her something to eat and not to tell others about this. How could they keep it a secret when the whole town knew she had died and now she is alive again? The time for the public proclamation of Jesus as the Master over death had not yet come, but for this mother, father and daughter, what joy and celebration. Jesus is the giver and restorer of life!

This story has a happy ending, but not every story ends like this one. This passage doesn't attempt to explain why evil is in the world, why children get sick in the first place. It doesn't give us an explanation as to why this man's daughter is raised from the dead and others aren't. What it does show us is that Jesus is Master over all. There is no limit to his power, no situation beyond his reach. It shows us that every time we think "why bother?" we can remember with Jesus there is no such thing as a hopeless situation, not even death. We can remember to keep on trusting and looking to Jesus. Don't be afraid, just believe. Believe in the one that can do all things, that causes all things to work together for our good. Believe in the one that will see you through. Believe in the one that is near you, with you, even in the worst of times. Don't be afraid, keep on trusting and believing in Him.

Are you facing an impossible situation? Have you reached the limits of your endurance and you are wondering 'why bother?' You've prayed before and nothing happened and you are thinking, 'why bother praying again?' **Why bother? Because Jesus has a plan, a time, a purpose. Even his delays are for a reason. Trust him. You matter to God. "Don't be afraid, just believe!"**