

Jason Upchurch - Mark 5:21-43 - The Good News of Jesus's Sovereign Mercy

Well, what we have this morning is just one of the most profoundly beautiful sections of Mark's gospel showing Jesus's sovereign power and mercy on these 2 ladies. As we read, it's really 2 stories of Jesus's compassion sandwiched together. Both Matthew and Luke record both events and they record it in the same sandwiched way: Jesus is asked to heal a little girl, he is on his way when he's interrupted by an older woman who is seeking healing and she is healed, in the mean time the little girl dies and yet Jesus goes on to raise her from the dead.

Her resurrection really concludes this larger section where Jesus's power is continually displayed on a bigger and bigger scale. He calmed the wind and waves, he cast out the Legion of demons. He heals the woman with the issue of blood that no physician could heal even after 12 years and he raises this little one from the dead.

And the big takeaway this morning is that Jesus is glorified because of his sovereign mercy. Jesus's power is just bursting forth and here it bursts forth in mercy and compassion.

And what I want to do is just slowly walk through this section with you. It's fairly straightforward but I think putting all the elements together will give us a richer understanding of what's going on here. **Read 21-25**

The 3 synoptic gospels all record the tension in the situation. Jesus gets off the boat and there's already a crowd waiting for him. His reputation is proceeding him everywhere he goes and crowds now just stand around and wait expectantly for him to return. And in the crowd is a synagogue ruler.

Synagogue rulers were basically the Jewish version of elders of the local synagogue. They kept the grounds, they planned the services, they oversaw the families in the area. And in this crowd waiting for Jesus is an anxious synagogue ruler - Jairus. In a lot of the healing stories in the gospels we aren't told any names, but here we know his name. He has a daughter who is so sick that to save her Jesus must come at once. There is an urgency here.

Now, even here this is a little bit of a plot twist, isn't there? Usually when Jesus is talking to religious leaders the relationship is adversarial, isn't it? They're rebuking him and he's rebuking them. There's confrontation and tension.

But here we see something we just don't expect. This Jewish leader comes to Jesus and falls on his face before Jesus. He's not just begging Jesus. He is urging him with the strongest possible language he can to come. It says he's imploring him earnestly. There's a sense of gravity and desperation in his voice because of her condition.

The language in the original is dire: "she has come to the last." His daughter is dying and there's not much time.

Luke adds another element that's important. Luke tells us that she is his only daughter of 12 years old, meaning that Jairus and his wife are likely barren except for this one treasured little girl.

In ancient times barrenness was seen as a curse. They're not technically barren but their life is bound up in this one little daughter. This is actually a theme we see throughout the Bible where the people of God are often barren and then God gives them one child. A little ray of hope, a beautiful blessing. And yet very often that child's life is then threatened in a test of faith. Will they trust God with the life of this little one?

Abraham had Isaac - the child of promise - whom he was called to sacrifice. Blessing then tragedy in a test.

You remember the Shunamite woman who was barren until Elisha promised a child. The child later died, only to be raised again by Elisha.

Zachariah and Elizabeth were miraculously given John the Baptizer after a lifetime of barrenness. She didn't tell anyone for 6 months. Why do people wait so long to announce a birth? The baby might not make it. We don't know, but she may have announced many other pregnancies where the little one didn't make it.

And just like them, this man's life is bound up in his little daughter. And he's begging Jesus in faith to come and heal her. He knows Jesus can do it. Jesus only needs to lay his hands on her - but he's got to get there in time.

The tragedy of the first situation Jesus is asked to help is only rivaled by the tragedy of the second situation with the woman with the discharge. **Read 24b-26**

Now, Mark gives us a lot of information about the woman with the discharge. If we didn't have this information we might think that she is utterly selfish to distract Jesus from heading to the girl to save her. What could possibly be more important at this moment than saving a little 12 year old girl who is on the brink of death?

But Mark sketches out the situation for us with a lot of detail so we don't despise this older woman, rather we pity her. With the girl, we don't know much about her. We know nothing of her condition or what has happened. But Mark gives us a lot of information about the woman so we have compassion on her just as much as the little girl.

First of all we're told in **Vs. 25** the woman has had a discharge of blood for 12 years. We don't know for sure but this is very likely some kind of menstrual bleeding problem. If you don't know what that means, you can ask your parents later. But this had been going on for 12 years - interestingly as long as the little girl has been alive.

