

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: BREATHLESS**

(studies in the Gospel of Mark)

## **Timing is Everything**

(Mark 5:21-43)

Study #9

### **Introduction: Life in the express lane...**

Timing is everything.

The following event really happened, so I'm not making any of this up. It also happened a bunch of years ago, and I haven't forgotten about it, which probably tells you all you need to know about my maturity. Oh well, here goes.

It was a January day and I had stopped off at Wal-Mart to buy one item: shampoo. I found exactly what I was looking for in one minute and walked to the only open Express check-out line in the store. I was second in line.

I had arrived just after the shopper in front of me and noticed with a groan that this shopper had loaded something more than the ten items allowed for that register.

In fact, this shopper had picked up nearly 60 items (I counted) - all discontinued Christmas stock. Why she had been allowed to use the Express Lane, I'll never know.

Nor did I ever find out why none of her items could be scanned. The SCU# of each item had to be hand-entered. Then, a separate sheet of paper was filled out and attached to every one of these items before it was dropped into her shopping bags.

I remember that the line behind me grew with increasingly irate customers. Fellow Express Lane customers shouted angrily at the management, and muttered curses at the offending shopper. I held on to my shampoo for fifteen minutes before finally making my purchase.

I remember thinking, "*Yep. Timing is everything. If I had walked up to the Express Lane thirty seconds earlier, I could have left the store fifteen minutes earlier.*"

You may have had that thought on any given day this past week as you stopped at seven successive red lights on Bandera Road or missed a flight because of unexpected traffic congestion on 410.

Timing really is everything. The difference between smooth sailing and rough days can be calculated in seconds.

The complexity of the timing issue intensifies for those of us who accept the Bible as true. That's because the Bible presents God as the God who is sovereign over time.

We don't control either the times or the timing of our lives. But we know that God does.

And when we are the victim of a timing attack, and when timing works out in such a way that we are inconvenienced or even hurt, it is tempting to rail at God.

After all, He could have intervened to make the timing work out better for all concerned. Why didn't He?

What we'll see today is that God works His will in and through time. He uses time - the most valuable commodity in this life - to shape and mold us into the image of Jesus and to bring maximum glory to Himself.

And He calls on each one of us to trust Him with the timing of the events of our lives. He wants us to trust Him, even when the timing is terrifically inconvenient and tragically hurtful.

### **A Little Girl, Desperately Sick! (vv. 21-24)**

#### **Jairus' Desperate Plea (vv. 21-23)**

*Jesus with a great crowd (again) (v. 21)*

***[21]When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore.***

When we left the disciples and Jesus last Sunday, they were all in a boat. They were sailing north on the Sea of Galilee after a brief stay in the region of the Decapolis where Jesus had just cast a legion's worth of demons out of a tragedy of a man.

He sent the demons into a herd of swine and then sent the man back to his hometown to ***(5:19) report what great things the Lord had done for [him] and how He had mercy on [him].***

When Jesus and the twelve completed their sailing trip north, they landed on the shore near Capernaum in Galilee and found themselves surrounded (as they did so often) by a large crowd.<sup>1</sup>

A prominent man in this crowd pushed his way to the front to speak to Jesus.

*Jesus is begged for help (again) (vv. 22-23)*

***[22] One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet, [23] and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live."***

There is no medical description of Jairus' daughter's condition here. Why she was at the point of death is anybody's guess. We aren't told how Jairus knew his daughter was at death's door.

We'll just assume that her symptoms were so severe that it was obvious. He knew that his little girl didn't have much time - or hope.

He needed help, so he was determined to find her some help. And Jairus' hopes were all pinned on Jesus, a well-known Miracle-Worker who lived in the same village, Capernaum, that he himself did.

The Bible says that he fell at Jesus' feet and begged Jesus to heal his daughter. And then the Bible tells us that Jesus immediately agreed to help. They were off in a flash, walking to Jairus' home so that Jesus could heal the little girl.

#### **Jesus' Compassionate Response (v. 24)**

***[24] And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.***

And they didn't walk alone. The crowd at the seashore followed Jesus and Jairus and the twelve apostles from the beach to the town. They wove their way through the city streets, intent on making it to Jairus' home as quickly as possible.

