



# WESTLAKE HILLS

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## ***“Keep On Believing”*** ***Sermon Series: “The Way of Jesus”***

*Mark 5:21-43*

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### ***Mark 5:21-43 (New International Version)***

### ***A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman***

<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 rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup>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." <sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup>And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup>because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." <sup>29</sup>Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

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

<sup>31</sup>"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

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

<sup>35</sup>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?"

<sup>36</sup>Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "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 ruler, 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 walked 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.

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### **Introduction.**

Today is the one year anniversary of my first Sunday at WHPC. I want to thank you all for the amazing year we've had together and for the many ways you have made Lorie and me feel so welcome and a part of this church family. Our congregation has been through a lot in the



last 12 months, things are looking up, and God has been faithful as we rebuild this church's ministry together.

It was also just about a year ago we witnessed the inauguration of Barak Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Regardless of your political persuasion, you have to admit it was an historic occasion as the first African-American was sworn in as the leader of our country. All the pomp and circumstance of that day took me back to memories I have from the time Lorie and I lived in Washington, D.C. back in 1980, and we had the opportunity to attend the inauguration of Ronald Reagan. It was quite an experience we'll never forget.

These anniversaries have caused me to reflect on another previous President. Today we think of him as a man of great accomplishment, but what most of us may not know is that this other President experienced a number of setbacks prior to his becoming President. Let me offer you a few events in his life and see if you can guess who it is.

- At the age of 22 he failed in his first business venture.
- The next year was defeated when he ran for the state legislature.
- The following year he failed again in a business venture.
- When he was 26 his girlfriend died.
- The next year he had what today we would call a nervous breakdown.
- At the age of 34 he lost his first attempt at running for Congress.
- Three years later he was finally elected to Congress.
- But he was defeated when he sought re-election.
- When he was 46-years-old he ran for the Senate, and again he was defeated.
- The next year he was on the ticket as the V.P. candidate for his party, and he lost.
- Two years later he ran once again for the Senate and lost.
- Finally, two years later at the age of 51, surprisingly he was elected to be the President of the United States.

Who is he? Abraham Lincoln. What was it that kept Lincoln going through all those setbacks? Why didn't he just give up? We'll look at the answer to that question a little later in the sermon. For now, let me say I think all of us from time to time experience disappointments and setbacks, either for shorter or longer periods of time which can be so discouraging to us, which bring crises into our lives, and which stretch us to the limit of what we can endure. Maybe you're in a season like that right now.

This morning we read of two people in the midst of their own crises in the passage before us in Mark 5. They are a man named Jairus and a woman who suffered from a physical ailment. What did they have in common, and what can we learn from their lives which can help us in dealing with our own crises and setbacks.

### **I. A Prominent Leader.**

You will recall from last week's sermon by Mark Roberts that Jesus was asked by the townspeople in the region of Garasenes to leave their area because they didn't like the way He was disrupting their lives. Jesus and His disciples returned to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, probably returning to the town of Capernaum. There Jesus encountered a large crowd,



and in particular he met a man in great distress. His name was Jairus. Here's what we know about this man.

First, the text tells us **he was the ruler of the synagogue**. The ruler of the synagogue was a layperson who was the administrative head of the synagogue. He was also the president of the board of elders, and he was responsible for the conduct of the worship services, although he did not usually lead them himself. Finally, the synagogue ruler was one of the most important and respected people in the Jewish community. The job would be a combination of Bud Reynolds, our church business administrator, Kyle Key, our facilities manager, and Nick Dunn, the chair of our worship division, all rolled into one, while at the same time also being the mayor of Westlake! That was the job the ruler of the synagogue had. Jairus was a person of great importance and social standing.

Second, the passage tells us **he had a crisis**. Something happened to his 12-year-old daughter, and she became very ill and was on the verge of death. The possibility of losing his little girl shook his otherwise secure world. Psychologists tell us that losing a child is the number 1 stress we can face in our lives. Some of you here today have faced this tragedy yourselves.

Crises come to us in many forms. It may be our health, or a marriage that is falling apart. It may be a special relationship that is now broken. It may be a problem with a parent or a child. It might be life itself as we face the possibility of death. Perhaps it is our abilities to do our job – we're not as sharp as we once were, our memory or our energy isn't what it used to be, and we feel it slipping away. A crisis comes, and it scares us to death.

