

Mark 5:21-43. Our Fears, Our Faith and Jesus

July 2018

Mark 5:21-43

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23 and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” 24 So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” 31 And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Intro:

We have heard two stories – a story of faith wrapped in a story of fear like a yoke inside an egg white, ... an *Inclusio* in literary terms.

Story within a story

Meet Jairus and ...a woman

Text:

Let’s meet the 2 people featured:

Jairus:

- A known and named member of society
 - a religious community leader... someone. Think Priest?
- Had a critically ill 12 year old daughter, perhaps at fever crisis point?
- Expected that if Jesus came to her while she still lived he could save her life.
 - He approaches Jesus as a healer and his people refer to Jesus as ‘The Teacher’.
- Healers can only heal the living so time was pressing.
- He was fearful.
- In his despair he as a known man of God goes to the itinerant rabbi of no official standing!

Unnamed Woman:

- Anonymous – just a woman from somewhere.
- A menstrual disorder with consequences:
 - Unable to marry.
 - Considered ritually unclean - so unable to worship with her people.

- Socially and economically vulnerable – had already spent all her money on doctors! ¹
 - She was probably not supposed to be in that crowd and needed to avoid being identified - just like a leper.
- Believed she could receive healing from this man of power simply by touching him or even the hem of his robe.
- Had faith that despite all the limitations upon and round her, there was healing for her in Jesus.

So,

- A. Jairus and the woman both came to Jesus with heart wrenching needs.
- B. Jairus came in fear - open public fear of loosing his daughter– and was progressed to faith.
 - a. When he heard the news of his daughter’s death Jesus said to him:

“Do not fear, only believe.”
- C. The unnamed woman came in faith - private and secret - but sank to fear when Jesus demanded she show herself. Jesus message to her when she ‘came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth’ was:

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”
- D. Both of them were challenged, stretched and received more than what they had ever expected.

So who are you in this story?

Clue: *Lex orandi lex credenda*

We may see ourselves in these stories of fear and faith?

Q: Are we like the woman coming in private and cautious faith,
or
are we like more like Jairus who comes in open desperate fear?

Or:

Q: If you benefit from having a hero/heroine or a model who would you look to here? Jairus or the woman?

Application:

Let’s consider a few things to help us answer those questions. I’ll begin with a Latin phrase:

Lex orandi lex credenda which means: “The law of prayer is the law of faith” or what anyone really believes is heard in their prayers. ²

Jairus came with fear in his heart reaching out in despair to someone who might be able to save his daughter.

I have to say that this is a common experience for me. People often come to me in fear wanting to reach out to God either with me as a helper before God or as the one with the power of being God’s anointed minister.

¹ Mark mentions this. ‘Doctor Luke’ does not!

² This extends to what we sing so hymn and song words are important! Singing things we don’t believe to a really strong tune doesn’t make that a valid prayer.

I have met 'Jairus' many times.

Sometimes in life and death matters but often in matters I find hard to place.

Let me put it this way:

- Would you have gone to Jesus for a blessing if you had bought a new car?
 - If so why?
- Would you have gone to Jesus if you were starting a new business?
 - If so why?
- Would you have gone to Jesus if you were going on holiday or had a family member visiting?
 - If so why?
- Would you have gone to Jesus for a blessing if you were pregnant?
 - If so why?

I wonder if risky activities with associated fears may lead us to seek God's blessing or intervention?

This is the way Jairus comes to Jesus.

I suggest that this not the way of genuine faith.

Jesus does not rebuke Jairus or despise him but he loves him too much to leave him there.

As Isaiah (42.3) foresaw and St Matthew (12.20) noted in Jesus:

a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
Isaiah 42.3 about Jesus

a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;

Jesus is patient and gentle.

BUT, While Jesus receives us in our fear,
he does not leave us there.

BUT, and it's a big **BUT**, in his grace Jesus receives Jairus in fear and starts off with him in that state but does not let him stay there.

Whatever circumstance you face from medical emergency through to a major purchase, acquisition or life crisis let us hear Jesus' words to Jairus:

“Do not fear, only believe.”

In saying that, Jesus includes don't be fearful in a religious way letting your desperation take you to Jesus or a pastor, priest, shaman or a guru.

Now at the risk of being culturally offensive let me give a very concrete example of this in relation to something Jesus himself faced: blessing babies.

When a baby is born, the cultural context will prescribe what mother or father need to do about baby. Here in Napoleonic Europe, father - or someone designated - needs to register the birth at the local government. That is the local custom.

What strikes me is that some customs have baby being taken to a priest or shaman out of concern for the spiritual safety of the baby. Many Europeans used to consider baptism of infants in this way too as a protection from demons, sickness and hell, a bit like modern inoculations.

My point is this: This is how Jairus was operating in his crisis out of fear. He engaged Jesus on those terms.

Jesus had compassion and responded but was not going to totally buy into his economy of fear. When he could, he drew Jairus from fear to faith even in the face of surrounding ridicule and unbelief.³

³ Yet to make a point, Jesus did once say when his disciples rebuked people bringing children for his prayer, [Matthew 19.13-15] “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus loves children!

If you do identify with Jairus and how he approaches Jesus in fear I am wanting to draw you away from that by considering the woman as a better model of faith.

The unnamed woman had cause to be afraid.

She was breaking the social limitations laid on her and setting out to touch a holy man. The crowd could be angry at her presence and become a hostile mob. Jesus could be indignant and be angry at her, yet she persisted. That is faith in action. She was going to touch and believe.

Her faith was that God's wholeness and healing for her were to be received in Jesus.

She did not need to solicit Jesus' attention but only touch his robe and believe.

She lived in an economy where God responds to faith. She believes God hears her heart-cry and Jesus was God's provision for her healing.

So when she acted in faith, God moved. Jesus knew something had happened, she knew it but no one else did.

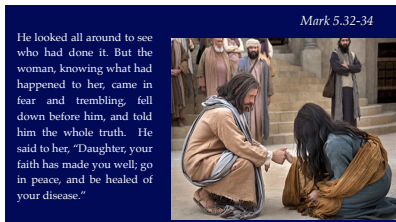
What Jesus seems to do is draw out her faith and affirm it.

He could have just rolled on with the knowledge that some work of power had just taken place? But no, he wants to know who the person of faith is so he asks a curious question:

“Who touched my clothes?”

Q: Is he suddenly worried about his clothes?

A: No, he asks because he is wildly curious about anyone's faith in him. Lots of people may have incidentally brushed past his clothes but one person at least had intentionally ‘touched him’ with expectant faith.



The story is worth quoting here:

32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Having come in cautious private faith she was now overtaken by fear of the social context and Jesus affirmed her.

When he then said “Go in Peace” it was the deep shalom of a healed woman restored in the community of Israel. The healing was more than physical.

Faith can wobble but Jesus reaches out to steady it.

So who are you in this story of faith and fear?

Clue: *Lex oranda lex credenda*

Conclusion:

- **Q1** Have you come to clarity about who you might be today in that story?
 - Do you come to Jesus in fear or faith?
 - like Jairus or the woman?

- What do you expect of Jesus or his ministers?
 - Do you need to activate them within the time frame or can you simply reach out and believe?

- **Q2** Do you have a desire to move forward in faith and leave fear behind?

Take this message on holiday with you and digest it.

Let us be resolved to come to God in faith and not fear.