



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

June 17, 2018

"A Desperate Hope" - Hope Restored Sermon Series

The Rev. Steve Peich

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.

Today we continue our sermon series "Hope Restored" as we wind through the gospel of Mark. On Father's Day it almost seems providential that we study a passage on a father named Jairus, a father whose emotions fluctuated wildly throughout this story between his greatest fears and the possibility of rescue.

Ever know what it is like to fluctuate wildly between utter fear and the possibility of rescue in a very short time span? When I was ten years old I went with a friend to swim at a big lake. We saw a wood platform anchored far off the shoreline that we wanted to swim to so we could do flips and dives in deeper water.

My friend made it but I got fatigued along the way I realized I couldn't make it on my own. So I shouted to my friend to call the lifeguard and I started to dog paddle to conserve energy. I figured the lifeguard was going to come quickly. Right? Wrong!

When my friend shouted and waved at the lifeguard, who was really far away and was chatting with a young lady at the hotdog stand, apparently, he was too far away to hear and understand what we were shouting. So the guy just waved back! It was at that point when I realized he was not jumping into the water that dread started to set in. I kept dog paddling for what seemed like a lifetime, but after a while I started to slip beneath the surface. I would thrust my self back up, dog paddle, yell for help, look for my rescue, and then slip back down again. Emotionally, I literally vacillated between utter fear and the possibility of rescue.

Eventually, after what felt like an hour (though I'm sure it was only a few minutes), now fully exhausted, I just slipped beneath the surface for what I thought was the last time. Just as I was several feet under water I felt a great tug at my wrist. The lifeguard apparently realized what was happening, stopped making time with the girl, and came like a flash to save me. I tell that story because sometimes we have similar feelings in our walk with Jesus, Desperation and hope. Desperation and hope are not only likely to be frequent

experiences in our walk with God, but sometimes simultaneous experiences in our walk with God.

On the one hand, we have this deep belief in God, which gives us a measure of hope and helps us stay afloat and dog paddle a while, but on the other hand, we are experiencing in very real terms profound disappointment or devastating loss. We may be experiencing a dream crushed, a relationship shattered, chronic illness, or like Jairus, a loved one who is gravely sick. When life gets like this, if we are honest, we can have some wildly conflicting feelings, thoughts, and experiences about God and our faith in Him takes a serious blow. Certainly the story of Jairus seems to play out that way. Let's try to look deeper into our story with Jairus today.

In verses 22-23 we see that he is a leader of the synagogue of that area. The leader of the synagogue was not a rabbi, but was a lay member who was entrusted by the elders of the community to direct the affairs of a synagogue (e.g. direct the worship, assign who would do the reading, praying, etc.). This would have made Jairus a man of significance in that community and this is why falling at Jesus feet and begging Jesus is no small thing. Jairus' humility and desperation were meant to be noticed.

We also see in verses 22-23 that he begged Jesus to lay His hands on his twelve-year-old daughter so that she may be healed. The Gospel of Luke tells

us that the girl was his only daughter. Anyone who has ever had a child, especially an only child, will totally understand how a man of standing would do away with propriety in the face of losing your child. At that point you don't care what you look like or sound like, you just want your child to be okay.

In the end, Jairus gets Jesus' attention and Jesus begins to walk with Jairus through the crowd. I imagine at this point Jairus has a sudden surge of hope run through his soul and yet no sooner do they set out then Jesus gets interrupted by an ailing woman; a woman who was hemorrhaging for 12 years, or for as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive.

Pastor Dan did a great job of expounding on the healing of this woman last week. If you have not heard it yet please check it out on our website. For now, I want to dive into just a couple of things as we slow down the action at this point and walk in Jairus' shoes. I want to ask you to enter his life viscerally.

Try to feel what Jairus feels as he walks with Jesus. It must have been frustrating enough to not move quickly through the crowd that had been pressing in on Jesus and then all of a sudden Jesus stops to turn aside to talk to a lowly woman in the middle of a crowd. I wonder if when Jesus stopped Jairus is thinking "Come on already! My kid is dying and you're stopping to see who's touching You? Are you kidding me? Who cares!"

The tension of the story mounts with each passing second. The time it took to deal with this woman must have felt like hours to Jairus, like it did to me when I was waiting for the lifeguard to save me. Yet I wonder if having heard this woman's testimony and witnessing a miracle Jairus may have felt an extra surge of hope again for his daughter.