Our middle son Jason was a chronic asthmatic growing up. As soon as we heard that tale-tell cough in the middle of the night, we knew we were in for a long ordeal. On two occasions Jason had acute asthma attacks which landed him in the hospital, and he almost died. Lorie and I were scared to death of losing him.

In a crisis, people can be drawn to faith in a new way. It gets our attention even as it sometimes raises our anger. A friend of mine went to see a man in the hospital who had developed cancer. The man was angry, he was embittered, and he was mad at God. He asked my friend, "Why did God allow me to get this cancer?!"

My friend replied, "I don't know why God has allowed it, but now that He's got your attention, what are you going to do with it?" Jairus realized he had a crisis, and he went straight to Jesus. That's the best thing you can do in a crisis.

The third thing we learn about Jairus is **he made a plea**. Even though he was a prominent person, well respected in the community, something happened to this ruler of the synagogue when his daughter got sick. He forgot his dignity, and he forgot his pride, and he came to Jesus and threw himself at the feet of the Lord and humbly asked for His help.

There are times when we must give up our dignity and push past our pride in order to seek what we need most from Jesus. As long as we remain in our pride and think we can handle it ourselves, if we believe we're too good to humble ourselves before the Lord, we will be stuck in our crisis and never get the help we need. Jairus made his request, and the passage says that he pleaded earnestly, *"My daughter is dying. Please come and put Your hands on her so that she will be healed and live"* (v. 23).

Then the passage tells us **Jairus experienced a miracle**. Jesus immediately left the crowd and went with the man. While they were on their way, people from Jairus' home came and



told him, “Your daughter is dead. Don’t bother the teacher anymore.” But our Lord responded, “*Don’t be afraid; keep on believing.*” The tense of the Greek verb Jesus used here indicates that the command as to be an on-going continuous response. Keep on believing.

It’s easy to give up in the face of doubt. It’s easy to retreat when the going gets tough. The path of least resistance is to throw up our hands in resignation. But the call of God is for us to keep on believing, to keep on hoping, to keep on trusting, even in the face of death itself. Jesus said, “Jairus, hold on to that that same faith that brought you here in the first place. Don’t be afraid. Keep on believing!”

Then the text tells us they continued to Jairus’ home, and the Lord spoke to the girl and said, “*Talitha koum, which means ‘little girl, get up.*” The result was that immediately the girl was healed, she got up, walked around, and everyone was amazed at what happened that day.

### **I. A Shunned Outcast.**

The healing of the woman with the hemorrhage is sandwiched in between Jairus’ plea and the healing of the little girl. Here we see that these two stories are brought together, and they come on the heels of the healing of the demoniac earlier in the chapter. All three stories have to do with the issue of ritual uncleanness. According to Jewish law, contact with graves, contact with blood, and contact with death would make a person ceremonially unclean and unacceptable to God in worship. The point of the healings is to show that Jesus was willing to get dirty in the mess of life to bring the healing grace of God to bear on the brokenness of our lives. It also demonstrated what was most important to God – our faith.

The precise nature of the woman’s ailment is not stated. It was probably some sort of uterine disease which caused the bleeding that had persisted for 12 years. That’s a long time to battle a chronic illness. She had suffered much and had been treated by many doctors. She spent every penny she had, but instead of getting better, her condition only worsened.

The result was she was not only broke; she also was isolated because she was considered “unclean” according to the Jewish law which meant she was unable to be with other people in public. So this woman had to stay by herself for fear of the embarrassment and shame. It is likely that she lived in isolation, all alone, as a shunned outcast of society.

She couldn’t attend the synagogue, she couldn’t draw water at the common well with the other women. She couldn’t join in the festivals of her faith with everyone else. Add the words “poverty,” “shame,” “guilt,” “unclean,” “lonely,” and you have a picture of a woman who felt less than nothing. She was probably disgusted with herself and the system that kept her in bondage. And all this for 12 long years.

