

Mark 5:21-43
March 8, '09

**MARK'S MARCH OF MIRACLES
"A TWO-FER"**

IN EXAMINING THIS PASSAGE, THERE IS A TEMPTATION – A TEMPTATION I MUST ADMIT I HAVE SUCCUMBED TO BEFORE – TO SEPARATE THESE TWO STORIES.

THERE IS A TEMPTATION TO READ VERSES 21-24, SKIP 25-34, AND THEN PICK IT UP AGAIN FROM VERSE 35 TO VERSE 43.

OR DO IT THE OTHER WAY – JUST READ VERSES 25-34.

WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS A *"MARKAN SANDWICH."*

THERE ARE 4 OTHER OCCASIONS IN MARK WHERE WE FIND A STORY WITHIN A STORY.

IF WE READ THIS PASSAGE STRAIGHT THROUGH, WE GET A "TWO-FER" – TWO MIRACLES IN A SINGLE SET OF VERSES.

LAST WEEK, AS WE LOOKED AT THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC WHO'S FRIENDS DROPPED HIM INTO THE PRESENCE OF JESUS THROUGH THE ROOF, WE FOUND THAT IT WAS RATHER EASY TO PICTURE THIS EVENT IN OUR MINDS.

THE SAME IS TRUE OF THIS PAIR OF MIRACLES.

YOU CAN EASILY SEE THE EVENTS AS THEY UNFOLD BEFORE YOU.

JESUS IS ONCE AGAIN BEING BESEIGED BY THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD OF HIS TEACHINGS & HIS MIRACLES.

A MAN COMES TO HIM FROM THIS GREAT THRONG OF PEOPLE WITH A DESPERATE REQUEST.

HIS DAUGHTER IS ILL – ILL TO THE POINT OF DEATH.

HE PLEADS WITH JESUS TO HELP HIM.

THIS MAY NOT SEEM LIKE AN UNUSUAL REQUEST – UNTIL WE CONSIDER WHO THIS MAN IS & PUT THE ENTIRE SCENE INTO ITS PROPER CONTEXT.

JAIRUS IS THE MAN'S NAME, MARK TELLS US, AND HE'S THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

THAT MEANS HE WOULD BE THE EQUIVALENT OF OUR CLERK OF SESSION.

HE'S BARBARA BARRETT, OR TOM CLAYTON OR CHARLIE STRAEFFER OR BARB FERGUSON OR MELISSA MATTINGLY.

HE WAS A MAN OF SOME IMPORTANCE.

HE WAS THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

HE – ALONG WITH THE OTHER ELDERS (WHICH IS STILL TRUE TODAY) – WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONDUCT OF WORSHIP.

HE WAS, UNDOUBTEDLY, ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED MEN IN THE COMMUNITY.

JAIRUS WOULD, LOGICALLY & PROPERLY, HAVE KEPT A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY FROM JESUS.

LET'S FACE IT - JESUS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AN EASY PERSON TO HAVE IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION.

LOCAL EXPERTS IN JEWISH LAW WERE VERY SUSPECT OF SOME OF THE THINGS HE WAS DOING & THE MESSAGE HE WAS TEACHING.

JAIRUS WOULD HAVE FELT HE COULD DO WITHOUT SOMEONE LANDING THE TOWN'S SYNAGOGUE IN THE ROMAN SPOTLIGHT FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS.

HE WOULD BE SENSIBLE & STAY AWAY FROM HIM.

BUT THEN...THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT MADE JAIRUS FORGET ALL ABOUT THE PROBLEMS JESUS MIGHT CREATE FOR HIM & THE SYNAGOGUE.

HIS DAUGHTER WAS DYING & HIS REPUTATION, HIS STANDING, THE RESPECT HE HAD EARNED FROM THE COMMUNITY DIDN'T MATTER ANYMORE.

ALL THAT MATTERED TO JAIRUS WAS THE HEALTH – THE SAFETY – THE VERY *LIFE* OF HIS LITTLE GIRL.

SUDDENLY, HIS PRIORITIES CHANGED.

IN A HEARTBEAT, EVERYTHING THAT MATTERED TO HIM HAD BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE, DON'T YOU?

YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HAVE THINGS IN YOUR LIFE ALL OUT OF WHACK BECAUSE YOU'VE LET YOUR PRIORITIES GET JUMBLED.

MAYBE JAIRUS KNEW IT.

MAYBE HE KNEW, IN HIS HEART, THAT JESUS WAS A MAN WHO WAS PROCLAIMING TRUTH.

