

## **Sermon: Jesus' lesson in faith**

Mark's gospel is a short, fast-paced, and to the point. But that doesn't mean it's simple. It has layers, like the rest of the Bible. Sometimes it is so deep, that we may never reach the bottom.

Our passage today has layers, like a sandwich. Two stories in one. And you can't break it apart. You need the whole thing to make it a meal.

It teaches us that the most crucial element of our life is faith.

With faith, you must believe that God exists, and that he loves you so much that he sent Jesus to save you. Second, you must trust wholly in Christ's salvation, put your life into his hands, and believe Jesus not only can save you but will save you. So, our faith is complete trust in God for your entire life.

Right now, every one of us is on a faith journey.

So where are we on this faith journey?

This passage helps us determine our place. But it does more than that. It also shows us the place Jesus wants us to move to. And it does that by showing us three movements of faith.

First, through circumstances. Life isn't easy. Things happen. Look at Jairus. Mark tells us he was "one of the rulers of the synagogue." He had a good life until his daughter got sick, grew worse and worse until she was at the point of death.

As he looks out his window, he sees a crowd. He sees Jesus has come to town. He looks back at his dying twelve-year-old daughter and decides to run to Jesus for help. He falls at his feet and says, "My little daughter is at the point of death."

Then there is this poor, suffering woman. For twelve years, she suffered a constant flow of blood. It's made her ceremonially unclean, preventing her from worshiping in the temple. She's a social outcast.

And as she sits in the street, she sees the crowd coming her way, and the one whom she's heard about is among them. She thinks, "He can help me." In both cases, their circumstances were beyond their control. Both had reached a breaking point. Both were desperate for help beyond what this world could offer. Their circumstances crashing on top of them summoned something from within, something that, no doubt, surprised each, something that led them running toward someone whom they believed had what they needed.

Their circumstances summoned a faith from within, that even they probably were unaware of. When Jesus came walking by, they came to him, trusting him for something everyone else was powerless to do.

That's the beginning of real faith—simply looking at Jesus as the one who can help and then making the decision to come to him for that help.

But often it takes overwhelming circumstances before we're ready to come. It's letting go of pride. It's saying to yourself, finally, "I just don't have what it takes. I can't do this. I need help.

That is the first movement of faith. But it's not the last. Circumstances summon faith, but honesty forges faith, which is our second point.

After Jairus' plea, Jesus agrees to go with him. They move slowly because the crowds press in around them.

Now the suffering woman takes center stage. Jairus is racing to his house with Jesus, hoping there's enough time before she passes. And now, out of the blue, they're being held up by some woman.

Here she is, weak and out of options, but just strong enough to come, which is all the strength Jesus requires. As she makes her way through the crowd, everyone she touches becomes unclean because of her. Then she reaches out her hand, touches the edge of Jesus' garment and something happens.

Just being around Jesus isn't enough. A lot of people think nearness to Jesus, nearness to the church, nearness to other Christians is enough, like the holiness just rubs off.

But it doesn't work that way. There is a way of touching Jesus without really touching him. There's a way of touching Jesus without receiving his power. A lot of people touched Jesus that day in that crowd, but only the woman got his power after the touch.

So, what unlocks his power? Personal need of a saviour and the empty hands of faith.

That's all this woman had. And that's all she needed. So many in the crowd that day were just excited about what Jesus might do for others. This woman was desperate for what he could do for her. That's the difference. It's the difference between seeing Jesus as a spectacle and seeing Jesus as a Saviour.

Until you understand your personal need for Jesus, his power will be withheld from you. But when you come to the end of your rope, when you come to him with the empty hands of faith, desperate for salvation, his power races toward you.

Jesus is saying to us all, "If you need me, come to me."

After her touch, Jesus stops. He asks, "Who touched me?" I think he knew who it was, but she doesn't yet know how profound her touch truly was. Others need to hear about this. All those around him need to know the kind of touch that touches Jesus' heart.

Her faith was true faith but there was a healing this woman had not yet received from Jesus that only confession could bring about.

She was face to face with Jesus, with God. She knew who she was. And she knew who he was. What would he do to her?

Isn't that fear inside us all at some point? Don't we all fear what God will do to us in those moments when he's calling us to confession?

