

Sermon for July 8, 2012 – 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

Theme: "Don't be afraid; just believe."

- 1) Your senses are not telling you the whole truth.
- 2) The LORD will reveal his salvation.

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ 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." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 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?" ³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." ³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Is there anything more gut-wrenching than seeing your own child slowly dying? And yet, even if this were to happen, the LORD bids us to trust his mercy, love and salvation.

In our sermon for this morning, Christ calls us to have faith even in the worst of circumstances. He tells us: "**Don't be afraid, just believe.**" 1) *Your senses are not telling you the whole truth.* 2) *The LORD will reveal his salvation.*

Part One: Your senses are not telling you the whole truth

Our sermon text finds Jesus in Capernaum, the city he called home after he left Nazareth.

It was a busy day. After crossing the sea of Galilee he healed a paralytic, called Matthew to be a disciple, was confronted by Pharisees for eating dinner with sinners and tax collectors, and was asked about fasting by the disciples of John the Baptist. It was at this point that *one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ 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 synagogue ruler trusted that Jesus had power to help his daughter. He probably remembered how he healed the servant of the centurion who built Capernaum's synagogue! He probably heard how Jesus healed a paralytic earlier that day. Is it any wonder, then, that Jairus came to Jesus to help his dying daughter? Let us do the same, whenever bad things threaten our loved ones.

Jesus immediately went home with Jairus. Unfortunately so did the crowd of people around them. They probably wanted to see another miracle. They pressed hard against Jesus as he made his way through the narrow streets. It was at this time that a woman, who suffered bleeding for 12 years, touched Jesus as he went by - trusting that she would be healed.

And healed she was! Jesus, however, stopped, and started looking for this lady in the crowd. Could you imagine what this delay must have been like for Jairus, whose daughter was near death?

But after a short delay of searching, the woman finally came forward and admitted to Jesus that she had touched him for healing. Jesus reassured her that her faith made her well. He said this not only for the benefit of the woman, but also for

Jairus, whose faith in Jesus was about to be severely tested. May we too learn to be encouraged by the grace and mercy Jesus shows others, that our faith may be strengthened when facing troubling times.

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?"

What a blow this must have been for this little girl's father! I am sure that, had Jesus not immediately encouraged Jairus to keep on trusting in him, he would have fallen into despair and anger - anger at the crowds who hindered their walk, anger at the woman for touching Jesus when his daughter needed his help more, anger at himself for not getting to Jesus in time. I can imagine all these emotions were about to well up in Jairus, but Jesus stops this flood of emotion by saying: *"Don't be afraid; just believe."*

It should be mentioned that, at this point, Jairus had no human reason to believe Jesus could be of anymore help. Yes, Jesus performed many miracles, but, up to this point, he had not raised anyone from the dead.

Consider, then, what Jesus was asking Jairus to do when he said, "Don't be afraid, just believe." There were so many reasons to be afraid, but at Jesus' bidding he wasn't. He trusted in Jesus' mercy and power.

Jesus got rid of the crowd and only took 3 trusted disciples with him as witnesses, conforming to the Scriptures that say: *"Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."* (2 Corinthians 13:1)

When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. The Jewish custom was to bury the dead the same day if possible. If not, then the next day for sure. Being a prominent member of the community, news about Jairus' daughter spread quickly. As was the custom, professional mourners came and wailed the girl's passing with loud laments. Flute players played mournful tunes. It was a loud, confused mess.

Jesus *went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."* Now, understand what Jesus says correctly: the girl was definitely physically dead. Everything in the situation pointed to this fact. But you have to understand that Jesus practically never referred to a believer's passing as "death." You see, Jesus defines death as separation from God. Unbelievers die. Believers, however, sleep. Even though their souls are separated from their bodies, their souls have not been separated from God. Believers sleep. Their bodies rest in the grave, as their souls live with the LORD in heaven - waiting for Christ to reunite their bodies and souls at the resurrection on the last day.

