

The Healer: The Heartbroken

Mark 5:21-24; 35-43

You all shared some of the most incredible stories of healing last week. You shared them in the lobby with us, over email, in video—so thanks be to God, we are going to have an outpouring of stories of healing to keep on telling over the next few weeks. Aren't you grateful? God is doing a lot of healing here!

It's so delightful when you're part of the healing story. When you're the one sent out in peace, oh it's so good. But it's so difficult when you're the one still waiting. This week we're back in another hard moment with a man named Jairus. He'd been so excited that Jesus was going to walk with him to go to lay his hands on his little daughter so that she might be made well and live. But then this woman interrupted. And Jesus had taken—who knows how long—to hear her whole truth. And this poor desperate dad, is just standing there, waiting. Little did he know, he would need that moment of seeing this woman's faith, need this moment of seeing God's power, in order to endure what was coming next for him. Let's press on with Jairus' story...

Mark 5:35

While he was still speaking [remember, Jesus was saying, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease"—while Jesus was speaking that...] there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But 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. Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha, cumi" which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me.

How's that for a word from Jesus? Don't fear, only believe. How would you feel if in the most acute moment of your heartbreaking I just said, "Don't fear, only believe, and sat down"? It's that simple, just do it. These are the words from Jesus at the most critical moment in the story of Jairus. And Jesus never spoke a "pull yourself up" kind of message, but messages of empathy, messages that expose us and make us whole all at the same time. So we're going to talk about this command from Jesus in the midst of heartbreak and how Jesus might speak love to us who have our hearts broken today, too.

So let's talk about what we fear and what we believe. What are we afraid of, and what do we believe? Who do we believe? I believe that the track record of Jesus gives us permission to let our fear give way to faith, to put our faith in, to believe Jesus.

We just moved to Port Orchard, and we woke up in the middle of the night to this sound. Do you know what that is? Coyotes. It wakes both of us up (so you know it was really loud. Coyotes sound like babies crying initially, so we had thought it might be Reed. When it turns out it's not, Larry goes back to sleep but I'm up another hour. Because this magic fear button has been pressed in my brain and now I'm afraid about everything. Oh, it's awful. Fear just takes over. It feeds itself.

I'm more in touch with fear than I'd like to admit. It's not just coyotes. I'm afraid of any movie with anything too tense in it. Can we go deeper? I'm afraid of disappointing people. And the fear gets deeper still. I live in a deep fear of losing Larry whose dad died young. I spiral quickly when he's even 15 minutes late.

Can anyone relate? So it's not hard to get into Jairus' shoes and imagine his fear. By the way—do you notice how little the name of Jairus is used? He's mostly referred to as the "ruler of the synagogue," I think just to emphasize that as the religious official, he should know how to believe God. But fear attacks us all! Jairus here is clearly afraid of losing his little daughter and all that comes with it. I don't need to give any human being more than one second to see that. We're with him in this struggle against fear, yes?

So to me, Jesus' command, "Do not fear" seems a bit unfair. Jairus has a lot, understandably to fear in this moment. As do we all in the deep moments of heartbreak. I don't know about you, but I just don't have enough mental energy to make fear go away. An instruction to "stop it" doesn't work for me.

What do we tend to do when we're afraid? Think about that for a second. What do you do when you're afraid? Our instinct from the time we're kids is to reach out for someone. Hide behind dad's legs. Reach out a hand when you're watching a scary movie. I still call my mom. We reach out for a person in fear, instinctively.

When Jesus says, "Do not fear. Just believe," he's not telling you "Stop it." He's telling you who you can reach out for. Do not fear is a very common command in scripture. Hundreds of times in Scripture God follows that up with, I am with you. One of my favorite passages, Isaiah 43:1, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. Even when you walk through the fire you won't be burned, when you pass through the waters I will be with you... Fear not, for I am with you." Even Jesus says "Do not be afraid, It is I" to his disciples. This is such a common command from God that surely this synagogue ruler who has the whole Old Testament memorized hears these words from Jesus and doesn't hear, "Do not fear... shove those fears aside." No, he hears, "Do not fear, The Lord your God is with you."