But she came. She knew what had happened to her, she knew she was the one who touched him. She was unsure of what would happen, but she was sure she was healed.

And what does she do? She probably told Jesus everything that happened to her. She told of all her struggles, all her pain and suffering, all her feelings of shame and despair, all her attempts at finding a cure. She told about seeing him, coming to him, touching him, trusting in his power to help her.

There's a lesson here for us. Jesus is not here to give us what we think we need. He's here to give us what he knows we need. But to give us that, he's going to ask a lot of us. He's going to ask more of us than we planned on sharing. He's going to ask for brutal honesty. Why?

Because brutal honesty is the only freeing kind of honesty. The only way you ever have the assurance of faith you need is if you tell him your whole truth. And when you do, he responds.

What did Jesus say in response to her? "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

When we come to Jesus by faith and reach out for his healing, he will turn to us in his grace. He wants a conversation with us, not to shame us but to assure us. He wants the whole truth because he wants to give us a whole

healing. And when we tell it all, he gives us his peace. Why? Because we've come to him in faith, in total trust. When we come to Jesus as our only hope, he accepts that as faith worthy of new life.

This woman touched him by faith. And we can too.

All it takes is the empty hands of faith reaching for Jesus who heals. Do you need him right now? Reach for him! He's passing by.

Albert Einstein said, coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous.

This was no coincidence that these two stories intersected that day. They needed each other to teach us.

When we come to God, it's not because we've finally understood all the answers and passed the test. It's because he's come to us—and has been coming to us all along—to give us faith.

The woman began the lesson with her story, and Jesus advanced it with Jairus'. The Bible says repeatedly that we must wait on the Lord. Why? Because his clock doesn't work like ours! We're impatient. He is not. We want his gifts now. But he knows we need more than that. We don't need his gifts. We need him. And sometimes it takes a long time for us to realize that. So, he makes us wait.

What happens in the waiting? Jarius only thought he was at the end of his rope as his daughter lay dying. Now that she's dead, he sees a new bottom.

Had Jesus failed him? Had he trusted in the wrong person? Of course not.

Jesus isn't shocked by the news of the girl's death. He knew it was coming. Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe. I haven't failed you. I never will."

What is God teaching us in those moments?

We think we deserve something from him—a good life, or at least an easy one. Maybe we've come to him in desperation, and he hasn't met our expectations.

We don't have a claim on him. He has a claim on us. And what does he do with that power? He gives himself to us in greater measure through the waiting. We just need to give a little time for his grace.

Faith not only comes, but faith also stays when all seems lost, because in Jesus all is never lost. No doubt Jairus reached a new low. But Jesus was there at the very bottom to catch him. He'll be there for us too.

When God surprises us—even frustrates us—with his timelines, we break through to new realities with him. Trusting him for the first miracle is good, but we need to trust him for the long haul, for the resurrection. Remember, faith trusts God with your whole life.

When Jesus arrives at Jairus' house, the mourners are there. The girl is dead. Everyone knows it. So, when Jesus says "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping". They laugh at him.

He enters the room, takes the child by the hand, and says to her, "Talitha, cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And she gets up immediately. She is healed. She eats, proving she's alive. This is no illusion.

When his little girl died, did Jairus' faith die with her? Biblical faith is more than trusting Jesus for physical healing. Biblical faith is trusting Jesus for resurrection healing. Jairus was looking for a quick fix to his crisis. Jesus was directing a lasting hope, a resurrection hope. Jesus will ask more of us than we may want to give, but he'll give more than we could ever imagine.

The faith God looks for in us is the faith he's directing toward himself. And every circumstance in your life, in God's hands, becomes a building block of faith in him. He is faithful, and he will never fail you, no matter what the circumstances may say. "Do not fear; only believe!" That's the lesson Jairus learned that day.

As Jesus hung on the cross, I imagine if Jairus and that poor woman were there to behold him, they knew something more than death was happening. They saw life on that cross passing from him to them.

When you look at the cross by faith, that's what you see. You see power going out from Jesus into you.

Biblical faith is no leap into dark uncertainty; it's a leap into the light of Jesus where we find cleansing. And he's asking us all right now to step in.  
Amen