



## TRUSTING JESUS FOR THE BIG ONES

Catalog No. 7150

Mark 5:21-43

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January 24th, 1999

And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered about Him; and He stayed by the seashore. And one of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and upon seeing Him, fell at His feet, and entreated Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, that she may get well and live." And He went off with him; and a great multitude was following Him and pressing in on Him.

And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak. For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well." And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" And His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?" But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." And He allowed no one to follow with Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. And they came to the house of the synagogue official; and He beheld a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. And entering in, He said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was. And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!"

(which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"). And immediately the girl rose and began to walk; for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this; and He said that something should be given her to eat (Mark 5:21-43, NASB).

At times, life presents us with things that are too big for us to handle. We become mired in a situation and there is no way out. Disease. Death. Depression. Debt. Sometimes it's not us, but someone we love and would gladly trade places with. In this story from the fifth chapter of the gospel of Mark we will learn that we can trust Jesus for things that are too big for us, because nothing is too big for Jesus.

In our text, two very different people are confronted with problems far too big for them. First, there is a synagogue official. Here is a man of stature in his community, a family man, a person of means, confronted with something too big for him: his twelve-year-old daughter is deathly ill. Nothing they have done for her has helped. She is on the very brink of death.

There is someone else, a nameless woman. She has been bleeding for twelve years. Her problem has rendered her a social outcast—walking pollution. She isn't even allowed to enter the synagogue. Her theology is based on superstition. She has no family, and no money; it has all been spent on the latest remedies. She has tried everything, but this thing is too big.

Mark brings these two very different people together, because they each teach us the same lesson: We can trust Jesus for the things that are too big for us because nothing, not even death, is too big for Jesus. I want you to observe four lessons which these two people teach us about trusting him in these situations.

### **We trust him by coming to him despite the obstacles**

First, these two people teach us that we demonstrate our trust in Jesus by coming to him despite the obstacles. Both Jairus and the woman do something that is so obvious we might miss it: they both come to Jesus. Trusting Jesus means we come to him. Sometimes, however, that's the hardest thing to do, because certain obstacles get in the way. Let us look at the obstacles these two very different people had to face.

As a synagogue official, Jairus was part of the relig-

ious establishment, and Jesus and the establishment were not getting along, to put it mildly. They were already plotting ways to destroy him. As the chairman of the Board of Elders in the local synagogue, Jairus would want to remain in good standing with the scribes and Pharisees. Perhaps it was even in this man's synagogue that Jesus had sparked so much controversy by healing on the Sabbath. These men might have already gone head to head. But pain has a way of bringing us to our senses. Jairus overcomes his pride, and perhaps even his fear of rejection, and comes to Jesus. He comes publicly, as Jesus is surrounded by a great crowd; and he comes humbly, falling at Jesus' feet.

The woman faced obstacles too. By Old Testament standards, she was unclean. She was supposed to keep her distance from everyone, but she overcomes her sense of shame and fear that she might contaminate others. That's why she tries to slip through the crowd and come to Jesus from the back side. She is thinking, "No one will know. I'll sneak up behind him and try to touch his cloak." Like others of her day, she was superstitious, believing that a person's power was transferred to the garments they wore. Yet she comes, with her misguided faith, despite her fear and shame, and Jesus heals her.

There are two obstacles that will keep us from coming to Jesus. Either we are too important, like Jairus, or we are too unimportant, like this woman. For some, like Jairus, it's a matter of pride. They live by the motto, "I can handle this myself." It's remarkable that such people seemingly live up to their view of themselves. They make a good living. They have model families. Their children are accepted into the right schools. They never get in trouble with the law. Sure, they have problems and challenges like everyone else, but they always seem to get through things relatively unscathed. Their illusion of adequacy and control never really gets shaken, so they do not come to Jesus.

But every once in a while something comes along that we can't handle. What do you do when your twelve-year-old daughter, the joy of your life, lies close to death? Perhaps at that point we want to come to God, but we are tempted to say, "It would be hypocritical to come to him now. I've always done things myself. Why change now?" But that didn't keep Jairus away, and it shouldn't keep us away, either. Jesus didn't turn this man away because he had ignored him up to that point in his life. He didn't say, "Oh yes, right, Jairus. Come to me now when things are bad."

But others respond like this woman. They stay away from God out of a sense of shame. They feel unclean. They only feel safe with people who have similar problems. For them, church is not a safe place, because everyone in church looks so good. They don't know how they are supposed to act in church. Like this woman, they have their own superstitions. They are afraid they might say something wrong. If that describes you this morning, then, be like this woman. Even if you have to

sneak up behind Jesus, come to him. Even if your faith is misguided, come to him. Just a touch will do. He will cleanse you. And you will find a host of people who feel the same way as you.

We trust Jesus for things that are too big for us by coming to him, despite the obstacles.