MAYBE HE'D ENTERTAINED THOUGHTS OF TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN TO HIM & GET TO KNOW HIM & GIVE HIS MESSAGE A TRY.

BUT HE COULDN'T TAKE THAT CHANCE.

HE COULDN'T RISK EVERYTHING HE'D SPENT HIS LIFE BECOMING TO TAKE A CHANCE ON A MAN WHO MIGHT BE A CHARLATAN.

BUT THEN...A CRISIS AROSE IN HIS LIFE & HE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN.

HE FORGOT ABOUT HIS DIGNITY.

HE TOSSED HIS PRIDE ASIDE.

HE FELL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE JESUS & BEGGED HIM – MARK SAYS – “*REPEATEDLY.*”

DO YOU REMEMBER THE SCENE IN “COOL HAND LUKE” WHERE LUKE HAS BEEN BEATEN MERCILESSLY BY THE PRISON GUARDS WHILE HIS FELLOW PRISONERS LOOK ON?

LUKE IS THEIR HERO & THEY KNOW THE GUARDS CAN'T BREAK HIM.

BUT THEN, LUKE DISSOLVES INTO TEARS, GRABS THE LEG OF THE GUARD, AND PLEADS WITH HIM – “*DON'T HIT ME, AGAIN, BOSS. PLEASE DON'T HIT ME AGAIN.*”

HIS FELLOW PRISONERS WALK AWAY FROM THE PRISON BARS, WITHDRAWING THEIR SUPPORT & WANTING NOTHING TO DO WITH LUKE JACKSON AGAIN.

THAT'S WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE FOR JAIRUS.

HE WAS RISKING EVERYTHING TO ASK JESUS FOR HELP.

HIS PRIORITIES WERE DIFFERENT NOW, THOUGH.

A CRISIS HAD ENTERED HIS LIFE.

ALL TOO OFTEN, THAT'S WHAT INITIATES CHANGE FOR US AS WELL.

MAYBE, LIKE JAIRUS, YOU KNOW, IN YOUR HEART, THAT JESUS IS A MAN WHO PROCLAIMS TRUTH.

MAYBE YOU'VE ENTERTAINED THOUGHTS OF TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN TO HIM & GET TO KNOW HIM & GIVE HIS MESSAGE A TRY.

MAYBE YOU *HAVE*.

MAYBE YOU *HAVE* LISTENED TO HIM & GOTTEN TO KNOW HIM & GIVEN HIS MESSAGE A TRY.

BUT MAYBE IT'S ALWAYS JUST BEEN A SURFACE THING WITH YOU.

MAYBE YOU'VE OFFERED LITTLE MORE THAN LIP SERVICE TO A COMMITMENT TO CHRIST.

THE STORY OF JAIRUS – LIKE THE STORY OF SO MANY OTHERS – EVEN THOSE OF OUR OWN GENERATION – CAN SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO RE-ORDER YOUR LIFE.

JAIRUS CAN HELP US RE-PRIORITIZE THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER TO US *WITHOUT* HAVING TO EXPERIENCE A CRISIS TO DO SO.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL – LIKE JAIRUS – THE WORST THING IMAGINABLE HAPPENS TO YOU.

WHY NOT FALL TO YOUR KNEES & BEG CHRIST TO COME TO YOUR HOUSE & OFFER HIS HEALING TOUCH BEFORE THE CRISIS HITS?

WHY NOT HAVE HIM ALREADY THERE WITH YOU WHEN CALAMITY STRIKES?

AS WE LOOK AT THESE VERSES & AS WE PICTURE JAIRUS ON HIS KNEES BEFORE JESUS – AS WE SEE THE COMPASSION OF JESUS THAT CONSENTS TO GO WITH HIM TO HELP HIS DAUGHTER – WE SEE THE CROWD PUSHING & SHOIVING TO GET CLOSE TO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING.

WE SEE JAIRUS STAND & WE SEE JESUS SET OUT FOR HIS HOUSE WITH GREAT PURPOSE & RESOLVE.

BUT THEN, JUST AS QUICKLY AS JESUS STARTED OUT, HE STOPS.

HE LOOKS AROUND & ASKS, "*WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?*"

I HAVE TO PAUSE FOR A MOMENT HERE BECAUSE AS I READ THIS, I'M REMINDED OF AN EXPERIENCE EMMA SUE & I HAD SOME YEARS AGO.

