



**Sermons from St. Marks
United Church of Christ
New Albany, Indiana**



Little Child---Get Up!

Mark 5:21-43

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Henry David Thoreau, the famous American author, once wrote, “The vast majority of people live lives of quiet desperation.” His point was simple---most people, down deep, suffer quietly through life. We all have things which plague us, which bother us, which cause us pain.

Mark gives us a glimpse of that.

There was a man named Jairus and his daughter was ill unto the point of death.

Jairus was a synagogue official. A religious man, an important man, a man of influence was he. And his daughter was near death and he was devastated.

Strange story, almost. In that day and age women and girls were legally property and it was not all that common to go to great lengths to save the life of a daughter.

Yet, we realize something very profound about Jairus. He loved his daughter---and as she lay dying, he was desperate for help. So he went out and threw himself at the feet of Jesus begging Jesus for help. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet in not so quiet desperation.

Jesus, of course, consents to go with Jairus. On the way there is another encounter, a woman, living a life of quiet desperation. She had been bleeding for 12 years and, as Mark had said it, ‘endured much under many physicians.’ Please do not have even a fleeting thought that physicians of that era have anything in common with our own day and age.

Most of them were little more than witch doctors doing almost dreadful things to people in order to cure them. Additionally, this woman’s bleeding would have been perceived as a ‘curse’ from God, thus people would have judged her as a morally unfit person---in some way, because, after all, God would not curse a virtuous person.

And as Jesus walks by her, she reaches out, hoping, believing in desperation that one touch of his garment would make her well.

It does---but Jesus stops the action for a moment demanding to find the one who had touched him---she thinks he will be angry---the crowd thinks he will be angry. Instead, Jesus stops to remind her that it was her great faith that made her well.

The story moves on and reverts back to where it began. Jesus arrives at the home of Jairus to find out his daughter was now dead. There is, of course, the commotion, the doubts, the chaos.

And Jesus goes to the girl, reaches out and says, “Little child---get up.”

“Little child---get up.”

The little girl, of course, gets up and lives her life.

This is, of course, one story in two parts---two miracles in one fell swoop.

There are some rich, deep, layered lessons in this story.

For one, the bleeding woman and Jairus remind us that the shortest path to God is the path of quiet desperation.

Jesus tells us this very clearly in the Beatitudes.

Many of us have, at some point, had to memorize the Beatitudes, but, like many things, I’ve often wondered if we ever really **read** them to see what’s there. If you really look at them, they are remarkable.

Blessed are the poor in spirit---wouldn’t you feel more blessed if you were rich in spirit?

Blessed are those who mourn---I’ve mourned and I didn’t like it. I didn’t feel especially ‘blessed’ or ‘happy’ during the experience.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake---wouldn’t it be better for everyone to accept righteousness and never persecute those who are good?

The point is the same, over and over again. We are blessed, most blessed, when we need God.

We need God when things are impossible.

I received a story a while back that I loved.

A man was pulled over for speeding by a police officer. When the police officer was looking into the car, he noticed a collection of knives laying on the back seat of the car. It looked suspicious

to him, so he asked the man, “Why do you have so many knives?”

The man said, “Officer, I’m a juggler. I juggle knives. That is my livelihood.”

The police officer said, “Well sir, I have to be sure of this. Would you mind proving this to me.”

With this the man got out of the car and began, flawlessly to juggle the knives in the air.

Just then another car past by and the driver said to his wife, “Remind me never to drink and drive dear. I don’t think I could ever pass the new sobriety test.”

We all have moments, we all of times, simple times, humorous times, tragic times, when life is more than we can handle. We are reminded by one story with two miracles that the greatest miracle we all live with every day is that God loves us and has compassion for us.

God has compassion when we suffer like the woman.

God has compassion when we grieve like Jairus.

And our response to that love is an invitation to have faith. In both cases, the woman and Jairus, it is their faith that makes the difference.

Secondly, the words, “little child---get up” are so rich. She is dead and he calls back to life her to life.

“Little child--get up.”

Sometimes those words apply not just to a little, first century girl who had died. Those words often apply to each of us.

When we get lost, those words, “Little child--get up,” invite us to find our way.

When we are trapped in despair those words, “Little child--get up,” invite us to have hope.

When we are trapped in sin, those words, “Little child--get up,” invite us to get right with God and the world.

When we get trapped by whatever it is that traps us, the challenge is to leave the trap wisely and well.

A company, feeling it was time for a shake-up, hires a new CEO. This new boss is determined to rid the company of all slackers. On a tour of the facilities, the CEO notices a guy leaning on a wall.

The room is full of workers and he thinks this is his chance to show everyone he means business!

The CEO walks up to the guy and asks, "And how much money do you make a week?"

Undaunted, the young fellow looks at him and replies, "I make \$200.00 a week. Why?"

The CEO then hands the guy \$200 in cash and screams, "Here's a week's pay, now GET OUT and don't come back!"

Feeling pretty good about his first firing, the CEO looks around the room and asks, "Does anyone want to tell me what that slacker did here?"

With a sheepish grin, one of the other workers mutters, "He's the pizza delivery guy."

Pizza delivery guy who received a \$200.00 tip from a man who decided to move forward from a trap unwisely.

This narrative reminds us that there is a way out of the traps in life and that way out is Jesus. Jesus' words, "Little child, get up," with his extended hand brought the girl back to life.

Jesus' mere presence, walking through a crowd healed a woman because she had great faith.

The words, are called out to us.

The words are an invitation. They are an invitation to move from the impossible to the possible; they are an invitation out of whatever traps in life we find ourselves in.

The story is about two. A woman reaches out in faith and is healed.

Jesus invites a little girl back to life and reaches out his hand to her. She reaches back, takes his hand, and lives.

Jesus reaches his hand out to each of us, each day, and invites us to life with him. The only question is this: Do we reach back?