There is a purpose to their walking. I imagine a hurried, harried father leading the way, urging Jesus to walk as fast as possible. Time is of the essence.

It is while they were on their way that the story takes an interesting turn. On their way to fulfill this urgent mission of mercy, Jesus was interrupted.

### **Parenthetical: Interruption on the Way to a Miracle (vv. 25-34)**

#### **A Woman Reaches Out to Jesus (vv. 25-28)**

***[25] A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, [26] and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse - [27] after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak. [28] For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well."***

<sup>1</sup> Trench thinks it is in Capernaum. He is probably right.

Jairus and this woman, the two major players in this passage, are as different as night and day.

- He's a man; she's a woman.
- He's named; she's not.
- He's a prominent citizen of the city; she has no position.
- His situation is tragic; hers is embarrassing.

We know nothing about this woman's background or her personal history. All Mark gives us is her medical history. A chronic flow of blood for a dozen years.

Today, we read "physicians" and may reflexively think of clean hospitals and well-trained docs.

But we should remember that doctors in the 1700's bled George Washington with leaches to cure him of what was to become his final illness. Modern medicine is really modern, and the medical skills of first century physicians were limited, indeed.<sup>2</sup>

All of her personal wealth had been spent (wasted!) on physicians who hadn't a clue as to how to really help her. Her physical condition had only worsened with the passing years and the physicians' clumsiness.

Her last remaining hope rested on the belief that Jesus might be able to do her some good. So, in a desperate act, she caught up to Jesus by going faster than the crowd around Him, and reached out to touch His cloak, from behind.

She never intended to have a personal encounter with Jesus. She wasn't going to ask Him to heal her. Speaking to a Rabbi was for the Jairus' of the world. She just wanted to touch Jesus and disappear back into the crowd.

To her utter delight, and after twelve years of battling for her health, one touch of Jesus' garment brought her the healing she had longed for - immediately!

### **Jesus Recognizes Need, Faith (vv. 29-31)**

*[29] Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. [30] Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My garments?' [31] And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"*

Well, Jesus' power was not an impersonal, but an intensely personal thing. So just as immediately as she had perceived that she was healthy again, Jesus perceived that power to heal had gone out from Him.

Not knowing who touched Him<sup>3</sup>, Jesus asked who it was who had faith-fully touched His garment.

The disciples responded with what must have been good-natured teasing. *"Are you serious, Lord? Everybody's touching You!"*

This crowd was a pick-pocket's dream come true. There was jostling and pushing and shoving going on while the mob made its way to Jairus' home.

But, Jesus was sensitized to faith, and He could tell "touch" from "touch". He knew someone had done more than bump Him. Someone had touched Him for blessing and for healing. Someone had exercised faith.

### **Healing Words Follow Healing Power (vv. 32-34)**

*[32] And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. [33] But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. [34] And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."*

<sup>2</sup> Along the same lines, one commentator mentioned how glad he was not to be afflicted with certain ailments, the first century Jewish "cures" for which are recorded in Jewish writings of the time (in the Talmud). We can all be glad to be living in the current age for that reason, if for no other.

<sup>3</sup> Or perhaps knowing and wanting to draw her out, more likely the former though.

I'm confident that this woman would have greatly preferred anonymity. She would have gladly walked away from Jesus, gotten lost in the crowd, become a ghost. Being discovered, she became terrified. Why? What did she fear?

I think that she was afraid of Jesus' response to her touch. For twelve years she had suffered from this hemorrhage, meaning that for twelve years she has been, according to Moses' Law, in a state of uncleanness.

And for her to have touched Jesus would have made Him unclean. Surely, this Teacher/Healer was going to be angry with her for having made Him unclean.

But that's not the way it worked with Jesus. Normally, an unclean thing will make a clean thing unclean. That's the way it is in my back yard, anyway!

But it doesn't work that way with Jesus. His holiness was of the sort that touching Him made whatever unclean thing or person touched Him CLEAN.

And no, He wasn't upset. He was moved with compassion for this woman. When He looked around He saw the woman. And His look was an invitation to tell Him her story. So, she approached Him, falling down in front of Him.<sup>4</sup> She told Jesus *"the whole truth."*

That might have taken some time. To tell the misery of a twelve year affliction can't be hurried through, and Jesus was the consummate listener. He listened as she spoke about the last dozen years of her life. How else would Mark know about the doctor's visits, the wasting of her life's savings? She told Jesus.