When Jesus says to you, "Do not fear," he's not commanding you to do something you're incapable of. He's assuring you that he is with you. 1 John 4:18 says perfect love drives out all fear. Jesus who loves you is with you in your moment of heartbreak. So you don't have to fear. You're not alone. If Jesus is leaving Jairus to his own devices, it would be cruel to say, "Do not fear, only believe." But he's not, so what is he doing? He's giving Jairus the best fear-destroying superhero—Jesus himself.

Do not fear, only believe. His only believe is not a what, it's a who. Jesus says only believe me. Jesus is saying, don't let these people and their hopelessness mess with you! Don't let them tell you that Jesus can't do anything. Don't bother the teacher anymore, puh-shaw! Hopelessness is never true when you're walking with Jesus. The spirit of Jesus speaks to the spirit of fear in Jairus and says, don't be afraid. Don't try to combat fear on your own. We can't! We need a person to turn to when we're afraid, and Jesus is that person! There's never going to be a "don't bother God anymore" moment. Don't be afraid, I'm here!

He tells Jairus, only believe. Believe who? Jesus. Let's talk about this word, Believe, for a moment. It's a word that means not only belief but also faith and trust. It gets translated all those ways. So last week when Jesus told the woman, "your faith has made you well," it is the same word. Her faith- her belief that Jesus could heal, meeting and touching Jesus- made her well. It was about her belief, her faith, her trust in Jesus. So, too, Jesus says to this man, "only believe." Believe, synagogue ruler, like you just saw that shunned woman believe and trust me. Believe that I am the only way to full body and soul salvation, and you will be saved, you will be well.

I believe with these words harkening back to that woman, Jesus could be saying, “I allowed that interruption just for you. So that you could see I have the power to save.” He says to Jairus, Just believe I can save. Believe it’s not just physical healing I’m capable of. I’m capable of healing and even if I don’t, I have eternal salvation, peace, and restoration covered. Only believe who? Believe Jesus. Believe what about him? Believe he has the superhero power to crush the fear and hopelessness and that power comes to life when God walks with you as you go to face that fear head on. His daughter is dead, and still he says, “Do not fear, only believe.”

Warning, I’m about to go super nerdy on you and quote a Bible dictionary. I searched about that phrase, “only believe.” This is what I found about why Jesus can say, “Do not fear, only believe” in this moment without being the least bit callous or trite or asking him or to just “bootstrap it.” Hear this:

“The comfort of Jesus is the deed which He alone can perform and which alone comforts; for all comfort which leaves the power of death unbroken is incomplete and unsatisfying. Hence true comfort can be given only by Him who is Himself the resurrection and the life.” (TDNT)

All comfort I could give which leaves the power of death unbroken, which leaves your friend hooked up to IV’s or worse, in the grave, without being able to undo that for you, what I can offer is incomplete and unsatisfying. So the only true comfort I can give you is that God is the

comforter who can alone perform what he has said he will do. He’s going to undo death in this moment, raising Jairus’ girl from the dead, and he’s going to work resurrection forever!

There’s no do-it-yourself solution to the fear and the loss. You need the spirit of Jesus to speak to your broken spirit, your broken heart. You need the presence of Jesus to walk with you down the road back to your house when you hear news like, “Your daughter is dead.” You need the God who has the power to undo death. We all need a powerful, comforting God who can say to our spirits, “Do not fear. I am with you. Just believe me, believe what I have said and done.”

Jesus knows death is our greatest fear, and he wants to show us who we can believe in and what we can believe about him when we encounter it. You can believe in Jesus, and you can believe he is with you, he comforts you, and he has the power over death forever. At least three times, Jesus demonstrated that about himself. Jesus showed us that he thinks your grief is the worst thing that could be happening, and he’s not okay with it. Three times Jesus came across death while he walked on this earth and went

ahead and kicked death in the gut. How many more times do you think he saw death? Probably more than those three times. 100% of the time, death is going to be the end of the this present life's story. But three times, Jesus said, temporarily, "Not today."

