**SERIES IN MARK - JESUS FOR ALL 29th June 2025**

Mark 5:21-43

Before I start, as we come to these 2 familiar stories, I want you to notice the scandal within. It is there on many levels, but the most extraordinary and scandalous thing of the whole story, is seen in how it unfolds, the sequence of events.

One the most respected members of the local community - Jairus - comes requesting help from Jesus! His daughter is about to die! It is urgent. It is desperate. And it is the request of one of THE most important religious figures in the community!

BUT, instead of dropping everything to do his bidding, as was right, appropriate and what everyone expected, Jesus is “distracted” by a nobody. One of the most insignificant members of the community. Overlooked, marginalised, forgotten and unclean. A complete nonentity! Knowing her place, she demanded nothing from him, except to touch his clothing as he passed by. Because in the eyes of many – they wished she didn’t even exist!

And yet. He pauses, he speaks to her and he restores her, and because of this - the daughter of the important, righteous, powerful man - dies! Make no mistake – this is scandalous! A complete reversal of how things should be. It is upside down to the correct order of things, to the relative importance of people! At least according to what everyone thinks and most people behave! But not to God!

Just a thought!

*And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” And he went with him.*

*And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”*

*While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

*(Mar 5:21-43)*

PRAYER

SERMON

On Saturday night, with little on TV, I turned to ABCiview, and found myself scrolling through episodes of “Songs of Praise”. This is not something I have watched for many years. I know a number of you love it and I have had my moments – but it’s been a while! One of the episodes caught my attention: “Faith in Young People”. Anyone seen it?

I don’t know if anyone read Andrew Turner’s recent article in Together in Mission, the Baptist paper. There he listed some recent stats:

* Australians attending Church has risen 6% over the last 20 years
* ¾ million Aussies shifted from “no religion in 2016 census, to ”Christian” in 2021
* People open to changing their religious views shifted from 8% to 19%
* 40% of people invited to Church by a trusted friend are likely to say yes.

Further to this, a recent study by the Bible Society in the UK…

* found that Church attendance has risen by 50 per cent over the last six years.The most dramatic change is among young adults, particularly young men.
* in 2018, just 4 per cent of 18–24-year-olds said that they attended church at least monthly. Today, this has risen to 16 per cent, with young men increasing from 4 per cent to 21 per cent, and young women from 3 to 12 per cent.

Having heard this, I was fascinated to then see it reflected and expressed in this beautiful episode of Songs of Praise. But perhaps more exciting for us, what is being seen in the UK, is also being experienced here in South Australia. With baptisms increasing exponentially, people walking into our churches wanting to know Jesus, and many many younger people enthusiastic about their faith. This is also something we have been privileged to experience at Grange!

And yet, my guess is, most of us still feel… that the people we know…our neighbours, friends and family who don’t know Jesus… have no interest, and are unlikely to change what they believe or do when it comes to Christian faith!

Which brings me to today’s passage, 2 familiar stories woven together, 2 stories with 5 characters within, 5 different types of people interacting with Jesus.

From these stories and the characters within them, I have 2 questions:

1. Which do you most identify with today?
2. And when you think about the people you know who don’t yet know Jesus…which character best represents them?

In no particular order let’s look at the people in the story now. Beginning with **“the crowd”**. The casual observers. Not people who are intrinsically a part of the story, and yet they are there… mentioned… Mark draws them in and calls our attention to them!

*And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him v.21*

We don’t know much about the crowd…except they appear to be following Jesus around. They had heard what had happened over in Gennesaret with the Pigs and the man who had been transformed. Some may have joined the crowd since then, some may have still been following Jesus since they had been fed, along with 5000 others! And others may have been there as friends and neighbours of the family of the dying girl, or desperate woman.

In many ways I imagine the crowd were predominantly just fascinated onlookers. People not ready to commit, yet intrigued by what they are seeing, hearing, experiencing. Open to finding out more, but not too keen to take sides, make a decision. A bit too sceptical for their own good!