And then when she told Him *"the whole truth"* Jesus commended her for her faith. He affirmed that it had been her faith that had drawn forth His power and had brought about her healing.

And so, with the life-giving words of Jesus echoing in our ears, the woman walks away, healed, with a new lease on life.

But hadn't Jesus been engaged in a mission of some importance before this woman had interrupted Him? Right - we're brought back to the scene on the city streets of Capernaum with a start - Jairus' daughter!

Jesus has just spent a lot of very valuable time with this woman all the while Jairus' little girl is lying deathly ill in bed.

During this whole exchange with the ailing older woman, Jairus and his entourage have been standing by, waiting for Jesus to re-start the walk to the house where his little girl is.

And just as Jesus was dismissing the woman, messengers approached from Jairus' house. The messengers' report changed everything.

### **Back to Jairus' Daughter (vv. 35-43)**

#### **A Golden Opportunity, Missed (v. 35)**

*[35] While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, 'Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?'*

Mark gives us no description of Jairus and his response. Nothing about a look of horror, of disbelief, of shock on his face. If he was angry, we're not told about it.

His thoughts are hidden from us. If he had the presence of mind to think, I wonder what he would have thought...

Maybe something like, *"If Jesus had just kept walking, we would have been there. He could have healed her."*

It's an understandable question. Why did Jesus allow Himself to be sidetracked while He was engaged in such a time-critical mission?

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<sup>4</sup> Just as Jairus had fallen down in front of Him.

He ignored a little girl's acute, life and death crisis to address an older woman's chronic situation - a situation that certainly could have been dealt with later.

The timing couldn't have been worse.

My complaints about an over-long stay in the Express Lane at Wal-Mart don't compare in any way to Jairus' heartache.

But you may have suffered tremendous loss because of a timing issue. You would understand if Jairus shot a questioning (even an accusing) look at Jesus. You've been there. You know what it's like to have something happen that could have been avoided if The God of Time had intervened.

Mark pays little attention to Jairus and his response, though and just records the messengers' words.

They came up to him, maybe grabbed him by the arm, as we do with people who are shell-shocked due to grief, and began to lead him away, back to the house, to get on with the need of the hour, which is now clearly mourning.

*"Come on, Jairus, the Rabbi's time is valuable. Leave Him alone, now."*

Their words show just how highly they thought of Jesus. He is a well-respected Rabbi and they don't want to waste His time.

This is key. They are of the opinion that Jesus was a teacher to be held in some awe. But no one was expecting Him to do anything in the face of death. Nobody could do anything now.

Of course the messengers' words had not been intended for Jesus. But He overheard<sup>5</sup> - and He promptly inserted Himself into the conversation.

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<sup>5</sup> Actually, the word "overhearing" could be translated "ignored." The thought is that Jesus heard the messengers' report, ignored its implication that nothing could be done, and decided to press on to Jairus' home.

## Emotions Running High (vv. 36-38)

*Jairus' fear (v. 36)*

***[36] But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, 'Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.'***

I would not have thought that Jairus' primary emotion was fear at this point. He was certainly experiencing grief, but Jesus didn't urge him to not feel grief. The thing that had to be put away was fear because faith doesn't grow where fear lives.

Fear is the antithesis of faith. The challenge before Jairus was whether he would believe only what circumstances made appear reasonable, or what he hold out faith in the God who makes all things possible?

And that is also the challenge before you and me today, as well. Are we afraid to ask God for the things that only He can accomplish, or will we be content to be satisfied with what we would normally expect to happen, anyway?

With that, Jesus continued the walk he had begun earlier, to Jairus' house. Jairus joined Him as did a select group of disciples, leaving the other nine in the middle of the street with the rest of the crowd.<sup>6</sup>

***[37] And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James.***

When they came to the house, they found a wake, in progress.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not the last time Jesus would include these three in an experience denied the other disciples. While A.T. Robertson suggests that the house was simply too small for the other disciples to have come in, too, it seems to me that Jesus simply intended for these three to be closer to Him, to see more, than the others. It is worth asking (but no answers are given here), what the other disciples may have been feeling at having been left out? Was there a competitiveness, or a contentment with the way Jesus treated them?