So he sees a widow who's lost her only son being carried out of town on his funeral pyre, he takes that boy's hand, and he raises him back to life. He's heard his friend Lazarus is at death's door. He waits three more days and goes on the fourth day and is chewed out in grief by Lazarus' sister, Martha, who says to Jesus, "If you had been here, he would not have died." And Jesus says to her, "Your brother will rise again." She says, pitifully, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus does what all of us are trained not to do. He gives seeming platitudes—all this I've been saying about life after death, life on the continuum, going into eternity, death isn't the end, there's better coming, I know it's blah blah blah to the one who is grieving when it comes out of my mouth. But when it comes out of Jesus' mouth, it's different because his word lines up with the superpower he has to do something about it, to break the power of death!

What does Jesus say to Martha next? "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Jesus is the only one who gets to speak words like this because he can back them up with action! Jesus is the only comforter who gets to say ridiculous things like, "Do not fear, only believe," because it's not trite! It's not nothing! It's not a "Stop it, do-it-yourself" message. Jesus is the one who can overcome your unbelief to carry you through the fear to the other side! He'll be with you while you get there. And so that you might know he has that power, he raises up this little daughter. He raises the widow's son. He raises up Lazarus. He himself is raised from the dead. So that you might believe and confess what Martha confesses next, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Some people love this life and have a rockin' bucket list and some of us, frankly, don't love this life. To both, I say—this life is beautiful and hard and it matters. It's just a few years on an eternal timeline. The end of your life is not within decades. It's going on forever. And how you live right now matters. Your life has incredible purpose. Even unfairly short lives with suffering matter to God. Remember, our eternal God thinks so much of the importance of the passing of the days and weeks and years and of even the human experience of pain and death that he came to experience it himself. And at the end of his life, after he died, what happened? We believe he rose again from the dead! To show us what was coming for us! What did he do in that resurrected body? He went fishing. Ate. Hung out with his friends. Walked miles and miles and told stories. Do you want in on that?

Let your fear give way to faith. I know I'm asking a lot because while there are beautiful stories of healing that we will keep on sharing, not every one of us will be like Jairus who got his daughter back. So what do we do if we're the one who has to wait? Last week I encouraged you to read Hebrews 11 to see how it was that people lived by faith—lived sure of what they hoped for even though they never saw it. How did they do it? How can we do it? Hebrews 11:13 says this, "Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home."

This is such a difficult thing to preach. I think our God, though, invites us to ask for healing AND to look into the distance and wave our greeting to our now living children and parents and restored bodies and kids free from addiction. That's the hope that's out there for us.

What I want more than anything is for you to believe Jesus, believe he's really God and really has the power of resurrection. Believe this once and for all story. I know I'm asking you to put all your faith, all your trust, all your believe in a lot of things you can't see. I'm not asking you to do away by your own strength with all the fears and doubts that plague us. I'm asking only that you believe that Jesus might be more steady than those fears, more present than not. My friend Barb Pine said it this way, "Faith, by its very definition, means trusting without having all the evidence to justify trust." There's a lot you're heartbroken over that is very real and that I can't make go away. But I can point you to the very trustworthy track record of God who has promised his people a time of restoration that we can't yet see.

I wish I could promise you that I could be Jesus and send these crowds away and go into the Prayer Chapel with you and pray for all the littles in your life, take them by the hand, and see them walking around and asking for something to eat. I'm sorry, I can't guarantee that will happen for everyone. YET that's the picture Jesus wants you to have of eternity. That's his power at work forever. That resurrection is sure. And so I am willing, we are willing, to keep praying to see that power here and now as God continues to give us miracles, miracles that are glimpses of the forever and complete resurrection power he is bringing into the world. God is giving us the stories, the videos we are sharing, to witness to us of his power until the day when we see every person ever buried, ourselves included, rise up to eternal life.

Don't fear. Only believe. Give your fear over to Jesus and let him gift you with his presence and with faith to walk through your heartbreak. We're going to take some time to pray that together. After the service, we will open the prayer chapel for anyone who wants to come by themselves or with their friends and family to come and to be prayed

for. We want to see God's power now. And so we'll ask. And even if he does not heal, we believe he is with us and will walk with us down the road as we go to face our greatest fears. Let's pray.