

June 30, 2024

Mark 5:21-43

No matter how big or small, almost every town in America has at least one of these. It's an American staple for millions- many stop in at least once or twice a month, sometimes more! Every time you drive by one, they're immediately recognizable, often you can see them from hundreds of feet away because of their tall structure. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about! McDonald's! The story of how McDonald's came to be is fascinating. It was started by two brothers: Mac and Dick McDonald, and they wanted to make a restaurant that not only served excellent hamburgers and fries, but at an efficiency and pace that no one had ever seen. No wait, no silverware or plates, just come up to the window, get your food, eat it wherever you'd like, and throw the garbage away! Ray Croc, a tenacious businessman noticed how genius this was, helped the McDonald brothers expand to other places, and within a few decades they had an empire built on quickness and efficiency.

This is a profound reflection of the human condition, especially the American human condition. Americans *really* do not like to wait. We are not patient people. We want our food, our entertainment, our information, our relationships, and *our God* to be fast and efficient so we do not have to wait too long. Jesus is not that God. Jesus will not be rushed. Today, we see this as Jesus is begged by a desperate father hoping that Jesus can save his little girl, and Jesus makes him wait, and because he made him wait, this father realized the theme for today: **Jesus is Lord over Death**. Jesus invites this man, and all of us to believe in him to have faith, and today we are going to see that **1. Faith is Patience**. And **2. Faith is Hope**.

1. Faith is Patience. After Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, he comes back and immediately there's a crowd waiting to see him. One of the people in the crowd, however, is an unlikely worshiper of Jesus: Jairus. Jairus was a leader of the Synagogue. His job was to make sure the Synagogue was ready for Sabbath, to conduct and schedule the meetings, and to supervise the teaching. He was kind of the president, treasurer, administrative pastor, and much more all in one- it was a full time job, and he would have been a deeply respected, prominent, wealthy man. But before Jesus, he's nothing and he knows it. Jairus falls to his knees because he's desperate. The Greek is more explicit than the English- his daughter is going to die, and he knows that Jesus is powerful and kind and all he has to do is lay his hand on her and she can be healed, but he needs to hurry because there isn't much time, and Jesus comes. While they're walking, at what I assume is a fast pace, something happens. A woman who had been suffering constant menstrual bleeding for 12 years sees him and thinks, "if I can just touch him, I'll be healed. So she hides in the crowd and just as Jesus walks by he reaches out and touches his robe and is immediately healed- and Jairus' and her worst fear is realized. Jesus stops and says, "who touched me? I just healed someone. Where are you?" She falls at his feet and tells him what happened, and Jesus spends time on her. He talks to her at least for a little bit and tells her about how her faith has made her well. Meanwhile, Jairus is likely inwardly thinking, "Hurry up! What are you doing? She's fine! Let's go! You can come back to her, my daughter's about to die- don't you care?" He was right- if Jesus were a doctor, he'd be incriminated for malpractice. The woman's situation was

sad, but not dire. She had been bleeding for 12 years, she could wait a few hours- Jairus' daughter couldn't. If a doctor was on his way to perform emergency heart surgery on a patient about to die and then stopped to mend a broken leg, get to know the patient a bit, and comfort her, he'd be punished. And Jairus' worst fear comes to fruition. It's too late. Another synagogue teacher comes and tells him to stop bothering Jesus. It's too late- she's dead. And at this moment, Jesus goes to him and says, "don't be afraid. You need to trust me."

In Jairus' perspective, I think it would have been almost easier for him if Jesus said, "no, I'm not going." Then at least he wouldn't have to wait for Jesus. But Jesus said he's coming, and then he pulls this, and now his daughter is dead, and now he has no choice. He has to just trust him and wait. He has to be patient. Why is that so hard for us? I don't think it's just because we're modern Americans and we think everything should function like McDonald's- fast and efficient. It's a human issue. We can't wait because we are convinced that we know how our world should function, we know how our lives should go, we know what is good for us and when we should receive those things, and if things don't happen the way we want, then something is horribly wrong and we get afraid. I want you to think about this: how many sins have you committed, how many problems have you caused, how many people have you hurt because you got afraid and couldn't wait for God's timing? A young man can't wait for the joy and happiness of marriage that God has promised, so he goes out and sleeps around because he thinks that if he doesn't have that now, he'll never be happy! And he finds out in the end it only made it worse. A wife is waiting for her husband to grow into the man that she knows he can be, but people take a while to grow and so she gets demeaning and nasty toward him and it makes everything worse. Why do people get addicted to substances like alcohol? Because they are in pain, and they can't wait for real, slow healing so they try to get it fast and alcohol acts pretty fast, but makes it all worse. Why do people gossip, or cheat, or steal, or lie? Because they desperately want something, money, friendships, status, comfort and think if I don't have that NOW then I'll never have it, but realize that it doesn't work. It all stems from fear, and a lack of trust that Jesus will give me what I need when I need it. But how can we be patient when it hurts? How can we wait? Because Jesus doesn't just tell us to wait- he gives us something to wait for. Hope.

