

**Faith in the Face of Death**

- Sometimes feel like we're surrounded by death all time, every day. Not something like to think about, dwell on. But death (and fear of) surrounds all time. This week in news: pulled young girl from wreckage of earthquake in Italy; saved life, but hundreds couldn't save. Reading Sept FIC; insightful article, how to talk to children re death. Death surrounds us. We go to funerals; here, 3 this year; 7 in 2015; 7 year before that. I've talked to people buried parents, spouse, children; miscarriages; sick friends, prayed God would spare lives. And we've all been to funerals, prayed, buried loved ones! Once stood next to man in home on deathbed; spoke with him, held hand; watched pink in cheeks quickly fade to eerie, pale grey at moment death. Been at funeral home, church with dead body in casket many times. Someone once asked how handle it; said get used to it. But do we really get used to it? I think: not only we surrounded by death all time; also have lot of fear in face of death.
- Fear in face of death in Gospel. Jesus had been performing miracles, healing people, becoming famous by time Mark 5: vs. 21-24. Jairus afraid. "**Little daughter**" dying; 12, age of 6/7<sup>th</sup> grader. Parents imagine your 7<sup>th</sup> gr daughter lying in bed, on brink of death; you catatonically helpless to do anything about it.
- Jairus "synagogue leader." Syn = Jewish church, cong. "Syn leader" not priest, rabbi. Like church councilman, lay member of cong in leadership role. Church man, dedicated to Lord. When most famous rabbi in Pal comes to town, pushes through crowd, falls at Jesus' feet, begs, "Please, help little daughter!" I have, many of you have; maybe daddy's girl; maybe helped dad out around house; maybe helped dad get syn ready for Sat AM services; Jairus loves her; Lk – only; afraid for her life. Comes to Jesus and says, "**Please come and put...healed and live.**" Here, fear in face death begins to meet faith in face death. He turned to Jesus, asked for Jesus' healing hands – same hands: blessed children; broke bread; someday nailed to cross. Those are hands Jairus asks for. That's faith in face death.
- But faith has lot working against it. Satan uses heartaches like sickness, death to work against faith, so that doubts arise; we begin to wonder if God even cares. Jairus's faith here had lot working against it. First, vs. 35. Pretend you don't know how story ends; you're Jairus; what thinking? Greatest fear reality; your baby girl is gone; trip to rabbi useless; wife is home collapsing in anguish; that's about all you want to do now.
- On top of that, what didn't read in Gospel for today was interruption on road. Look in service folder at verses; something happened – Jesus interrupted. On way to Jairus's house, woman with serious bleeding condition approached, touched robe, was healed, Jesus had conversation with her. Great for woman. But Jairus thinking: "Don't have time to spare! Need to go!" Was while Jesus talking with woman, gets news of death; so not only daughter dead, but wonders what if could have been prevented. "What if Jesus faster; what if I faster?" Today, in face of death, many of us plague our minds with "what if" questions: "I done something different; I been there faster; doctors done something different; God punishing me for something I've done; what if..." Blame ourselves, others. Result: dangerous mixture anger, guilt. All works against faith. Faith has lot working against it. Jairus' faith had lot working against it.
- But vs. 36. Just believe what? Jesus doesn't say what believe in. In Lk acct, "**Just believe, and she will be healed**" (Lk 8:50). But again, healed from what? Already dead! What Jesus essentially saying to Jairus (and us): do not have fear in face death, but faith in face death; certainly faith in God's power to heal physical body; even more, faith to trust when your greatest fear becomes reality, God still work things out for good.
- Vs. 38. Crazy, Jewish custom: when died, pro mourners paid to cry out loudly, even if didn't know deceased; way to spread news, also show compassion to family; figured if no one cried, no one cared. So, loud "**commotion;**" "**people crying and wailing loudly.**" But not all professional. Many there, hearts shred to pieces. We relate: when someone we love dies, hearts shred to pieces, because we have fear in face of death.
- But vs. 39. Said before, from this pulpit. But let this be one of most comf truths for all Christians for all time: for us death is a sleep. Every night when I'm home: tuck in children S,M,A into bed, pray with, kiss goodnight; expect to see them next day. While asleep beneath God's watchful eye, I know they're okay. When we go to funeral or say prayer by coffin of Christian, all we're doing is tucking them in so can sleep. And we know beneath God's watchful eye, they're okay. Expect to see them again because for Christians death is sleep. Remember what Jesus said when Laz died, "**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up**" (Jn 11:11). Reason death for Christian is sleep: temporary. Just as wake from

sleep, so also someday from death. When night of death is ended, and heaven's morning breaks, Lord Jesus will kneel beside cemetery bedside, gently wake us from our sleep.

- That's what he's about to do for this little girl. **Vs. 40b-42a.** Faith in face death. Even though I've been to, conducted many funerals, been in room with lifeless body numerous times, death still scares me. Not nec thought of my own death; but casket reminds me I have more funerals to face in my future. Someday bury parents; perhaps wife, children, friends, church members. Scary, because death not natural; not part of God's creation; never what he intended. Takes loved ones from us; takes us somewhere we've never been before. I'm sure as this little girl lay on deathbed, scared; parents scared. But also sure when she heard Jesus say TK, when opened eyes, lifted head, no more fear, only faith.
- That's point! Point of this compelling miracle of Christ: Jesus would replace your fear in face death with faith in face of death, because same Jesus who brought Jairus's daughter back from dead, also faced death himself. In Gethsemane, Jesus was scared to death; knew what his crucifixion would be like. Took up that cross anyway, spread out arms, paid for your sins, fell asleep. Then woke up! Awake today. And even though you have more funerals to face in future, including your own, Jesus wants you to know with Christian certainty, that someday he's going to take you and loved ones by hand, say: "TK, little girl/boy, I say to you, get up." And you'll be in heaven, and you'll never have to face death ever again: not your own, parents', spouse's, children's, friends'. **"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ...Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:55-57).**
- Doesn't nec take away all our fear of death, or pain death brings. Jesus cried at grave of Lazarus; we'll shed tears, too. But when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from dead, saying to you, me: "I have power, desire, intention to do same for you." So have faith in face of death, faith in your Savior JC, and fall asleep with confidence, because someday Jesus take you by hand and say "My child, I say to you, get up."

### Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He 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." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" <sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." <sup>40</sup> 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. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