My guess is there are people like this still. And many we know who would fit this category.

Many of the people who turn up at our community events, or receive donuts from us at Grange School sports day…or come to our programs like Café, Play group, or the walking group…or perhaps even some of you? They are not anti, just not into faith. At least not yet! Still weighing up what they are witnessing. I find it interesting that Jesus is not pushy with such people. He is not quick to make them decide.

He allows them to tag along, watch from a distance, take their time. He includes them into what he is doing. He is gracious and generous toward them. Mostly uncritical, never judgemental!

The sad thing is, they are missing out on what could be. They can’t see what really is. And therefore they are missing out on being a part of the action

Or the blessing

Or the healings

Or the friendship.

Their caution – is ok, but oh what they were missing!

If you were in this story, would you be part of the crowd?

Are you sitting back, watching, interested, but not willing to commit.

At least not yet!

What about those you know?

The second group of characters are **the disciples**.

Here, as in so many of the events, they are not portrayed in a great light. They are the inner circle, close to Jesus, especially chosen by Jesus. They have decided to follow Jesus and spend heaps of time with Jesus….but they just don’t get it… yet! Are not yet fully onboard with what Jesus is up to!

When Jesus asks who touched him (as He had felt healing flow from Him), they think He is crazy, hundreds of people have been touching Him in this thronging crowd! (v31). Or when just the closest of the disciples tag along and witness the life giving touch of Jesus – they are silent.

It makes me wonder how often I am a bit like the disciples. Despite all that I know and have witnessed. Despite my own experience of Jesus, I am still slow to catch on… but quick to doubt, question or just stay silent. I am slow to see what Jesus is really on about, but quick to express my own opinion, make my own judgements.

And so it is appropriate to ask. How much am I really allowing Jesus…Who He is and what He is doing, has done…to transform me?

When it comes to what I think – am I the voice of reason – just like the disciples. Am I fascinated by what I see, hear, know… I like being a part of the action…but I am reticent to let it affect me. I am slow to let it change and transform me! Do I like how it feels, but not yet ready to submit? To commit? What about you, and those you know? Are there any people like the disciples amongst us!?

Our next character is **the woman**. It is not surprising that she is not named - women in that culture…and part of the impact of the way Mark tells the story…is to have it this way!

Women were not considered of great value, just property. They were hidden, overlooked, marginalised, ignored. Which is exactly how this woman felt, what she had experienced and what is so poignantly expressed in the way the story is told! Only known, described, by that which shamed her, by her misery!

*And there* ***was a woman*** *who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.  V25,26*

Can you begin to imagine the distress, the hopelessness, the shame. But can you also see the desperation, the boldness, the audacious nerve and courage… of this woman!

Despite the years of suffering and misery, the dehumanising and marginalising experience of her medical condition, the ostracising from the religious community that gave you identity, and the cost of the ineffective treatment. Despite everything that gave her reason to stay at home, hide in a corner…disappear….

She joins the crowd, pushes to the front and reaches out….

“If only I can get close enough…even just to touch his garment…

All I need is a tap on his tunic, a pat of his sleeve…

If I can just get near ….

Then I know I will be healed.

My shame taken away. Relief and restoration at last!

Which of course is what happened! At least a little… physically… the beginning of restoration….

But then in full, when Jesus, sensing the touch, sensing the power, sensing the healing…. Jesus knows what has begun to occur – and pauses to complete it. To bring it to light and restore the woman in fullness.

*And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”*

It was a ridiculous request! With the crowd pressing so tightly…it wasn’t who touched me, but who didn’t! And yet Jesus hadn’t finished with the woman. Sure… she had experienced physical healing. But the shame, the isolation, the desolation she had known for so long…

this too needed his touch. And this he wanted to give… Could only be given through His word!

*But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.  And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.  V33,34*

Go in peace, shalom. Be whole. Be restored.

Know you are precious,

know you are loved,

Know you are valued and complete.

