

A Sick Woman and a Dead Girl

Text: Mark 5:21-42

Sermon statement

Faith in believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus reinterpretes the Leviticus laws and introduce a new way of living by faith.

Text

^{MK 5:21} When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

Jairus was a synagogue ruler. This was a respected and honored position in the community. He did not serve as a priest, but it was his responsibility to take care of the administrative details of the synagogue. This included making arrangements for public worship and inviting visitors to teach. Despite his high position, Jairus cast his dignity aside and bowed at the feet of Jesus. His twelve-year-old daughter was dying.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

Mark states that she had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. It is not clear what her bleeding was. Some suggest a uterine discharge. Others suggest that this was not a continual bleeding but excessive bleeding that had continued off and on for twelve years. She probably suffered from physical exhaustion as well and possibly pain. An even greater source of pain would have been the interruption of daily social activity because of her disease. Anyone coming in contact with her would be made ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:25–30). She herself was unclean and would not be allowed to participate in communal feasts and sacrifices. She was just as much an outcast as the demon-possessed man had been.

5:26. Adding to the woman's physical disorder was her financial distress. For twelve years she had made the round of doctors, and none of them could help her. Many of the cures listed in the Talmud and probably tried on her—such as carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a cloth—would seem like superstitious magic to us. She did not get better but only grew worse.¹

¹ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (87). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

This woman was an outcast. Because of her condition, she would not have been allowed to approach Jesus. To talk to him would be unthinkable. So she approached him in the only way she could—secretly. And it was enough. At once, she was freed from her distress.²

MK 5:30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

Some interpreters feel that Jesus did know who touched him, but he did not want her to remain anonymous. Faith always requires confession. This would allow him to restore her to community as well.³

MK 5:31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

MK 5:32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The first thing we note in this verse is that Jesus called her **daughter**, a word used only in this passage in the New Testament. He claimed the same special relationship with her that Jairus had with his little daughter—infinately precious, unbearably sorrowful at the thought of loss.⁴

MK 5:35 While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

MK 5:36 Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He told him to **just believe**. The Greek *monon pisteue* denotes continued action. Jesus was asking Jairus for more than a single act of belief. He was telling him to have a continuous, steady, ongoing faith—a "no-matter-what" type of faith, the type all Christians are called to exhibit.⁵

² Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (87). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (87). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁴ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (88). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁵ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (88). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

MK 5:37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.
 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40 But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Jesus, who had already proved his authority over disease and demons, now proved his authority over death. Immediately, the girl's life was restored. Jesus told those gathered not to tell anyone. He was again in Jewish territory where his messiahship could be easily misconstrued and misunderstood.⁶

	<i>Verses</i>
<i>The first miracle introduced</i>	21–24
<i>The first miracle interrupted</i>	
<i>by</i>	
<i>the second miracle</i>	
faith concealed	25–28
faith rewarded	29
faith revealed	30–34
<i>The first miracle performed</i>	
a word of encouragement	35, 36
a word of revelation	37–40a
word of love and power	40b–42
word of tender concern	43

⁶ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (89). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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1. Faith is believing in a Person
2. Jesus did not negate the Leviticus laws but reinterpretes them
3. Jesus introduces a new way of living by faith

1. Faith is believing in a Person

Both stories involve women, “daughters,” beyond all apparent human help, one twelve years old and the other having suffered for twelve years, who come into defiling contact with Jesus. Yet the thrust of each story is faith. The woman’s healing faith provides the climax in 5:34 and the backdrop against which Jesus’ assurance to Jairus, “only believe” (5:36), gains an added dimension.

Parallelism in both stories

Sick woman	Jairus’ daughter
Bleeding 12 years	Dead at 12 years old
Touched Jesus	Touched by Jesus
Daughter	Daughter
your faith has healed you. (v.34)	"Don't be afraid; just believe." (v.36)
Immediately her bleeding stopped (v.29)	stood up and walked around (v.42)

- Both a sick woman and a synagogue leader can have faith
- Faith is active, you have to believe
- Faith is believing in a person

⁷ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 10: New Testament commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*. New Testament Commentary (202). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

“Jairus” transliterates **יֵאִיר**, $ya\hat{a}ir$ = “he enlightens” (Num 32:41; Judg 10:3–4; Esth 2:5) and **יֵעִיר**, $ya\hat{a}ir$ = “he awakes” (1 Chron 20:5). Such a symbolic use is subtle at best, especially when Jesus’ call for faith (5:36) is supposedly understood as faith in the “promise expressed in the name, ‘He will awaken’ ”

2. Jesus did not negate the Leviticus laws but reinterpretes them

According to the Leviticus laws which Jesus was following rules that it is unclean to touch a woman who is menstruating and a dead body (story of the good Samaritan. Both priests thought that the Samaritan was dead). Whoever touches them become unclean until the end of the day and need to undergo purifying rites.

Ritually defiling bleeding (Lev 12:1–8; 15:19–30). Lev 15:25

Lev. 12: 1-8

LEV 12:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: `A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. ³ On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. ⁴ Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. ⁵ If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

LEV 12:6 " `When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. ⁷ He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

" `These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. ⁸ If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.' "

Lev. 15:19-30

LEV 15:19 " `When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:20 " `Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. ²¹ Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²² Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his

clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.²³ Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:24 " `If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.

LEV 15:25 " `When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period.²⁶ Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period.²⁷ Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:28 " `When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean.²⁹ On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.³⁰ The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge.

Sick woman	Jairus' daughter
Bleeding 12 years	12 years old (menache)
Touched Jesus (ceremonial purity)	Touched by Jesus (ceremonial purity)
Daughter	Daughter
your faith has healed you. (v.34)	"Don't be afraid; just believe." (v.36)
Immediately her bleeding stopped (v.29)	stood up and walked around (v.42)

➤ Jesus declares woman 'clean' (initiate woman liberation)

Jesus did not scold the 'unclean woman' for touching him (thus making him ceremonial unclean) but instead praise her for her faith.

Jesus did not rebuke the woman for touching him. As with the Sabbath laws, Jesus was giving the Jews a message about his kingdom. As Stock notes, "The story subtly shatters the legal purity system and its restrictive social conditioning" (Stock, *Mark*,

p. 172). If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, then he is Lord of the purity laws as well.⁸

- Jesus touched the dead body of Jairus' daughter.
- Jesus reveals that the spirit of the Law is more important than the practice of the Law.

3. Jesus introduces a new way of living by faith

Faith involved more than simply believing Jesus could perform miracles. No one questioned that in Nazareth. They questioned how he could do what he was doing because of who they “knew” him to be. By implication, therefore, healing faith for Mark in these two stories means more than faith in a miracle worker. Both Jairus and the woman displayed faith that God was somehow at work in Jesus. Therefore, the evangelist uses these stories to underscore the role of faith and its corollary, the person of Jesus as seen in his ministry that highlights the role of faith in these stories.

- The Jews taught that obeying the laws will please God
- God wants a people who are more than just follow rules
- God wants a compassionate people who loves
- Jesus is the example and reveals what God wants

Lessons for us

Living by faith is hanging onto Jesus for “better or for worse” type of faith.

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⁸ Cooper, R. L. (2000). *Vol. 2: Mark*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (88). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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