Not only is this discharge tragic and chronic - and likely painful - but it also has cut her off from society. According to **Lev. 15:19-33** women who have bodily discharge of blood are unclean during their menstrual cycle. Everything they sit on is unclean and everything they touch is unclean.

They basically live by the same standards as lepers did. They couldn't go anywhere. They couldn't touch anyone. They lived in isolation for fear of passing their uncleanness to anyone. This isn't just a medical/physical tragedy, but it's also a social and spiritual tragedy.

We also see in **Vs. 26** it had been a financial tragedy. **Read**

She had spent all she had trying to fix this. Medical intervention has always been expensive. I know some of you have dealt with incredibly expensive medical situations - some of you still are. Sometimes its hard to know: do you keep seeking help or do you give up? Can this doctor actually help? Do I go to another one? Do I keep spending money to fix this or do I just live with it?

You guys, this has always been a struggle. She had seen many physicians - polus: a great number; dozens and dozens of doctors - spending all she had. We don't know for 100% but she was probably a widow because we have no mention of a husband. She is destitute. She is desperate to be healed.

And check this out: she goes to these doctors and what do they do? **Read 26** It says she **suffered** under many physicians. Paschw in the Greek. It's the word root that is used for the Passover lamb being sacrificed. She goes to these doctors and rather than helping her they make her suffer greatly, like a lamb to be slaughtered.

The tragedy is not only has the problem not gone away, but after seeing one doctor after another the situation has only grown worse. The bleeding is worse now after she spent all her money. Movement is probably worse, isolation worse.

Does that sound familiar? Do we still deal with that today? Absolutely.

But she has hope. She had heard reports about Jesus. **Read 27-28**

She had heard about the healings. Just like Jairus is in the crowd waiting and hoping to see Jesus, she's in the massive crowd waiting and hoping to see Jesus.

And so just like the lepers in chapter 1, she does what she shouldn't do: she goes into the massive crowd to see Jesus. By doing this she has just made the entire crowd unclean. The throngs of people - thousands of people - crowding around Jesus, they've touched her, she's touched them and now the whole crowd is defiled.

And **Vs. 28** is amazing. It says she said to herself. Actually that's a poor translation. Only the NASB gets it right and really only in a footnote. Literally, "she was **saying** to herself, 'if I just touch his garment.'" Why does that matter? Because what Mark is telling us is that she had been psyching herself up for this. Repeating it to herself over and over. "If I just touch the garment, if I just touch the garment, if I just touch the garment..." "You can do this, you can do this, you can do this. It will work, it will work, it will work." She's not bold and brazen and charging up to Jesus triumphantly. She's scared and timid and has to psych herself up just to get to him just to touch the edge of his robe without him noticing.

But she has the same faith that Jairus does that Jesus can heal. She's just got to press in and touch. That's all. Jesus can do it! And she does. Somehow this weak woman presses herself into the mass of humanity, through all the people, who are all marching with Jesus to go heal the little girl. **Read 29-32**

Everything she had wanted over 12 years she got in one moment with Jesus. Mark set this story up just like all the others. No one could help the demonic, no one could stop the raging sea, no one could heal the woman. Jesus does it in an instant.

Immediately the flow of blood is gone. The healing is swift and significant and complete that she feels it. She knows! And Jesus knows, doesn't he? He knows something has happened.

This is really amazing. Remember we talked about Jesus being fully man and fully God? We talked about Jesus, according to his divine nature knows all things. But Jesus according to his human nature is limited in what he knows and sometimes his divine nature and human seem incompatible. They're not. Jesus is fully human and fully man, we have no idea how that works but it's true.

But here this woman takes power without Jesus - in his human nature - knowing. And he feels it. And he stops the massive crowd on their way to to the little girl and says: Who touched me?

Let me ask you: what is it called when you take something from someone without asking? Stealing. She didn't ask to be healed. She charged into the crowd in the hope and faith that just touching Jesus would heal her. She didn't imagine that he would even know. He's so powerful, he heals absolutely everyone. Why should he notice?

But he does and asks "Who did this?" That's an amazing question to the disciples because Jesus is surrounded by thousands of people pressing around him on the way to the little girl and yet there's one touch that stands out to him? Really? **Who didn't** touch him?