WE WERE IN LONDON & WALKED AROUND THE CORNER FROM THE HOTEL WHERE WE WERE STAYING & SAW, ON A THEATER MARQUEE, "*ST. MARK'S GOSPEL – ALEC MCGOWEN.*"

I HAD HEARD OF THE BRITISH ACTOR & HIS ONE-MAN STAGE PRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

WE GOT TICKETS & WALKED INTO THE THEATER AND THERE ON STAGE WERE JUST A TABLE, TWO CHAIRS & A GLASS OF WATER.

AS MCGOWEN STEPPED ONTO THE STAGE HE ADDED ONE MORE PROP - A COPY OF MARK – "*JUST IN CASE*" AS HE TOLD THE AUDIENCE.

AND THEN HE PROCEEDED TO RECITE THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN ITS ENTIRETY.

ONE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE ASPECTS OF THAT PERFORMANCE WAS THE REACTION OF THE AUDIENCE.

WE SAT SPELLBOUND AS WE LISTENED TO MCGOWEN, BUT THERE WERE AT LEAST 20-30 TIMES WHEN HE HAD US IN UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER – DOING NOTHING MORE THAN RECITING – WORD FOR WORD – THE GOSPEL OF MARK!

ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS OF LAUGHTER WAS AT THIS POINT OF THE GOSPEL.

PICTURE THIS SCENE.

PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE, CLAMORING TO GET CLOSE TO JESUS.

HE'S GOT HIS LITTLE SECRET SERVICE BAND OF DISCIPLES TRYING TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY, BUT THEY DON'T STAND A CHANCE WITH THIS CROWD!

AND JESUS STOPS & SAYS, "*WHO TOUCHED ME?*"

IT WOULD BE LIKE U2'S BONO, GOING CROWD-SURFING AT A CONCERT & THEN GETTING BACK ON STAGE & SAYING TO THE EDGE, "*WHO TOUCHED ME?*"

THE DISCIPLES ARE DUMBFOUNDED!

"YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?! WHO TOUCHED YOU?!"

AH, LET'S SEE, BOSS. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ONE OF ABOUT A HUNDRED & FIFTY PEOPLE WHO WERE CLOSEST TO YOU!"

BUT SOMEHOW, JESUS *DID* KNOW.

HE KNEW THAT – EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE CROWDS PRESSING IN ON HIM FROM ALL SIDES – THERE WAS SOMEONE WHOSE TOUCH WAS DIFFERENT.

IT WAS A MORE ANGUISHED TOUCH.

IT WAS A TOUCH THAT WAS A DESPERATE CRY FOR HELP.

BUT WE CAN'T AVOID ASKING THE QUESTION, "*HOW DOES JESUS KNOW?*"

HE JUST DOES.

WHETHER IT'S A LITTLE 12-YEAR OLD GIRL LYING DEAD IN HER BED OR A WOMAN WHO HAS BEEN DYING FOR THE PAST 12 YEARS, HE KNOWS.

HE KNOWS THE NEED THAT EXISTS IN EACH OF THEM.

AND HE KNOWS YOUR NEED AS WELL.

HE KNOWS WHEN YOUR SPIRIT HAS DIED.

HE KNOWS WHEN YOUR SELF-ESTEEM HAS BEEN KILLED.

AND HE KNOWS WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE MADE YOU FEEL LIKE THE LIFE HAS BEEN BLEEDING OUT OF YOU FOR THE PAST 12 YEARS.

HE JUST KNOWS.

AND HE STOPS TO MEET YOUR NEED.

WHEN JESUS STOPPED IN THE MIDST OF THAT CROWD & ASKED WHO TOUCHED HIM, THIS WOMAN – LIKE JAIRUS – WAS WILLING TO TAKE A RISK.

SHE WAS WILLING TO BE OSTRACIZED.

SHE WAS WILLING TO BE HUMILIATED.

SHE WAS WILLING TO TAKE WHATEVER REJECTION & ABUSE WOULD COME HER WAY.

SHE WAS WILLING TO ENDURE IT ALL FOR A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST.

AS WE LOOK AT THE THIRD & FINAL PART OF THIS “TWO-FER” PASSAGE – THE PART THAT PICKS UP THE JAIRUS & HIS SICK DAUGHTER STORY - WE DISCOVER THAT THE WORST HAS HAPPENED.

THE LITTLE GIRL HAS, IN FACT, DIED.

THE MOURNING & WAILING HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

BUT JESUS LOOKS INTO HER FATHER’S EYES & SAYS, “*DO NOT FEAR, ONLY BELIEVE.*”

WHEN HE ANNOUNCES THAT THE GIRL ISN’T DEAD, BUT SLEEPING, HE DOESN’T MEAN THEY’VE MISDIAGNOSED HER CONDITION.

