

# St. Matthew's Church

## NEW YORK CITY

### **HEALING OF TWO DAUGHTERS**

**Mark 5:22-43**

**Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, June 28, 2009**

**Introduction:** In today's Gospel we see two people coming to Jesus out of desperation and need. The display of God's power involves two contrasting segments of society. On the one hand it focused on an outcast woman who had been suffering a disastrous hemorrhage for twelve years. The hemorrhage rendered her ceremonially unclean in Jewish society, which meant that she was a transmitter of uncleanness to all who came in contact with her. She was ostracized from normal society and debarred from worship in the synagogue and Temple. Her desperate situation had driven her to pursue medical help, and "She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors."

On the other hand, there was the prominent family of Jairus, the head ruler of the synagogue. He was the president of the board of elders and responsible for the conduct of services. He was a man of wealth and prestige. But he was in equally great need: his twelve-year-old daughter lay dying. She had been the joy of his life, "his only daughter" and now that joy was about to be snuffed out.

Parental love leaves a parent wide open to towering joys and to the deepest sorrow. Some of us have known what it is like to see a convulsing child and wonder if they were going to make it. We would do anything to save our child. Jairus probably thought, "Take my life, not hers." Jairus and his wife were desolate, at the very bottom.

Here we see two desperate representations of society: one rich, the other poor; one accepted, the other outcast; one with a family, the other alone, both beyond natural help. For twelve years the girl and the woman had led

such different lives, but now adversity had bound their souls unaware together, and they were both to be recipients of God's life-giving power.

You will notice that these stories tell us how God brings faith into the lives of those He touches and how He causes it to grow. These stories, united around three encounters, can help us complete our faith and know more of God's power.

**Jairus Comes to Christ:** *“While He was by the lake, one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet and pleaded earnestly with Him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”* The crowd stood riveted in silence. Jairus had not been known to be friendly toward Jesus. Jesus was an outsider and had even been accused of heresy by many. His previous use of the synagogue had proved controversial. Jairus was the leader, not Jesus. Yet, now he was coming to Jesus. Even more, he was bowing in humility, pathetically pleading with all he had for his little daughter. This was amazing indeed. But we must not mistakenly think Jairus had become a devotee of Jesus or that he was a man of great faith. The simple fact was, he was desperate. He had heard of Jesus' miracles (maybe had even seen some) and possibly had talked to some who had been healed. He was not sure about Jesus, but Jesus was his only chance.

**It Was His Need:** Jairus was like so many of us in our coming to Christ. It was not his love for Christ that brought him. It was not what he could do for Christ. It was his need. It was his desperation and a glimmer of hope. Despair is commonly the prelude to grace.

**Faith Brings Great Rewards:** Jairus' infant faith was going to bring great rewards, especially as we see Christ develop it in the next events. Mark records that Jesus immediately set out with Jairus, no hesitation. Jesus responded to the need. As they went, “A large crowd followed and pressed around him.” It must have been excruciating for Jairus as he and Jesus were slowed down like an ambulance in heavy traffic. There was no ill meant. It was just that no one wanted to miss a thing. Then, Jairus' dismay, everything came to a sudden halt.

**The Woman Who Touched Jesus Clothes:** There was another needy person there that day, an unknown woman with a hemorrhage: *“When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched*

*His cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*" The poor woman did her best to escape attention. But she, like so many in her day, believed that sometimes the garments or even the shadow of the godly could bring healing. So as Jesus passed by, she momentarily closed her frail hand about the edge of His cloak, or perhaps one of its four tassels. In a vivid, Technicolor moment which lives in her eternal memory, she felt healing course through her body, and she was whole. Without a word Jesus' power completely healed her in the anonymity of the great crowd. This is the same power which He used to make the sea instantly lie flat and to restore the raving demoniac healed her long-standing illness.

**Who Touched Me:** Jesus realized that His healing power had gone forth and began asking repeatedly, "Who touched my clothes?" Despite his disciples' telling Him that He was surrounded by a pressing crowd. With His penetrating gaze "Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it." Now you can imagine how chafed Jairus is at this interruption. Precious time was ticking away. "Come on, Jesus." My daughter is dying and you're worried about someone touching you in this crowd!"