*The mourners' grief (v. 38)*

***[38] They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing.***

There is nothing really surprising here, is there? Intense mourning and free-flowing displays of emotion are to be expected over the death of a little girl. And the scene precisely depicts what we know of near eastern times of mourning.

This is what's going on in the house as Jesus and company enter.

**The Power of God on Display! (vv. 39-43)**

*Dead and DEAD (vv. 39-40)*

***[39] And entering in, He said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." [40] They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was.***

In making the comment that He does about the child sleeping, Jesus invited the scorn of those who had been mourning the girl's death.

*"He's some miracle worker! He doesn't know death when He sees it."*

But, the words Jesus used here are the same words He will later use when describing the state of His good friend, Lazarus, after Lazarus had been dead and rotting in the tomb for four days.

Of course, Jesus knew that she was dead. His point to the mourners is that she is not yet PERMANENTLY dead. Her story is not over.

Jesus took the situation in hand by sending the scoffing mourners packing.<sup>7</sup> Remaining in the room were the dead little girl, her father (Jairus) and her mother, Jesus, and Peter, James, and John.

*Dead and ALIVE! (vv. 41-43)*

***[41] Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, 'Talitha kum!'<sup>8</sup> (which translated means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). [42] Immediately the girl got up and began to walk; for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded.***

Now this is a miracle unlike any miracle we have seen in Mark's Gospel thus far. It is the first recorded raising of the dead.

Jesus has healed many times, and we have watched that, but the line between health and sickness is sometimes not sharp and well defined.

The line between death and life is sharp. Some of Jesus' miracles sped up the process of nature - as when He calmed a sea that would have become calm eventually. But, this was a miracle that contradicted the process of nature: He brought life out of death.

Not surprisingly, those in the room were astounded when they watched the girl bounce out of bed and begin to walk around, fully recovered from her brief bout with death!

And then Jesus gave strict orders to those in the room, the first of which would have been tough to carry out.

***[43] And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this; and He said that something should be given her to eat.***

<sup>7</sup> "The presence of some people will ruin the atmosphere for spiritual work." (Robertson)

<sup>8</sup> (The Aramaic words are retained, so vivid must they have been to Peter who retold this story to Mark.)

How in the world would they keep the news about this miracle quiet, since everyone in town knew about the girl's sickness and death?<sup>9</sup>

Like other examples we've seen so far in Mark where Jesus says to stay quiet about a miracle, it's tough to believe that this one was any more obeyed. It wouldn't have taken long for word to get out that the dead girl lives!

But, the second would have been a cinch. *"Give her some food. She's not a ghost. She's your daughter, restored to health again. (And I'm suspicious that Jesus' words got translated, "Let's throw a party!")"*

### **Conclusion:**

Now, did Jesus know what He was doing in the incidents we have seen this morning? YES! Would it have seemed so at every step along the way? Probably not...

When Jesus stopped to speak with an ailing woman while on a hurry-up mission to heal Jairus' daughter, would the delay have seemed wise, or even loving? Likely not.

We can almost hear Jairus (inwardly) shouting, *"Come on, Jesus, let's get this show on the road. Tell her You'll come back to help her later. Don't You realize what this delay means for my daughter?"*

Jairus had to step away from a paralyzing fear and trust Jesus to do what only He could do.

Today, you and I take a giant step on the road to discipleship when we choose to trust that He knows what He is doing with our lives even when things are playing out counter to our hopes and dreams.

Any of us might wonder from time to time why God doesn't act in response to our urgent cries for intervention, or wonder that He seems pre-occupied as we pray.

Here is what we learn from the story of Jairus' daughter and the ailing woman.

We learn that we need no longer think of timing as "good" or "bad." Our lives are in God's hands. The timing of events are some of His most powerful tools for conforming us to the image of Jesus.

So, we will put aside fear (and it's cousins anxiety, nervousness, and worry!) and rely wholly on The God of Time.

The word for today is relax. Trust. He is in control of time - and the timing of our lives.

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<sup>9</sup> Maybe here is where the Lord's genius is seen for having said that she was only sick?