

## Sermon Mark 5:21-43 June 30

The Late Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Peace Prize winner whose writings have often focused on the Jewish Holocaust, he and his entire family were sent to Auschwitz in 1944 by the Nazis at the age of 15. Wiesel penned many books. One book, a memoir titled *And the World Would Remain Silent*, focused on the terrors of the Holocaust.

Of his experiences, he wrote, “Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live long as God himself.

In one incident, he writes about an account of two adults and a child who had been caught holding guns inside the camp. They were sentenced to death. Wiesel writes that the boy had the refined and beautiful face of a sad angel. The guards erected three gallows. The three victims mounted chairs and nooses placed around their necks. All of the other prisoners were forced to line up and watch this spectacle. “Long live liberty,” cried the two adults. The child said nothing. From the back row of the spectators, a cry came up. “Where is God?” The chairs were tipped over, the bodies jerked and then dangled limply from the ropes. You can imagine the terrible sight. The two adults died in seconds, but the child was so light the third rope twitched for over 20 minutes. Behind me says Wiesel; I heard the same man asking, “Where is God now?”

I would be willing to bet there have been times in your life, as well as mine when you have asked that same question: Where is God? Maybe some of you are asking that question today. Perhaps a sense of life crumbling around and no help in sight. Not even God. A skewed EKG or a suspicious MRI, or maybe a suspicious call from the doctor. You or a loved one afflicted with disaster. Diseases and death are always hovering around us; during COVID-19, there were 650,000 deaths within two years. When these disasters strike your life, where will you turn, and how will you cope? Let’s find out as we turn to an inspiring encounter from today’s scripture. But first, let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, we humbly come before you with our Bibles open, seeking your divine guidance. We pray that you will send your Holy Spirit in abundance to aid in our speaking and hearing so that we might truly understand and internalize the teachings of the Bible. We acknowledge our desperate need for your help and cry out to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today, we read Mark’s account of two miracles in hopeless cases with two contrasting personalities between a man and a woman, yet two things in common: a desperate need and unwavering faith in Jesus—one miracle over disease and the second over death. In verses 21-24, we see the appeal of Jairus to Jesus. Jairus was a synagogue official who was not identified as a member of the Pharisees. Then, in verses 25-34, the miracle of the woman touching the fringe of Jesus, and in verses 35-43, the miracle of raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead. Mark is famous for writing text in what we call a “sandwich structure.” As you will recall, Jesus had crossed over the sea of Galilee, where people put out the welcome mat, for they had been eagerly waiting for

him. One can only surmise that some of those hearing about his miraculous healings only wanted the earthly benefits from Him but not the blessing of eternal life; the lesson here is that people still seek Jesus for the wrong reasons. Still, those who publicly believe and fall at the feet of Jesus as an act of worship, like Jairus, our faith should focus on God, not our problems, that faith trusts in God's timing, not ours, that faith grows in believing despite the circumstances of life, and that our faith now looks back in the direct knowledge of Jesus Christ.

If people were to ask Mark why he is writing, he would say I am writing the good news about Jesus of Nazareth and all of the implications that follow. Back in the first chapter of Mark, Jesus makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is near; repent and believe the good news. In living this life, we are faced with a crucial decision: whether to encounter Jesus. We must either go to Jesus at his word, turn from our sins, and believe in Him, or do we risk ignoring and avoiding Him, thereby rejecting Him. This stark choice calls for deep meditation and a sincere examination of our faith.

Although the Bible is an ancient text with ancient words, a place and time long gone, it is not obsolete in any way, shape, or form. This book, the Bible, as we try to understand it, understands us. This book places moments of circumstances and points of identification that we find ourselves frequently shaking our heads about and marveling at the whole notion. Mark writes that Jesus is the one who has authority to calm the storms and has authority over demonic forces. Even so, Mark tells us that although the crowds followed Jesus because of his claims and miracles, not all people believed or followed. I think the same remains true today. The relevance of the biblical text to our present day is striking, connecting us to the timeless truths it holds.

When Jesus said that Jairus' daughter was not dead, they laughed at him. They said we know better than Jesus. They did not understand what Jesus was saying. In the community where he has brought restoration, they ask him to leave. In the context of the home where he is about to bring restoration, they laugh at him. Later in chapter six, when it comes to his relationship with his family, they pay no attention to him, and then the general population takes offense. Not a lot has changed. It's like the farmer who sows the seed, and the birds of the air come and pick it up, meaning the word of God is planted all over the place, but much of the ground is stoney and rocky. The evil one comes along, picks it up, and takes it away before people ever have an opportunity to see it germinate in their lives. However, when it falls on good ground, the change is remarkable. This morning, the seed is sown. Will it find good soil in the hearts of the listeners?