The reports she heard about Jesus led her to believe that maybe He could help her, so she sought Him out. But her faith seemed to be mixed with superstition. Apparently, she shared the belief which was common in her day that the power of a person was transmitted through their clothing. So she went into the crowd and approached Jesus secretly from the rear. She thought, “If I just touch His clothes, I might be healed.”

When she touched the hem of Jesus’ robe, her bleeding immediately stopped, and she felt a soundness in her body she had not known for years. Our Lord stopped and asked, “Who touched Me?” The disciples were incredulous at His suggestion. “Look around You, Master. There are so many people here. Everyone’s touching You!” But Jesus had the spiritual



sensitivity to know that someone had touched Him for healing, and He felt the power go out of Him.

With fear and trembling, the woman acknowledged all that had happened. Then our Lord continued His healing, now not of the woman's body, but of her soul. He said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering." Christ made it clear it was the grasp of her faith and not of her hand that secured the healing she sought. The word that is translated "healed" is the same Greek word for "saved." Both physical healing and spiritual salvation were present in the mind of Christ that day. She came for healing of her body, and she left with the salvation of her soul.

### **III. A Compassionate Savior.**

Two very different people from different walks of life and very different socio-economic standings in the community. But notice the similarities in the way Jesus cared for both of them.

- He met them at their own points of need.
- He left the crowd to minister to the individual.
- His power is not only over disease and death but also fear and embarrassment.
- He speaks words of assurance and comfort.
- He left unbelief outside and took belief inside to bring about healing.
- He was willing to touch what others considered unclean to bring the power of God to bear in their lives.

The Lord is never so near as when we need Him the most. He is every-ready to reach down into our broken lives and touch us where we hurt and heal us where we are broken. But we must acknowledge our need of God, and we must humble ourselves before Him if we ever hope to experience His healing touch and grace.

### **Conclusion/Application.**

Have you, like this woman, tried everything else to solve your problem? All of us tend to be like that. We try everything else before we come to God. It's when all else fails, we finally turn to the Lord. Let Christ meet you at your point of need this morning. Quit trying to do it yourself. Take your problem to Jesus first.

What kind of crisis are you facing today, and where is God calling you to persist in your faith? Jesus told Jairus to keep on believing. A lifetime of belief requires persistent faith.

I began this message talking about Abraham Lincoln. Why did he persist through all those defeats? Why didn't he just give up? Early in his life, Lincoln and his business partner, a man named Berry, owned a general store which was failing. They knew they had to close the business down and liquidate the assets. Lincoln's hope was that they could possibly sell everything in the store for a nominal fee, pay off their bills, and they might have just enough left for him to buy Blackstone's *Commentary on the Law*. It was a book Lincoln wanted badly because he was sensing a call to serve society through the practice of law. However, when they added up the inventory, it wasn't going to be enough even to cover the bills.

Lincoln was sitting on the porch of the store in despair, and he wondered out loud, "What is God going to do with my life?" Just then a strange wagon pulled up to the store. It was a family



moving west, and they had run into trouble and needed some money. The man offered to sell Lincoln an old wooden barrel that was on the back of the wagon for 50 cents. Fifty cents was all Lincoln had in his pocket. But he was a compassionate man, and he saw a hungry wife sitting in the front seat of the wagon. So he reached into his pocket and pulled out the 50 cents, and he bought the old wooden barrel. People teased him mercilessly the rest of the day as the barrel sat on the porch. He didn't need one more thing to sell in a country store that was going under.

Later that night, as they were closing up for what was to be their last day of business, Lincoln decided to see what was in that old wooden barrel. He rummaged around, and there he found some papers. Then in the bottom he felt something hard. He reached down and pulled out a book, and there to his amazement was a copy of Blackstone's *Commentary on the Law*. Lincoln later wrote, "I stood there holding the book, looking up to the heavens, and there came this deep impression that God was calling me to something specific, and He was showing me that now I'd better get ready to do it."

Abraham Lincoln kept on believing through an awful string of sorrows because it was when he touched bottom, the Lord met his need. The same was true for Jairus, it was also true for this woman, and it can be true for you as well, my friend. Where do you need the touch of Jesus today? In the midst of your crisis, keep on believing! Amen.

