

Faith in the Face of Death

- This year, 2018, rough year for cong, in terms deaths among members. So far in 2018, 8 funerals for members. Double in 2017; only 4. In 2016, 6. This year, 8; only halfway thru year. Many you friends with, related to people whose funerals held this year. All these funerals, constant reminder: surrounded by death. Don't like think re that; but are. 8½ yrs ago we lost 2nd gr student in our school; May, student at SL died car accident; many experienced miscarriages; lost friends to cancer, even young mothers; said goodbye to people we love dearly. Surrounded by death; and afraid of death. I think often we have fear in face of death.
- Fear in face of death in Gospel. Jairus afraid, just like discs afraid last Sunday on Sea of Gal. Remem: crossed lake, calmed storm. Today, cross back, and: vs. 21-23. He's afraid. This his "little daughter;" was dying; was 12, age of 7th grader. Parents: can you imagine your 7th gr daughter lying in bed, on brink of death; you can do nothing to help her?
- Jairus here called "synagogue leader." Syn = Jewish church, cong. "Syn leader" not priest, rabbi. Like church councilman, lay member of cong in leadership role. So he's church man, dedicated to Lord. When most famous rabbi in Pal comes to town, pushes through crowd, falls at Jesus' feet, begs, "Please, help my little girl!" I have little girls; many you. Maybe daddy's girl; maybe helped dad out around house; maybe helped dad get synagogue ready for Sat AM services. Jairus loves his daughter; Lk – only; afraid for her life. So comes to Jesus, says, vs. 23b "Please..."
- Here, fear in face death begins to meet faith in face death. He turns to Jesus, asks for Jesus' healing hands: same hands that blessed children; broke bread; someday nailed to cross. Those are hands Jairus seeks. That's faith in face death.
- But thing re faith: Satan constantly trying tear it down. Satan uses storms of life (like sickness, death) to create doubts in minds as to whether God cares re us at all. What talked re last week – storms of life. "Does God care?" Jairus in middle of storm; faith being challenged. And listen: vs. 35. She didn't make it! Pretend you don't know how story ends, and you're Jairus – what thinking? Your baby girl is dead; greatest fear just became reality; life collapsing around you.
- On top of that, what didn't read in Gospel for today was: interruption on road. Look in service folder; two sections. In middle, something happened – Jesus interrupted. On way to Jairus's house, woman with serious bleeding condition approaches; Jesus talks with her, heals her. Great for her. But Jairus thinking: "Don't have time for this! Daughter dying! Have to go – now!" And it was while Jesus talking with woman, they get news of daughter's death. So not only girl dead, but Jairus wonders: "What if this could've 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. What if: "I done something different; I been there faster; doctors done something different; God punishing me for something I've done; what if..." Blame ourselves, or others. Result: dangerous mixture anger and guilt, which Satan uses to tear down our faith in Jesus.
- But, vs. 36. Okay, 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 have faith in face death" – faith certainly in God's power to heal body; but even more: faith in the love, wisdom of God even when he does not heal body. IOW: don't let death (true for all us) (of friend, classmate, spouse, child) shake faith in Jesus as Savior or cause you doubt his love. Jesus: "Just believe."
- Vs. 38. True; may have heard: Jews had strange custom that when person dies, pro mourners show up, make big scene – crying, wailing loudly – even if didn't know deceased. I guess show of compassion. But I don't think crowd was faking it. I think these people absolutely crushed. These: grandparents, cousins, neighbors, friends of parents, of daughter. This was child! I'm sure whole community devastated. And we've been there before, whether child or not. We know crushing feeling of death and raw emotions it brings out.
- But vs. 39. They laughed, but Jesus wasn't joking. Jesus looked at her dead body, saw girl who was sound asleep. Every night before go to bed, I go and check on my kids in their beds; and I see two girls, one boy sound asleep. I've already tucked them in, prayed with them, kissed them goodnight. Same prayer every night: "Father in heaven..." So we pray, and I commend them to Jesus' care; trust that Jesus will keep them safe while they sleep, until morning breaks, new day begins. That's what death is like for Xian. No matter

how old we may be, we are always Jesus' little children. He hears our bedtime prayers. And when time comes for us die, he tucks us in, watches over us, keeps us safe while we sleep, until res morning breaks, new eternal day begins. Death for Xian is a sleep, from which we someday wake up. When Laz died, Jesus: **"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up"** (Jn 11:11). On last day, Jesus going to kneel at our graveside, gently wake us up from our sleep.

- And that's exactly what he's about do for this little girl. **Vs. 40b-42a**. Fear in face death is replaced with faith in face of death. Jesus raised her from dead (woke her up), replaced her parents' fears with faith!
- As pastor, I conduct many funerals – already many this year. You sort of get used to being around dead bodies; sort of don't. Death is unnatural. Obviously, surrounded by death, because of fall into sin; death is result of sin. But that was never God's design for Garden of Eden – that people would die. God created us to live; that's why heaven will be eternal life; and that's why death unnatural, unsettling, scary. Death takes loved ones from us, to a place we've never been before. It's scary to think someday I'll have bury parents; or maybe wife, children; or more friends from church. I'm sure that little girl scared as lay on deathbed. Parents certainly scared. But I'm also sure: when Jesus said TK, she opened eyes, lifted up head – no more fear, only faith.
- That's point! Point of this deeply moving miracle of Jesus is to replace our fear in face death with faith in face of death – faith in Jesus! The same Jesus who brought Jairus's daughter back from dead, also faced death himself. In Gethsemane, Jesus was scared to death; knew about to be crucified! But took up that cross anyway, to rescue us from death. Then fell asleep. Then woke up! So Jesus is alive right now, guarding, protecting us. And even though we have more funerals to face in future, including our own, Jesus wants us to know with Christian certainty, that someday he's going to take us 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'. Paul: **"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 Laz; 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 risen Savior JC. And when your death approaches, 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

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 leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³ 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." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

³⁵ 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?" ³⁶ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

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 leader, 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 began to walk 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.