

# Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

## MADE WELL BY FAITH

Mark 5:21-43

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8)

Analysis by Paul Jaster

21When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23and begged him repeatedly, "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." 24So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" 31And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32He looked all around to see who had done it. 33But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

35While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40And they laughed at him. Then 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. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Fatally Ill**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) :** *Failing Physically*

Two women are failing physically: One only twelve years old, the other hemorrhaging for twelve years. The one critical, the other chronic. One the daughter of an affluent named leader of the synagogue, the other nameless and penniless. Does the repetition of the number twelve make us think of the twelve tribes of Israel, who have been critically and chronically sick for centuries? Do the illnesses and healings on the "Jewish side" of the Sea of Galilee parallel the illnesses and healings on the "Gentile side"? Ill health clearly is a universal human condition that afflicts everyone without partiality. Both rich

and poor, Jew and Gentile, young and old, named and nameless. And many people spend "all that they have" under "many physicians." A serious illness in the family is the leading cause of bankruptcy in America today.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : Faithless**

Sicker than the two women (and sicker than Jairus, whose humility before the feet of Jesus verifies how heart-sick he is for his daughter) is the large crowd of faithless people. They laugh when Jesus says of Jairus's daughter, "She is not dead but sleeping." And they say, "Why trouble the teacher any further?" They consider talk of revival and resurrection as a cruel joke, and think of Jesus as a teacher and healer only, and not as the Resurrection and the Life. The hemorrhaging woman may be separated from God, synagogue, temple, and others by her perpetual state of uncleanness (the social/liturgical/theological consequence of her illness) and she may have a somewhat magical and superstitious view of Jesus ("if I but touch his clothes"), but at least in "fear and trembling" (v. 33), before the feet of Jesus, she knows "the truth." She is sick, desperate, bleeding, infertile, and spent. There is no future for her. And neither she nor her doctors can do anything about it. She is as good as dead.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : Put Outside**

And yet, there is something even worse than death: being put outside and missing out on the resurrection. For the critically or chronically ill, sometimes death is a relief: a release from their pain and suffering. And, as we will soon find out, at the hand (and hem) of Jesus, death is only a deep sleep, temporary and reversible. And so, clearly, dying due to a terrible illness is not the worst thing that can happen to us. Worse by far is to be "put outside" (v. 40) by Jesus, to miss out on the amazing wonder of the resurrection. That is precisely what happens to the faithless crowd. Jesus "put them all outside." But outside

of what? Change the paterfamilias of that house from Jairus to God and you have some terrible eternal implications: outside the Father's house. No wonder the woman fell on her knees before Jesus "in fear and trembling." She had been on the "outside" long enough to know what an eternity of being on the "outs" with God is like. And she is desperate to avoid it.

## **PROGNOSIS: Faithfully Healed**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Crossed***

But awesome things happens when Jesus crosses over. In Mark, the Sea of Galilee is indicative of a great divide—both between God and his people and between Jews and Gentiles. Yet, for those receptive to the ministry of Jesus, it is also indicative of a great reunion. Jesus crosses over from God's side to ours and in the process heals our sick divisions from God, our true whole self and one another. To those who have the eyes of faith, what happens around the Sea of Galilee is exemplary of what will ultimately happen on the cross. The healing of all dis-eases—physical, social, soteriological. A healing (Greek, *soteria*) synonymous with salvation (also, *soteria*).

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Faithful***

What makes Jairus and the nameless woman stand out from the crowd is not their illness, suffering and grief, but rather their faith. Because of their desperate situations, Jairus swallows his upper class pride and the older woman endures her fear and trembling to risk all at Jesus' feet. Obviously, both had heard enough about Jesus to believe in his healing power. Faith comes by the ears—by hearing the Gospel Word. And even the smallest mustard seed of faith (in this case, superstitiously touching the hem of Jesus' robe) is enough to get what Jesus offers: Inclusion in his family; resurrection to a new life; peace; healing. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." "Talitha cum!" "Little

girl, get up!”

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Whole Inside and Out*

Both women are healed inside and out. The older woman is healed of her chronic illness, which means that she is no longer perpetually unclean and now able to enter the temple and touch others. And Jairus’s once-dead daughter gets up and walks as a preview of our own resurrection. This happens because both are intimately connected to Jesus’ own family now. They are on the inside, not the outside. Notice the provocative vocatives! Jesus calls the first woman “daughter” and the second “little girl” in the most intimate of terms. And notice the parents’ WOW! “They were overcome with amazement” (v. 42). Contrasted with the derisive chuckles of the faithless is the awestruck joy of the faithful. This is what it means to be “at peace” with God. And finally notice the last imperative. “Jesus...told them to give her something to eat” (v. 43). Undoubtedly this was more than a saltine cracker and chicken soup, but a regular feeding of Word & Sacrament. For this is the way to stay truly healthy. Faith comes by hearing. And faith is what makes us well. And so, we come to where that faith is regularly fed-the Father’s house-to hear the Word (like the Markan sandwich that we feed upon today). It keeps us whole on the inside, so that we can be whole on the outside, too.