Although the heading of this chapter refers to two changed lives, there are actually three. Mark's image is dramatic. In verse 25, a woman in the crowd had watched and listened, and all the while, a man of stature named Jairus had also come. Seeing Jesus, he fell at the feet of a Galilean carpenter. Dramatic, for even his disciples had said earlier in chapter 4, "Who is this Jesus of Nazareth that even the wind and waves obey him?" The posture of Jairus tells us something. The way in which a person comes to Jesus makes all the difference. If you come to Christ only to

examine Him as an intellectual exercise, you will not come to faith in Jesus. Jairus's posture is that of a sincere person about Christ. Don't miss it.

Please put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live. We have not been told how Jairus arrives at this conclusion. However, Jairus is convinced to make this request. My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her. Who else could receive such a request? So, Jesus went off with him, and a large crowd followed, bumping his elbows.

All of a sudden, a lady with a problem of her own, bleeding for twelve years beyond any remedy. She had suffered and grew worse. According to the law of Moses, any person who would come in contact with a person in her condition was rendered ceremonially unclean. She was cut off from society and the sanctuary. Whoever touched her was impure, and even her family had to keep their distance. But here is Jesus who touches the untouchable—the outsider. If we, as the church, miss this point of disregard for human life, allowing ourselves to compare ourselves with others and think that we are not so bad, there is no human remedy for our uncleanness. This is how sin works in the human heart.

Both of these people were deemed ceremonially unclean. According to the thinking of the day, the woman Jesus touched would make Him unclean. Because of the nature of Jesus and the power of God, that was not how it worked. Jesus wasn't made unclean; the woman was made whole. Think of it this way. If you were to go to the doctor's office for a routine check-up and the person sitting beside you was obviously sick, and you picked up the same magazine they were reading, you would be ceremonially unclean. That is how the Jewish law read during those days.

As Jesus walks in those days, he touches the untouchables. In touching them both and being touched by them, Jesus makes himself ceremonially unclean, pointing out the fact that when he dies upon the cross, he will take upon himself all of our uncleanness, all of our sin, so that by his stripes, all of the unclean will be made whole. That is what Mark details for us. This woman believed that by touching Jesus' clothes, she would become healed. However, this is a mixture of truth and error, magic and reality. An indication at the end of life that somebody has tried every possibility and gone to every source of help and now, twelve years into the predicament, thinks that the person I have left is Jesus, so I'll go up and touch his clothes. The word I hear on the street is that something dramatic will happen, and maybe that will immediately occur to me, too.

Mark has a favorite word, and that word is "immediately." In verse 29, "immediately her bleeding stopped." Then, in verse 30, "At once, Jesus realized the power had gone out of him, he turned around and asked, Who touched my clothes?" Immediately, she knew instantaneously something had happened. Jesus also knew instantaneously, for the power had gone out of him responding to the touch.

Surprisingly, the mystery is that Jesus did not realize how the power had gone out of him, how it had happened, or who was responsible for the touch. But Jesus discovers who the woman is as she falls at his feet and tells him the truth of living beyond the borders of social acceptability.

I am the one who touched you. All the while, Jairus is listening, seeing her touch of child-like faith. Her cure was because she trusted Him. Yet so many people today laugh at the doings of Jesus. Here in the story of this beleaguered life of this woman is good soil.

We do not need to understand everything perfectly. But it is faith-seeking understanding, and he teaches this woman and us by saying, “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” We can hear Jesus say there is no magic in my clothes, for many people have bumped up against me in the days that have passed. But when you touched me, and I did not know who you were, a transaction took place, bringing together two elements. Faith and Jesus.

Spurgeon remarked on this story in this way. “Here is the great marvel. Little as was her knowledge. Great as was her unbelief and astounding as her misconception of her Lord, yet her faith because it was real faith saved her.”

In closing, this woman came privately, in pain, ashamed, and rejected. She left publicly. She left in peace with all her needs met at the feet of Jesus. The man Jairus came to Jesus because he believed Jesus could do for him what no one else could. His humble faith and request were straightforward. When we ask for the Lord to lay hands, it means there is sin within, and sin means spiritual death. Yet the physical action of laying on of hands has no power in itself. It is only used by God when it is done in agreement with God’s Word. Brothers and sisters, we do not come to know Christ from a position of detached curiosity. This woman had tried everything, but she had never trusted Christ. Maybe that describes you today. I tried but never trusted. The late Professor John Murray put it this way. “Wherever there is faith as slender as one strand of the spider's web, the fullness of redeeming grace is active.” If, perhaps, you have one strand of a spider’s web, you know God’s redeeming grace. Are you in trouble? Reach out your hand. Touch Him. Sit at His feet. Repent and believe. Jesus will make you whole. **Amen.**