HE DOESN’T MEAN SHE’S SLEEPING AS WE WOULD MEAN IT TODAY.

WHAT HE MEANS IS THAT IN HIM THERE IS NO DEATH.

AS PAUL WOULD LATER WRITE – “*DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY?*”

BUT WITH THIS BOLD ANNOUNCEMENT FROM JESUS, THE CROWD’S REACTION IS EQUALLY BOLD.

MARK DOESN’T MINCE WORDS HERE.

HE SAYS, “*AND THEY LAUGHED AT HIM.*”

WHAT A STRANGE REACTION.

THEY’VE GONE FROM WEEPING, MOANING & WAILING TO LAUGHING AT JESUS – MOCKING HIM AS A FOOL & A DREAMER.

THINGS ARE REALLY NOT MUCH DIFFERENT TODAY, ARE THEY?

IN AN AGE IN WHICH THE WORLD IS INCREASINGLY HOSTILE TO TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN FAITH, THERE ARE THOSE WHO LAUGH AT YOUR FOOLISH DREAMING.

I THINK THAT’S WHY THIS “TWO-FER” PASSAGE CAN MEAN SO MUCH TO US TODAY.

JAIRUS, WITH HIS 12-YEAR OLD DYING DAUGHTER & THIS WOMAN, WITH HER 12-YEAR DEATH SENTENCE, DISPLAY A MIXTURE OF BOTH FEAR & FAITH IN THEIR RESPONSE TO CHRIST.

THEY ARE FEARFUL OF FOLLOWING HIM, BUT HAVE ENOUGH FAITH TO DO SO.

ISN’T THAT WHAT YOU SOMETIMES EXPERIENCE?

ISN’T THERE SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU THAT – LIKE JAIRUS – IS AFRAID OF RE-PRIORITIZING YOUR LIFE TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF JESUS?

ISN’T THERE SOMETHING THAT – LIKE THIS WOMAN – MAKES YOU AFRAID TO ADMIT THAT YOU REACHED OUT TO TOUCH HIM IN YOUR DEEPEST NEED?

BUT THEN, ON THE OTHER SIDE, ISN'T THERE A SLIVER OF FAITH INSIDE OF YOU THAT TELLS YOU HIS PROMISES ARE REAL – THAT HIS HEALING POWER IS GENUINE – THAT HIS PROMISE OF NEW LIFE IS YOURS TO CLAIM?

AND, TO ME, BY FAR THE MOST REMARKABLE ASPECT OF THIS STORY IS THAT IT'S TRUE.

WE KNOW THAT IT'S TRUE BECAUSE, FROM BEGINNING TO END, WE HAVE CLEAR EVIDENCE OF AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT.

MOST LIKELY, THAT EYEWITNESS IS PETER – CONVEYING WHAT HE SAW & EXPERIENCED TO MARK.

ONLY AN EYEWITNESS WOULD REMEMBER THE SHOCK OF HAVING JESUS ASK, “*WHO TOUCHED ME?*” IN THE MIDST OF A MOB OF PEOPLE.

ONLY AN EYEWITNESS WOULD REMEMBER THE VERY WORDS OF JESUS WHEN HE BROUGHT THAT LITTLE GIRL BACK TO LIFE.

YOU SEE, THAT'S WHY WE HAVE THOSE TWO WORDS “*TALITHA CUM.*”

IN ONE OF THE VERY FEW PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, WE ARE GIVEN THE WORDS IN ARAMAIC – THE LANGUAGE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN SPOKEN BY JESUS & THE DISCIPLES.

FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT PETER WOULD NEVER FORGET THE SOUND OF THOSE WORDS ON HIS MASTER'S LIPS – “*TALITHA CUM*” – “*LITTLE CHILD, ARISE!*”

YES, THIS STORY IS TRUE.

IT WAS TRUE & IT *IS* TRUE.

WHEN YOU FALL ON YOUR KNEES & BEG JESUS TO ENTER YOUR HOUSE & BRING LIFE OUT OF DEATH, HE'LL BE THERE FOR YOU.

WHEN YOU REACH OUT TO TOUCH JESUS, HIS POWER IS THERE TO HEAL YOU.

IN THE MIDST OF YOUR DEEPEST FEARS & PROFOUND ANGUISH, HE REACHES OUT TO YOU & SAYS, “*LITTLE CHILD, ARISE.*”

YES, IT'S TRUE. AMEN.

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