The same power the woman felt heal her body is apparently the same power Jesus felt go out of his body. In fact, best we can tell, she didn't even touch Jesus did she? She touched his garment. But she took what she did not ask for that's why she responds like this. **Read 32-33**

The whole crowd stops and thinks Jesus is crazy for asking this question. But he knows and she knows something happened. And she comes and falls down. The man with the Legion fell down before Jesus, Jairus fell down before Jesus. This woman falls down before Jesus and confesses everything. What's Jesus going to do? Rebuke her for stealing? Take the healing away? No. **Read 34**

This is absolutely beautiful on every level. He calls her daughter. This is tender, fatherly, loving. He's not mad. He's not angry or wrathful. She stole nothing from him that he - in his divine nature - did not sovereignly give to her in tender grace.

Why does he stop and help her rather than Jairus's daughter? Because this is **Jesus's** daughter. This is a precious woman who Jesus himself created who has been suffering for 12 years.

By him all things were created - including her. She is his daughter, that's why he heals her. He loves her more than you or I love our daughters, more than Jairus loves his daughter.

Jesus in the gospels never rebukes anyone for asking for healing. Did you know that? Everyone who comes to get healed - even unbelievers - get healed. What he often rebukes is lack of faith. And guess what? Even when there's lack of faith he heals people.

Listen, if you've got a malady you know what you should do? Pray to him for healing. There was a time when I used to think that prayer requests for healing were kinda lame. Maybe they are kind of lame if you're not the one suffering. If you are the one suffering it's your whole world. And you're reminded of your fragility and brokenness. And what I want to encourage you with is that you go to Jesus in fervent prayer and ask him - saying to yourself over and over - he can heal, he can heal, he can heal.

Will he always heal? No. It is not always God's will to heal. Sometimes he does, sometimes he doesn't but we're called to ask in faith. And if Jesus were visibly present in front of us as we ask we would never hear a rebuke.

"Daughter, your faith has made you well." Jesus healed her because she believed he could. She actually believed it was possible. How often do we pray and don't think Jesus can do it? Or won't do it? I'm guilty of that, if I'm honest. She believed and her faith was shown by what? Works. She marched into the crowd and grabbed the cloak.

"Go in peace and be healed." There's no animosity. She didn't steal anything. She took the reward for her faith in Jesus and she could go home knowing she owed him nothing and could fully celebrate the healing Jesus gave to her.

But the delay has caused another tragedy. The little girl has died. **Read 35**

As tender and touching as the healing of the woman was, what was sacrificed was the healing of this little girl. We don't know how far Jesus needed to travel to get to the little girl or how long the conversation with the woman lasted, but the implication here is that the stop meant she died.

She was at the last. You ever miss a plane or ride or sale or something by just a moment? Had you been just a little earlier you would have made it.

Why didn't Jesus just go heal the girl then come back and talk to the woman? Why not do that?

Can I tell you something? Sometimes we need to die in order for Jesus to be magnified. It is not God's will that everyone gets healed this side of glory. Some will - praise the Lord. But not everyone.

Did Jesus heal Lazarus? No. Lazarus was dead dead. Stinking dead. Jesus could have healed him. Could have left earlier, could have even healed him from afar. Why did Lazarus die? So the glory of God would be revealed.

Paul says whether by his life or by his death Jesus will be honored in his body. **Phil 1:19**

Sometimes we die so that Jesus power is made brilliantly manifest. Many faithful saints were burned and killed or simply suffered well so that Jesus was honored. And look what Jesus says. **Read 36**

Why does he say that? Because look what happened when just one person believed a minute ago. The woman's faith had made her well.

But this little girl is dead. What can Jesus do now? What can Jesus do? The point of this whole chapter of miracles is: What **can't** Jesus do? That's where Mark is taking us.

He's stopping storms, casting out thousands of demons, healing diseases that dozens of doctors only make worse. Is there anything that Jesus can't do?

Notice what he does. **Read 37-38**

So this massive crowd who is pressing around Jesus to see him heal this girl - he tells them they can't come. They have to stay here. They don't get to come to the house. Why not? Mark doesn't tell us. Maybe it would be a zoo. Maybe if there were thousands of people around when Jesus raises this girl the crowd would go bananas. We don't know.

But somehow he gets the crowd to stay and he takes Peter, James and John and heads to the home. There's people everywhere crying. Weeping a wailing for this synagogue ruler's only daughter.