Today this may be what you need Jesus to say **to** you, do **for** you. Perhaps it is what Jesus **has** done for you. When you think of the characters in this story – are you this unnamed woman?

What about those you know – are there any who need the touch of the Saviour. But so broken, so ashamed, all they dare to is reach out in desperate hope.

Today Jesus would turn to you, come to them, and say:

*“your faith has made you well, go in peace and be restored”*

Our next character is so very different, the very opposite of the woman – and yet…

**Jairus** – introduced as *one of the* ***rulers of the synagogue v22***

In many ways a person like so many of us, at least on a world scale… respected, righteous and rich!

Jairus as a synagogue ruler, was responsible for overseeing the religious activities, for maintaining the order and discipline of the Jewish faith. His role was to preserve and uphold the values and traditions of the community! And was a respected, prominent and powerful member of his community with significant influence. He had responsibility and authority, was privileged, wealthy and esteemed!

But all that mattered for nothing! Out of desperation and deep fear for his daughter…he risks it all. He seeks out this rebel rabbi for help!

I wonder what you are prepared to risk for Jesus? Jairus’ reputation, respect and role was on the line – he didn’t care. He was frantic, even reckless… but that mattered not - his daughter was desperately ill! And nothing was too much, no cost too great…nothing would stop him from seeking the help she needed. From seeking Jesus! In fact, not even news of her death, would stop him from following Jesus, from trusting Him.

Are you a Jairus? Prepared to give up everything for Jesus? To care nothing for your reputation or your lifestyle for the sake of that which matters more? Is this how it is for us?

Have we, do we, are we… ready to risk everything to trust and follow Him?

Finally, we have the only silent, passive, character in the story. The unnamed, but very sick, dying, dead, **little girl**! I love Jesus’ response to her. There is care in His coming. Priority in His presence. Tenderness in His touch. There is kindness in His words. And grace in their effect

She does nothing to deserve her restoration. Absent when the first request is made. Unable to speak. Incapable of faith. And yet Jesus restores her!

And Jairus – he no longer has a name. He is no longer the ruler of the synagogue. He is simply the girl’s father. Her dad!

And Jesus takes mum and dad in with Him. He gently takes her by the hand. Speaks to her with warmth and compassion. And gives her breath once again. Restores her back to life!

I don’t know what your picture of Jesus is. But like this little girl - He would come to you!

You may have nothing to offer, no strength to say yes, no faith with which to hold on. No ability to act. Feel you don’t yet know enough to say yes. But today, the Gentle, Compassionate Jesus, would come to you, take your hand and give you life.

This is His invitation to you. And to all those you know and love. This is His invitation today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Jesus leaves Jairus (the respectable) to engage with a nobody (the woman) resulting in the girl’s death and the restoration of the woman. Who are the people we prioritise in our society, in your own relationships? Who would Jesus put first? See Matt 20:1-16

The stats are suggesting faith is increasing here in Australia and in particular among the younger generations. How does knowing this affect you? Will it change anything you do? What can we do to participate in what God is doing in our own generation. Do we have sufficient faith to believe what we don’t yet see?

The crowd were interested and uncommitted observers. When are you like this concerning what God is doing? How is God calling you to change? What would need to change if you were to commit?

The disciples knew Jesus well but their own thoughts made it hard for them to really understand what He was on about. When is this true for you? What is God inviting you to open your eyes to see? How might you be more open to this?

The woman came desperate and in faith. Who around us is desperate? What am I desperate for? How would Jesus want to respond to us?

Jairus was also desperate, but his desperation was for his daughter. Who are you desperate and come seeking Jesus for? What is it you want God to do for them? How might he be calling you to be a part of this?

The little girl had nothing to offer and was not involved, and yet Jesus brought her back to life. What does this say about Jesus’s ability and desire to reach – even people who are not yet seeking Him, or have nothing to offer Him? What does God want to do for them, for you?

Jesus is inviting us today to come to Him, seek Him and receive from Him all that he would give. What is stopping you? Why not ask Jesus today to give you life and help you do what it takes to help others experience His life?