"She is not dead, but asleep." What a wonderful truth this was! What wonderful comfort this statement gives us as we face the death of a beloved Christian. Our senses and emotions scream out to us that the person is gone, that we will never see them again. We are sad, alone, angry and afraid. But Jesus tells us not to be afraid, just believe. Don't look with your physical eyes or trust your emotions. Rather simply believe Jesus. He conquered death for us. How did he do that? By first of all living the sinless life we failed to live. Then, he took our sins upon himself, suffering and dying because of them. He was punished in our place. He paid God the debt we owed. But Jesus didn't remain dead. Having paid for our sins, he rose from the grave - thereby showing that God's justice was satisfied, that the sins of the world have been paid for. Heaven and eternal life has been opened to all, so that everyone who repents and believes in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins will receive everlasting life.

There was no reason to wail in despair at the death of this little girl. Why? Because believers don't really die, they simply rest from their earthly toil, as the Scriptures say: *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. ² Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.* (Isaiah 57:1-2)

Blessed are those who understand this and take it to heart. They will find much comfort and peace when facing the death of a loved one.

But they laughed at him. How sad the situation was. Before them stood the God who created them and all that exists. There stood the author of life itself, and yet they did not recognize him. They laughed mockingly. One can assume that they were upset with Jesus for saying the girl was asleep. They knew better: she was dead. And poor Jairus was caught in the middle between trusting Jesus who promised the impossible, and the people laughing at Jesus' seemingly foolish statement.

Dear Christian, how often aren't we like Jairus - caught between Jesus who calls us to trust in him, and the world that laughs at Jesus' word and promises? And all our senses tell us that the world is right. Dead people stay dead. Have you ever seen anyone leave the grave? Our senses tell us that Jesus is not here. We can't physically see, hear, touch or smell him. It is so easy to give up hope, and yet Jesus bids us to simply trust him. Listen to his voice. Believe his promises. Your senses are not telling you the whole truth.

Lord, we do believe in you - help us with our unbelief. Help us to trust that you are our all-powerful Savior who laid down his life for us - only to take it up again. You love us and promise to work in all things for our eternal good. Cast all fear from our heart and help us trust in you at all times, especially in the worst of times.

Part Two: The LORD will reveal his salvation.

Jesus gets everyone out of the house. *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.* ⁴¹ *He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").* ⁴² *Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.*

Jesus did the impossible. With a simple command, while grasping her hand, Jesus awakened the girl from her sleep of death. By doing this Jesus proves, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that He is more than a mere teacher. He truly is the Messiah, God the Son. *Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.* (Romans 10:11)

Now, someone might say: "This is all fine and dandy, but what about my loved ones, when they were ill. Like Jairus I ran to Jesus in prayer. I pleaded with him to spare them. But they died. Why didn't Jesus answer my prayer?"

To this Jesus again says: "Don't be afraid, just believe. Your loved ones who died in trusting in me are not dead but asleep. I will wake them up on the day I have chosen; only do not doubt, just believe."

King David understood this. When his infant son was ill, he pleaded with God to let him live. But his son died. What was David's response? He went home, dressed in regular clothes and ate normally. And why? Because, even though he could not bring his son back to him, David knew that he would see him in heaven. He trusted in the LORD's grace, and, as bad as the situation was, God's promised grace was sufficient for him.

When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, he did so in order to show his disciples that He is the Son of God - our Savior. He wanted them to trust him, as every day brought him closer to his own suffering, death and resurrection.

We, on the other hand, can look back at Jesus' own death and resurrection and be reassured that He is the Son of God. Jesus' own resurrection reassures us that the day is coming - just as He promised - when he will raise the dead. On that day Jesus will answer the prayers of every Christian asking to see their loved ones again. This will happen, but just not now. Jesus will do it in his good time. The world may laugh, mock and say it's impossible, but don't listen to the world. Christ's promises are as sure as his own resurrection. Don't be afraid, just believe and you will see the power and love Christ has for you. The graves will open, Christians will be reunited, and we will all enjoy the eternal paradise Jesus is even now preparing for us. And so we pray: Amen, Come soon Lord Jesus, Amen.