

SERMON PM 2 March 2008 Luke 8:40-42, 49-56 Lord over Death

⁴¹Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

Whenever we look at the miracle stories in the Bible, our natural curiosity is aroused. With our modern preoccupation with technology the question we always want to ask is, "How did He do that!" We define **miracle** as *that which is unexplainable, a mystery* and that's a pity because, then we miss the point of 95% of them. What is remarkable about the incident of Jairus' daughter is not just the raising to life of someone who was dead, not just the wonder of mysterious healing, not even the demonstration of Jesus' power but rather His amazing kindness and understanding, the way He deals with people.

Jesus appreciated immediately, for example the devotion of the girl's parents. ***⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.***

Only Luke of all the Gospel writers picks up for us that this was an only child and for these parents beside themselves with worry for their only daughter she meant everything. In kindest love, Jesus reaches out to them in their despair understanding just what it had cost them to come to Him and how much it meant to them. ***"Don't be afraid; just believe,***

He had sympathy for her tender years. 12 was a significant age in Jewish life. Boys would have their Bar Mitzvah and take their place as part of the congregation of Israel. Parents would already be thinking of arranging marriages for daughters and the horror of a girl struck down at the very threshold of her life was not lost on Jesus. Life was only just beginning for her and He who would give up His own life on the Cross to conquer death reached out gently to take her hand. It is as if everything that he had come to do was being worked out before their eyes, not in some spectacular sign but in gentle love and care. ***just believe, and she will be healed."***

Jesus showed sympathy for the position of her father. Jairus, who as a ruler of the synagogue was a man of some influence and piety, a religious leader, ***a ruler of the synagogue*** greatly respected was prepared to throw all that away by falling down at Jesus feet. All his dignity and standing meant nothing for the sake of his precious daughter and maybe as Jesus spoke with him he was remembering a favourite theme of His parables about those who'd given up everything to follow Him. The treasure in the field, for example, where a man sold everything he had in order to buy a field where treasure was hidden. Or the pearl of great price where the trader had discovered perfection and gave up everything

to have it for himself and so on. Here was someone who didn't need to be taught what those parables meant for, as he threw himself down at Jesus feet, he emptied himself, he had nothing. ***a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house***

This was a time when synagogues were becoming closed to Jesus. Very soon He would teach only out on the hillsides and in the fields. For Jairus to make this dramatic gesture meant swallowing his pride, risking everything he held dear and had built up in the community, everything he believed in, to come to the Giver of Life itself.

Of course we can well understand why he would be prepared to do it for something so precious as the life of his only child. He would do anything, as any of us would to save her. But if Christ is the giver of Eternal Life, what price would **we** put on such a gift. If Heaven itself is the treasure to be offered, what lengths would we be prepared to go to win that great prize? Would we make a fool of ourselves, throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus? Or do we hold back, embarrassed, unwilling to commit too deeply in case we should be thought foolish. There really is no other way to come to the Saviour of the world than like Jairus who so committed everything into His hands that he had nothing left of his own.

For the sake of that which was more precious than life itself he counted all as nothing to gain the prize. How we cling to foolish pride, our dignity, all that we have built up for ourselves when it all must be cast aside as worthless. How our pride keeps us from the kind of trust that puts all into the hands of Christ.

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Think of the poor around us needy, lonely or heartbroken. We hold back from risking too much to help, don't get involved. *You'll look a fool.* In our prayers or in our mission, we're too proud to plead, to shed tears, to throw everything we have at Jesus feet but, if it were our own kin, our own child would we not go all out to help? How much more than a Child of God. Would we hold back out of pride, preserve our dignity when people cry out to know the living Lord, or for justice, or for peace. Jairus risked all threw his whole life, his dignity, his position, his reputation everything at the feet of Jesus and it was not rejected or wasted. He might have regarded Jesus, as other faithful Jews did as a poor risk, a lawbreaker, but in His hour of need he simply pleaded for help.

It's always easier to give help than to receive it. We don't like people to think we can't cope

or that somehow we're less than able. It offends and wounds our pride our self respect but what happens when it's too late to ask and the opportunity is gone. We ought never to be ashamed to come. We ought never to be ashamed to ask God's help. I think it's one of the reasons why prayer is so little regarded in churches; we reckon we don't really need it! We like to think we can do all for ourselves and it's only when disaster strikes that we run to our Father in desperation, not knowing what to say, struggling for words because it's such an unaccustomed experience. **Come to me**, said Jesus **and I will give you rest**. He longs that we'll come, whether in desperate straits or humbly in regular prayer.

Come like Jairus who was not ashamed to ask for help and, of course was not disappointed in the asking. Jesus fully understands his fears and ours and quickly offers reassurance, an immediate word of encouragement to soothe his tortured soul Luke 8:50 **"Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."**

We are so full of fears, fears for the future, for our health, for our money and homes, families and interests. I'm sure Jesus would say we worry far too much, especially about things that in the end don't matter. When real troubles come we're often so full of anxiety that we can't think straight and Jesus word to us is simply to calm down and think the matter through. I think that's why He says to Jairus **"Don't be afraid; just believe."** a gentle and kindly word to ease Jairus' mind.

Jesus knew what death would mean; He would face it Himself and wants to calm our fears over it. He might have said *Jairus, you have put all that is most precious and dear to you, your whole life, into my hands, now leave it there*. It's that kind of peace that's so familiar to those who get into the habit, of not just bringing everything to Him in prayer but leaving it there.

In Jairus' house crowded with mourners, filling the courtyard with the sound of their wailing, the temperature was rising, fear and anxiety were rife. Jesus sends them all away, puts them out. He's not in the business of making empty gestures that will impress the crowd but of giving the parents and the little girl some air, some space, some peace, quietly taking command of the situation. This is surely the watchword for all our prayers and all our fears.

Psalm 37:7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;

Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God;

In that little room Jesus, who would give Himself up to death on the cross so that we might have life and have it abundantly gently took a little girl's hand in His and gave her life. **Luke 8:54 He took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.**

Conscious that both the girls parents were perhaps still in a state of shock He then sends the whole family off by themselves to do something as natural and ordinary, as preparing and eating food. It was a touching and careful gesture which much have meant so much to them as together they sat down around the table. Family life was restored and Jesus wants them to be left alone.

Our eyes are immediately drawn to the wonder of the miracle, *how could it have happened*, but Jesus plays that down, ***"Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."... he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.***

Never mind how, never mind the spectacular look simply at the tenderness and kindness of Jesus, at Jairus a man who laid down everything at Jesus feet risking all for that which was most precious to Him and let each one of us come to Him like that, offer everything into his hands and then, in the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrate that same compassion and care in our own hearts.

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