

Do Not Fear, Only Believe

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 5:21-43. There are two stories in this reading. Both stories center on females, and both mention a span of 12 years; the girl was 12 years old, and the woman had suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years. (TLSB)

As our text begins, Jesus has just returned by boat from across the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd gathers, as often happened during his Galilean ministry. Jairus was a “ruler of the synagogue,” responsible for the administration of the synagogue and for supervising the worship. Jairus’ daughter is sick and near death. Jairus believes Jesus can heal her by laying his hands on her. Jesus starts to go, but is delayed by the bleeding woman.

The precise nature of the woman’s problem is not known. Her existence was wretched because she was shunned by people generally, since anyone having contact with her was made ceremonially unclean. The woman had tried all kinds of remedies. The Talmud listed 11 cures for such ailments, all of which we would consider superstitious; she likely tried such remedies. (TLSB)

Sometimes we are at wit’s end with our problems. Jesus never gets tired of hearing from us and uses the faith he gave to take care of our most dire affliction, sin, gives forgiveness and strength.

Going back to the story of Jairus’ daughter some men from the house of Jairus tell him not to “bother the teacher anymore.” Jesus responds, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” Faith needs only to grasp the person of Christ Jesus. No matter how small a hold, miracles are wrought by the power of his words.

The grieving process had already begun. While Jairus had been out seeking Jesus’ help, his young daughter had died. The mourners had been hired to play their dirges on their flutes and to weep and wail for the young girl. Such was the Eastern custom surrounding death.

The girl had, in fact, died, but Jesus was about to awaken her as easily as from natural sleep. Because of the Lord’s mastery over death and the resurrection promise, the NT repeatedly speaks of death in terms of “sleeping.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for giving us these two stories as examples of how much you care about people’s problems. Thank you for reminding us that you have power over life and death and that we have nothing to fear no matter what enters our lives. Help grow our faith so that we may grow ever more confident when difficulties come. Amen