By the way, the German liberal theologians - and frankly, American ones too - want us to believe that she didn't really die. She was just sick. "Ancient people were not as smart as we are and couldn't tell when people really died. And so Jesus just revived her."

Well, 2 problems with that. First, in that case he still miraculously healed her from the point of death to full health. Sometimes people who deny what the Bible simply says make the most foolish arguments.

But, second, ancient people knew when someone had died. It's not hard to tell. There are some biological indicators when someone dies. Even someone who has never seen someone die, knows when their loved one dies in the hospital or at home.

This little girl is dead. Which makes Jesus statement almost offensive. **Read 39-40**

Wait a minute. Is she dead or not? The people say yes, Jesus says no and when he says no they laugh at Jesus. "Some Messiah, some healer."

Is she dead? Of course she's dead. So why does Jesus say she's just asleep?

Because what Jesus is about to do is a foretaste of eternal, resurrection glory. Jesus fundamentally changes how believers think about our greatest enemy: death.

For those who follow Jesus, death is no longer the enemy. Death has been transformed into sleep.

1 Thess. 4:13 Paul doesn't want us uniformed about those who have fallen asleep...who have died...that their bodies will be raised when the Lord comes.

1 Thess 5:9-10: God has destined us for salvation...so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live for him.

1 Cor. 15:51: We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed.

Why sleep? Because what happens when you're done sleeping? You wake up. Your body is revived. This is the great Christian hope of resurrection.

For those who have placed their faith in Jesus our hope is not that we will die and go to some floaty cloud heaven forever and ever where we strum harps for eternity in bodies like ghosts.

No, the Christian hope is in physical, bodily resurrection when Jesus returns again. That just like Jesus died and physically rose again, we too will die and physically rise again just like him.

When a believer dies our soul goes to be with the Lord instantaneously even though our body is lowered into the ground. Believers who are in heaven now are in what we call the intermediate state. Which doesn't sell a lot of Hallmark cards. We can call it heaven, the Bible calls it heaven. But it's called the intermediate state because it's temporary. It won't last forever.

Our eternal hope and joy - and everything we're focused on - is that one day Jesus will return and when he does our bodies will be physically raised and reunited with our souls.

Our bodies will be glorious and powerful and incorruptible. And just like our bodies are renewed and glorified, the heavens and the earth will be glorified as well. We'll be on a New Earth that is unstained by sin looking up at a New Heavens unstained by sin forever and ever. That's our hope.

So when we die and our body is placed into the ground it's not forever. It's just like sleep. Not soul sleep like the Jehovah's Witnesses believe. That our body and soul is in the grave. No, just the body goes in the grave.

And when Jesus comes back it will awaken in the resurrection. This resurrection, and all the resurrections Jesus does, looks forward to that day. Remember Lazarus? Jesus said "our friend Lazarus" what? Sleeps in **John 11:11**. But the disciples don't get that - even after all the resurrections Jesus had done - so Jesus has to just say "Lazarus is dead."

This is why Jesus says she sleeping. Because she's about to rise. Jesus, because he is God - Yahweh, who is I AM THAT I AM, bursts forth life. And they're all about to get a foretaste of resurrection glory. **Read 40-43**

Can you imagine the emotional rollercoaster these parents have been through? Their one and only daughter, their only joy gets sick unto death but there's hope of Jesus. But Jesus is delayed and she dies. But Jesus still comes and is talking crazy that she's not dead. What kind of joker is this? And all he does is touch her hand and she's instantly alive and fully healed.

Not a little, not back to death bed conditions. She is 100% alive so alive she can get up, walk around and eat on her own. And they are completely overcome with amazement.

This wasn't an either/or ethical dilemma for Jesus about who to heal. He healed one and raised the other and got glory for his own name.

You know what happened to both of these ladies after Jesus? They both died. One died twice. Even if God grants us mercy and healing, the question is always: are we ready to die? It might be when you're 12, it might be when you're 112 but you will almost certainly die. Are you ready to stand before Jesus?

Second, there is a day coming when what Jesus did here in raising this little one will be done billions of times over instantaneously when he returns. That's the day we look forward to. When every **body** comes out of the grave. When every knee bows and every body confesses that Jesus is Lord.

You think people were overcome with astonishment with one resurrection, just wait until Jesus comes back.

Pray