

Matt Henry
Mark 5:21-43
01 July 2018

“Touching Life, Touching Death”

Grace and peace...

A few weeks ago, when Dave Horn was here singing and strumming his guitar, he mentioned how Mark sets up a story. He called it a sandwich and what he meant by that is it's like having two slices of bread—that's the beginning and ending and it's the stuff in the middle that's really defines the sandwich. There are a lot of these sandwiches in Mark that are specially made to order.

In our text today of Mark 5, the sandwich is so big, it's one of those where you wonder if you can get your mouth around it. We start with hearing about Jairus' daughter who's ill and near death. But then comes the stuff in the middle—this woman who has been sick and bleeding. Once she's healed, then Mark returns to Jairus' daughter who we learn has since died. He raises her to life. Through Jesus' power, both are instantly granted life and health. One story is stacked upon another. There must be Miracle Whip because this is a miracle sandwich!

That's nice, but it's not our experience. So what are we going to do with these miracles? Does stuff like this happen still today? We're going to zoom in and also zoom out and see the big picture because there are both small details

and the big picture for us to appreciate. There's a beauty to the Word of God as it hangs together.

As for zooming in, notice the continuity of time. Jesus heals a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. Jesus raises from the dead Jairus' daughter who is 12 years old. Why is it significant both are female? In Jewish culture, men and women weren't supposed to touch in public. That's inappropriate. You're also not supposed to touch a dead person and if you do, you defile yourself according to the law. That's unclean.

The woman and the girl come from different classes. Different stations in life. Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue, so this is obviously a position of status and respect. Daddy's little girl? You bet!

As for the woman, she had been told by more than one doctor, "There's nothing else I can do for you, but take your money." Her life was pretty much written off. All those treatments and she was worse for it. The woman's faith is scandalous because she's not asking. She just goes for it by touching the hem of Jesus' garment in the midst of the crowd. Power goes out from Jesus even into his clothes—that's some holy garb, right?

So we've got an unclean woman touching Jesus and we've got Jesus taking a dead girl by the hand. He's touching life. He's touching death—and breaking all the rules as well as people's expectations.

One of the things I appreciate about this miracle is the personal nature of it. When Jesus asked, "Who touched my garments?" this woman, comes and falls down before him, trembling in fear. Her private struggle was now a public spectacle. And she tells him the whole truth. How long she had suffered, why she had done it. Jesus calls her daughter which is relationally huge—not just for her, but for Jesus. Because if Jesus can call her daughter, that is an appeal to his identity with the Father? He's speaking to her like a father. He probably got some strange looks. (I can relate to that as an adoptive father. There's just 18 years between me and my oldest daughter, Emily. That's prom baby timeline right there. I got some weird looks when people thought my oldest daughter was my wife!) If you didn't know about the family of God, if you didn't know how the Father brings us into the family by faith in His Son, think how silly it sounds for Jesus to call this woman "Daughter". She is probably hear the same age as Jesus. And this is the only instance in Scripture where Jesus calls a woman "Daughter." That's huge and I want you to really appreciate that detail. The healing isn't the big deal—her being in relationship with God is—and that's something we can

relate to because we've been adopted into the family of God! We're sons and daughters of God; we're brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, let me zoom out. This miracle of resurrection isn't the first, nor the last. I put together a list of resurrection accounts. Each of these is a great story, but I don't have time to go into it, but if you would like a gold star, I would encourage you to do just that because you're going to see a pattern emerge. The prophet Elijah raises the son of the widow from Zarephath (1 Kings 17:22). Elisha raises the son of the Shunammite widow (2 Kings 4:35). That's a fun story because the kid's a chain sneezer. In the New Testament, wherever Peter's shadow falls, the sick are healed (Acts 5:15). Peter raises Dorcas/Tabitha to life (Acts 9:40). Put a little star by that one and I'll come back to it. And the Apostle Paul gets in on the action too—his handkerchief and apron were sent around so that whoever touched it was healed and it even cast out unclean spirits (Acts 19:11). From a handkerchief! Talk about Gesundheit! It's all wild stuff.

What I want you to see is how these miracles—the prophets and the apostles—all align with Jesus. All of Scripture relates and points to Jesus. What Jesus does here in Mark 5—healing and resurrection is the pattern, is the paradigm that not only runs through Scripture, but it points to our future as well. This is what Jesus will do. for you and me one day. But for now, as he said to the

woman, it's a "go in peace, your faith has made you well," kind of way to live. As he said to Jairus, it's a "don't be afraid, just believe" kind of way to live. We live in relationship with the God who holds all things in His hand.

What does the adult woman and younger girl have in common? They're both daughters...and so the story goes back to Jairus' daughter who has now died, we're told. Now we know the story and outcome, but try and appreciate how this is the first instance of resurrection in Jesus' ministry. He hasn't done this before. He tells them that the girl is not dead, but sleeping. And they laugh at him. It's as though their grief could only be interrupted by scoffing. So Jesus puts everybody else, all the mourners and grievers outside. Who sees it? Only Peter, James and John—and Jairus and Mrs. Jairus. He takes her by the hand and says, "Talitha cumi" which means in Aramaic, "little girl, arise". Of course she wakes up. That's the miracle. The power was in Jesus—in His Word.

Now I've tried speaking those exact words—every time I'm waking up Lily and Chloe in the morning. And it doesn't work. I really wish it would.

But on a much more serious note, I know there have been instances where parents have lost a child, and in that moment of initial discovery and pleading, what they are saying is "Talitha cumi"...wake up! Wake up! But they did not.

And the words didn't work even though they had the faith and love to go with them.

Mark didn't have to give us this exact wording Jesus spoke but He did. So now we have to zoom out and recall how Peter also raised someone from the dead. Her name was Dorcas, that's Greek, but we're also given the Aramaic name, Tabitha. Just details, but watch how they'll fit. Peter does exactly what he saw Jesus do. When he gets to the house, he first removes all the mourners and grievers. He puts them outside because that's what Jesus did. He kneels down and prays and says to the body, "Tabitha arise." And he takes a very much alive Tabitha by the hand and shows them all she is alive. But here's the connection. Jesus said, "Talitha cumi." Peter said, "Tabitha cumi." Just change one little letter. Those details show a connection and pattern. Peter is doing what He saw his rabbi do.

All miracles point to Jesus and His return as Lord. They are designed for us to make sure our faith triumphs over our fears. Miracles in the Bible happened at key times in the life of the church. When God was rolling out something new, when the church was taking on a new dimension as it did in Acts, these miracles served a purpose—to show that the apostles had God on their side so people

better get on board and believe. The final miracle won't be belief-inducing. It will be belief-confirming.

When Jesus comes back, the miracles of healing and resurrection will be wonderfully ordinary! One day, Jesus will heal and restore all who love and know Him. Meanwhile, the miracle of this moment is that He has put us into relationship with Him through Christ our Lord for He calls us daughters and sons.

In Jesus' name, Amen.