**The Woman's Faith:** Imagine the woman, her heart throbbing with joy and fear, her eyes tearing with emotion. Christ was calling her to stand before the throng, but not for His sake. It was for her and for Jairus and for some within the crowd and for us. The woman's faith was at its core an ignorant faith. She sought a cure that was essentially magic-secured (touching the edge of His robe). She had no idea that Jesus would know anything about what she did. Her faith was uninformed, presumptuous, and superstitious, but it was *real*, and Christ honored her imperfect faith. (1.) Beginning faith is often uninformed and mixed with many errors about, for example, Christ's person, the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, grace/works, the Scriptures, etc. However, such foggy understandings are often the beginning of a deep, informed trust in God. This is why God often saves those who know virtually no theology. The point is a faith that pleases God does not belong only to the informed elite. (2.) The woman's faith was also selfish. She wanted health, but she did not especially care about the Healer. This is so typical of beginning faith: we come to Him because of some problem, we reach out with a stumbling faith, He touches us, and we go on to love Him and trust Him with our lives.

**Christ Gives Instructions on Real Faith:** Jesus said to her. “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from you suffering.” Jesus is tender with her (this is he only recorded instance of Jesus addressing a woman as “daughter”). “Daughter, your faith has healed you,” not your touch, not your superstition, not magic, but your *faith*. Her faith may have been as tiny as a mustard seed, but Jesus saw it, honored it, and developed it. That is why Jesus called her before the multitude. This poor woman represents humanity, all of us. We are ill. We have spent our resources trying remedies which do not work. Christ comes to us from the Cross. We need to touch him by faith. Do not fear that you are too selfish. Fear only one thing that you will let Him pass without reaching out in faith to Him.

**Jairus Little Daughter and Christ:** *“While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they dead. ‘Why bother the teacher any more?’* In a terrible instant the growing flame of Jairus’ hope was extinguished. But in equal swiftness it was rekindled and elevated: *“Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.”* We must not miss what is happening here, Jairus came to Jesus with an uniformed, wishful “belief” that Jesus could heal his daughter. That belief elevated through Jesus’ exchange with the woman. **But now Christ challenged Jairus not to believe Him for a healing, but for a resurrection!** This is a radical call and a radical development of Jairus’ faith. It is one thing to pray for your child’s healing from a life-threatening disease. It is quite another to stand over her cold body and pray for immediate resurrection. “Don’t be afraid; just believe,” said Jesus. Jesus, Jairus, and the three disciples set out for the leader’s home.

**Jesus had set the stage for the resurrection of the little girl and the ultimate elevation of faith:** *“When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.’ But they laughed at Him. After He put them all out, He took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with Him, and went in where the child was.”* At the home, the professional mourners were wailing their antiphonal song. Jesus rebuked them, saying that the girl was “not dead but asleep.” Real death is the separation of the soul from God, not the body from the soul. In this sense, her dead body was asleep, and Jesus would bring it back to life. Then, with some degree of force, Jesus put the mourners and mockers out.

**The Eyewitness Account:** So beautiful was the event that (Peter, Marks informant) could still hear Jesus' voice, for he preserved for us the Aramaic phrase Jesus used. Taking the little girl's hand in his (which by the way was defiled by death, just as the woman's was by illness), Jesus said, "*Talitha koum*" (little girl or little lamb arise'). Can you hear the word as it falls on the girl's cold, dull ears? Can you see her eyes flutter and open wide? The first thing she saw was the face of Jesus, and then the faces of her mother and father, and then the three enraptured apostles.

This was a proto-resurrection. The tender words and loving face of Jesus, along with the surrounding Church, are revelatory of what we will all one day experience.

What is the Christ like who gives this life? He is all-powerful. He made the raging sea instantly lay flat with a word. He cast out a legion of evil spirits with another word. He healed the outcast woman without a word. He tenderly raised the little girl. He is understanding, lovingly gentle, and inviting.

In times of suffering, He gives strength. In times of sorrow, He gives Joy. In times of despair, He gives victory. In times of death, He gives the promise of eternal life. There is real help for you and for me, for whatever we may have to face. There is real help for the uncertain times in which we live.  
Do not fear, only believe!