### **We trust him by exposing ourselves fully**

The second thing we learn from these two people is that we trust Jesus by exposing ourselves fully. We see this in the actions of the woman. At first, it looks like she will get away with her secret plan. She touches his cloak, and immediately feels her body respond. She knows the flow of blood has stopped. She is healed. She probably wants to shout with joy, but she can't risk it. She slinks away, trying to get lost in the crowd. And then she hears the words, "Who touched my garment?"

Why did Jesus say that? The text says, "perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth..." This may be a clue as to why Jesus got so exhausted at times. Sometimes we forget the toll that his ministry took on him. Though he was God, and God's power resided in him, he wasn't beyond feeling drained as that power flowed out of him. But we still must inquire, why did Jesus ask this question? Obviously, he wants this woman to come forward and identify herself. But why? Why call attention to what she has done? Why expose her to public embarrassment? Why not a wink and a nod and let her go? The answer is, Jesus cared too much for her to do that. He wanted to draw her out, to have her experience more than mere healing; He wanted her to experience him, to know that it wasn't his cloak that had healed her, it was him. He wanted to mature her faith. He wasn't a slot machine; he was a person. Healing wasn't mechanical; it was personal. He wanted a relationship. But to learn all of this she had to come forward.

For her, this was the moment of truth. She could have slipped away and remained anonymous. What would have happened to her in that event? Some say the issue of blood would have returned. Perhaps. The point is, she was being called to expose herself to Jesus and to the crowd. Certainly, she would be embarrassed. Maybe she would be rebuked. Yet, shaking with fear, she came and fell at Jesus' feet and told him the "whole truth." She told him "the whole story" (Phillips). Twelve years of pain gushed out of her. She told him about all the doctors she had seen, all the money she had spent, all the ridicule she had endured. She told him about her little plan to sneak up behind him, how she felt her body instantly cured—everything.

Notice again what Jesus says to her, "Daughter (when was the last time someone called her that?), your faith has made you well (that word literally means 'saved'); go in peace (shalom) and be healed of your affliction." Think about it. If she had not come forward and exposed herself, she would not have heard these

words. She is affirmed publicly for her faith. As misguided as it was, it was real faith. She is a daughter of Israel, and she is given back her ticket to society as Jesus declares her healed of her affliction before all.

It's one thing to come to Jesus, but it's quite another to expose ourselves fully to him and to others. Most of us would like to remain anonymous and sneak away with the blessing of Jesus without coming forward and telling the whole story. But, in the long run, faith cannot be kept a secret. We have to come out of the closet and let the whole story be known.

I heard a story of a young man who met Bill Cosby when Cosby came to his college to receive an honorary doctorate. He was given the job of picking Cosby up from the airport. He told Cosby that he was dyslexic, and relayed to him that an episode of the Cosby Show had helped him, because it had dealt with the issue of dyslexia. The young man was now doing well in college, but he still kept his dyslexia a secret. At the graduation ceremony, when Cosby went forward to receive his doctorate, he did something no one expected. He announced that he wanted the young man with dyslexia whom he had met to come forward. It was a moment of public exposure for this young man that was hard, but very important. He had been doing fine up to that point, but there was another step to take, the step of full exposure. He is now Dean of Students at Mississippi Valley State University, and he says that moment of public exposure was the defining moment of his life. This man is testimony to the fact that it is our secrets that keep us in bondage. It's only when we share these secrets, first to Jesus and then to trusted friends, that we will be set free by the power that resides in him.

It was true for that young man, it was true for that woman, and it is true for us. Sooner or later, Jesus will call us to come forward to expose ourselves, our faith and our healing to all. Without that, there is no real blessing. Have you been blessed? Do you secretly thank God for all he has done for you? Are you a covert follower of Christ, a spy for Jesus? Maybe it's time you came forward and said publicly, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I was sick, I was hurting, I was helpless, but he has made me well."

### **We trust him by persisting in our faith when he delays**

The third thing we learn from these two people is that we trust Jesus by persisting in our faith when he delays. Let's focus on Jairus for a moment. He comes to Jesus with a desperate situation, and Jesus listens to him and accompanies him to his home. Notice Mark mentions the press of the crowd (v. 24)—a first century traffic jam. Imagine Jairus, frustrated by the delay: "Don't these people know that my daughter is about to die?" Then, to top it off, Jesus stops and asks, "Who touched me?" What a strange thing to say! Who wasn't touching him? And he waits for this woman to come forward. Talk about frustration! Jairus is biting his fin-

gernails, pacing, cursing as this woman takes what must have seemed like hours to pour out her story. He was thinking, "Wait a minute, Jesus, I was first in line!" But Jesus, ever patient, listens to her ramble on.

What's going on here? Has Jesus forgotten about Jairus? I doubt it. He knows exactly what he is doing. This delay was purposeful. Besides showing his concern for the woman, he accomplished two things. First, Jairus would learn something about faith, from an unclean woman, of all people. He had asked Jesus to come and lay his hands on his daughter, that she might "get well" and live (v. 23). And then he hears Jesus say to the woman, "Your faith has made you well" (v. 24). Notice, the same word is used. Jairus's faith was about to be severely tested. He needed to hear this woman's story and see her faith, and he needed to hear Jesus affirm her faith as the very thing that had saved her.