2. Faith is Hope. In ancient Israel, professional mourners were an important part of a funeral. Since funerals typically happened the day of the death, which meant that extended families wouldn't have time to get there in time, families of the deceased would hire at least two mourners and one flute player. They would come and wail and play flutes to let everyone know that someone has just died- since Jairus was likely wealthy, there were probably a lot of them there. Jesus comes and tells them to be quiet because she's sleeping, not dead. That's ridiculous- they make fun of him for being so obtuse, but he orders them out, takes his three closest disciples with the girl's parents, and just gently wakes her up and says, essentially, "honey, get up." *And she does.* And to prove she's really alive and not a zombie, she walks and eats and she's perfectly fine. Why did Jesus do that? Why did Jesus do this miracle, and for that matter, why did Jesus do miracles in the first place? Clearly, it wasn't to get famous- he directly tells the witnesses to not tell anyone. Firstly, because he loved Jairus and his daughter and Jesus wanted to use his power to help them. But there's more. He's teaching- he's teaching that all things, even resurrection

are possible with him and to him death is nothing but a sleep that can easily wake anyone from. He's powerful- He's God and he's proving it! But there's more. With every miracle Jesus does, he's showing us what he's really come here to do. Typically, we think of Jesus' miracles as him interrupting the natural order of things with some sort of supernatural occurrence- like bringing a dead person to life. But that's not it. In his miracles, he is slowly restoring creation back to its natural order. People weren't meant to starve, so he restores the natural order by feeding them. Storms weren't meant to rage, so he brings back the original order by calming them. People weren't meant to die- so he slowly restores his creation by bringing them back to life. That's what Jesus has come to do. He has come to make all things new and not to just heal a few people and raise a few people- but to heal all people and make it so they never die. But in order for all people to live forever, he has to die. He has to be punished with the ultimate punishment that all people deserve, both physical and eternal death, and that's exactly what the cross- not just physical pain and death, but being abandoned by the Father as he hung and bled. But the fact that he's risen again proves that the restoration is going to happen, and the only difference between us and Jairus, his wife, his daughter, is not that they get a resurrection and we don't. The difference is timing. The difference is we have to wait a bit longer for it. It's ours, but we don't have it yet. That's what hope is.

Contrary to the ways that many people talk about hope, hope is not an uncertain wish. It's a certain knowledge of something that's yours, but you don't have yet. We know life everlasting is coming, but we don't have it yet. We know that a place of endless joy, celebration, freedom, and perfection is ours, but we don't have it yet. We know that we are going to have perfect bodies and we will never have to worry about death or sickness or struggle with temptations or addiction, but we don't have that yet. All of it is ours, but we don't have it yet. We have hope, a certain hope, and that's what allows us to be patient. One of my favorite examples of hope and patience in suffering is a WELS pastor in California- in the Los Angeles area. I met him a few years ago, he's a gifted pastor and fine Christian gentleman all around, and also a modern day Jairus. About a year ago, his three year old son died after months of battling with brain cancer. When it was clear that the cancer had spread so aggressively that he was going to die, and treatment would only prolong the suffering, they decided to make him as comfortable as possible until Jesus took him home. At that time, he wrote this to his family and friends:

While this news might make it sound like God did not answer our prayers, here's the reality: for seven months now, our prayer has been for Finneas to get better. Instead, God's plan was to make him perfect. Our prayer was for Finn's cancer to be gone, and soon it will be, along with any other future pain or suffering he might have had to endure. Our prayer has been for Finneas to come home, and shortly, that's exactly where he'll be, home with Jesus. We prayed for Finneas to live a long, healthy life, and soon, everlasting glory will be his present reality.

Not only has our Savior graciously answered all of our prayers, but each of His answers is infinitely better than what we were requesting. What countless doctors, nurses, and medicines couldn't do, the blood of Jesus did. This is why we baptize our babies. This is why Easter is such a big deal. This is why we don't grieve like the rest of the world. Because Jesus really lives and death is truly defeated. Which means everything Jesus says is true and every promise He makes is

trustworthy. What more could you ask for than to know your child will rest safely in the arms of Jesus forever? God most certainly answered our prayers. May His Name forever be praised! Knowing this, please keep praying for Finneas, that the Lord would bring him home quickly and peacefully. Pray for our family, that the emptiness we feel in Finn's absence would be filled with the peace that surpasses all understanding. Pray for us but don't feel sorry for us. We are only to be pitied if Christ has not been raised. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Soon this will include Finneas, one day you and me as well—asleep in Jesus, waiting for His precious voice to wake us up forever.

Do you notice what he says? They are sad! This is painful! They grieve! But they know that this is not the end, and the hope they have isn't empty sentimental nonsense. It's a real Jesus. A real resurrection. A real promise. A real eternity. And that empowers Jairus, them, you, to wait. That's what "Jesus is Lord" really means. It's not just a signpost. It's a declaration of victory. It's a cry of joy. It's why you, even as you suffer, can suffer with joy, peace, and patience. Amen.