And second, the delay would allow time for the situation to get worse so that the power of Jesus would be seen by all. As Jesus is blessing this woman, Jairus gets the news that his daughter has died. The woman's good news is Jairus's bad news. Her twelve years of misery are over; his twelve years of joy have come to an end. But his moment of despair is Jesus' moment of opportunity. He says, "Don't be afraid (lit. "Stop being afraid"), only believe." Jairus had to persist in faith when the situation was apparently beyond hope.

Sometimes when we bring our big problems to Jesus we pray fervently for help or deliverance or healing, but he delays. What is he doing then? Has he forgotten us? Consider the fact that he may be trying to teach us something through the delay. Open your eyes. Are there examples of faith that you can learn from while you wait on God? There may be someone near to you telling their story. Faith is instructed in the delay. Things may get worse before they get better. Your prayers may seem to backfire. But God knows what he is doing. I have a favorite Garth Brooks song in which he sings about taking his wife to a football game in his old home town and he runs into his old high school flame. He recalls how back then, he prayed and prayed that "God would make her mine." But, on the way home, he looks at his sweet wife and sings, "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers. Remember when you're talking to the man upstairs, that just because he doesn't answer, doesn't mean he don't care. Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers."

I have been praying for something for several weeks now. Last week, I received bad news. Instead of things getting better, they have gotten worse. What seemed possible once now seems impossible. I was so discouraged. I was mad at God. I wanted to give up praying, give up trusting. Nevertheless, Jesus says to me and to you what he said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid, just keep on believing."

Sometimes the situation becomes hopeless from a human perspective. What is God doing? He is doing what he does with all of his children, what Paul describes in

these words, from 2 Corinthians, “We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

Faith persists, even when God delays, even when things get worse, even when things become humanly hopeless.

### **We trust him despite what others do and say**

The last lesson we learn is that we trust God despite what other people do and say. Both of these people demonstrate belief, in contrast to others around them. The woman stands in contrast to the crowd, which presses in upon Jesus, jostling and pushing him along the street. They were looking for excitement. They were curious to see a miracle at Jairus’s home. But the woman comes close to him for a different purpose. Augustine said, “Flesh presses, but faith touches.” She comes close because she believes Jesus could meet her deepest need. Some are like the crowd, following Jesus because it’s the thing to do, but real faith arises out of desperate need.

This contrast is even more pronounced with Jairus. The messengers arrive and say, “Don’t bother the Teacher anymore, your daughter has died.” But Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid, only believe.” Jairus has to choose: will he listen to the messengers or to Jesus and follow him home? When they get to his house, the place is already surrounded with professional mourners, a custom of the time. Jesus says to them, “What’s the commotion? The child is not dead, she is asleep.” He is not saying she was alive, but that her death could be described as “sleep,” because it was temporary. He would soon raise her up. For the believer, that’s all that death is, really: it is sleep (1 Thess. 4:13-15). But the professionals laugh at him. They are the experts on death. So Jairus has to make another choice. Whom would he listen to, the professionals, or Jesus? Would he follow him into the room where his daughter lay dead? It was that step of faith that allowed him and the four others to hear those Aramaic words they would never forget, “Talitha kum!” “Little lamb, arise!” It was that step of faith that allowed Jairus to see his daughter get up and even eat as proof that she was real and not a ghost.

There will always be people who scoff at our faith. They will tell us to “get real.” Some of them will be so-called experts. They will know all the facts. Some so-called New Testament scholars are now saying that Jesus could not have said even a fraction of what the New Testament records he said. Some scientists say they can explain how life came into existence; therefore creation is a myth. A doctor tells us we can pray all we want, but when it comes to cancer, nothing will help but chemotherapy. A financial expert tells us that giving away a substantial percentage of our income is fiscal suicide. Whom will we listen to? The point isn’t to ignore reason, but sometimes faith will fly in the face of all the evidence.

### **Conclusion**

We can trust Jesus for things that are too big for us because nothing is too big for him. What are the things in your life that you are having to trust him for these days? Are you coming to him despite the obstacles? Are you willing to expose yourself fully to him and to others? Are you persisting in your faith when he delays and things look hopeless? Are you trusting him despite what other people say and do? Some of you may be saying you don’t have a big thing to trust him for. Well, you will before long. That is how God works in our lives. He gives us more than we can handle so we’ll learn to trust him.

We have no guarantee of how things will turn out this side of heaven, but we do know that in the end, not even death can thwart God’s good purpose. We may not get healed. Twelve-year-old girls still die. But, in the end, those who trust in him, even in weak and misguided ways, will be raised up.

In one of the low points of Martin Luther’s life, his daughter, Magdalena, barely fourteen years of age, was stricken with the plague. Brokenhearted, Luther knelt at her bedside and begged God to release her from her pain. When she had died and the carpenters were nailing down the lid on her coffin Luther cried out, “Hammer away! On doomsday she will rise again.”

Even if the Lord delays until what Luther called “doomsday,” nothing, not even death, is too big for God.

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