Twelve years of suffering gone in an instant? What a hopeful thing it must have been to see a miracle as your daughter is gravely ill. Then suddenly, no sooner than any hope fills his heart, it is quickly punctured again by the worst news possible: "Your daughter is. . .dead" I'm not sure there are worse words a human can hear than *those* words. As a parent myself I can only imagine how this man's heart sunk, his stomach tightened, and his knees became weak. The interruption, so profitable to the woman has now cost the life of Jairus' daughter.

Try for a moment to viscerally grasp the *incredibly intensity* of this moment. Imagine if you brought your daughter, who is having a heart attack, to the emergency room and the assigned doctor asks you to take a seat in the waiting room because he needs to spend some time treating a woman who was suffering from depression. While depression is quite important to attend to, her condition isn't life threatening like your daughter's.

Then imagine now, if your daughter died because of this

doctor's delay. It is not inconceivable we would be so incensed that we would do everything that we could to get this doctor's license revoked for malpractice and sue him for all he's worth but that's not what happens here.

In the very next moment the story takes a hopeful turn - yet again. In verse 36 Jesus over hears the bad news about the daughter, and as He does He says to Jairus: "*Do not fear, only believe.*" The continuous tense of the verb here 'believe' could be translated also as 'keep on believing'. In other words, it's like Jesus saying, "Jairus, You had a certain amount of faith when you came to Me, and you just saw what I did for that woman. Don't let go of that faith, keep on believing, trust Me not the circumstances."

As I read this I try to imagine Jesus as He said this to Jairus. Did Jesus see in Jairus' face hope suddenly evaporating and fear rising? Is that why His first words are "Don't fear"? Did Jesus quickly, but gently grab Jairus by the elbow so he would turn away from the other men and turn toward Jesus? And then did Jesus look right into Jairus' eyes with a very affirming look, perhaps even a slight confident smile, and say to him, "Don't be afraid, just keep on believing"?

The challenge before Jairus is the challenge before everyone who meets Jesus. Do we believe only in what circumstances allow or do we believe in the God who can change circumstances? Do we believe in the

God who can heal our sickness; believe in the God who can make His kingdom come His will done on earth, in real ways, as it is in heaven? I don't know how much faith I would have in that moment, but Jairus had enough faith to not get angry and walk away. In spite of the fact that raising people from the dead was not a common outcome in those days, Jairus still walks on with Jesus! As you face your own impossibility today, can you still walk on with Jesus? Or have you let anger and fear take over?

For me, to keep faith in that moment is almost too hard to comprehend. I can't help but wonder what was going on in Jairus' heart and mind as he walked back to his home with Jesus? I know my mind would jump back and forth between utter fear that my daughter was gone and a desperate hope in Jesus' words, "Don't be afraid just keep on believing." Have any of you been there? Have you walked that path? That lonely walk where God has delayed and we have wondered why?

Maybe it was in waiting for the phone call with those lab results, for the In Vitro test results, the college acceptance letter, or the call back from the job that you really need to pay your bills, etc...? Have you been left waiting and waiting, walking and waiting?

Here is where I want to pause and drill down because I think it's that long walk back to his house which most of us can relate to;

That long walk between our pain and Christ's promises, between utter fear and the hope of rescue. This walk seems as much symbolic as it is sequential because we all know Jesus could have healed this girl from afar, but instead Jesus chooses to walk with Jairus in his pain, in his confusion, and in his fear and you can be sure Jesus walks with you in yours. Do you believe that today?

The walk of Jairus has long been the walk of the people of God for millennia; a walk full of fear, bewilderment, exasperation, and even sorrow. And yet at the same time a walk of faith and hope. The Book of Psalms is full of such journeys. We call them Lament Psalms. Lament psalms are those prayers of raw and unguarded speech. They are words of people who find their once smooth circumstances in life and their clear doctrines of God suddenly or painfully altered. Their vision of God is now questioned and their trust in Him now challenged.

You'll see what I mean as we read this Lament Psalm. Psalm 6, Look at verses two and three and feel what this guy is going through: *"Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony.³My soul also is struck with terror, while You, O Lord—how long?"* You can hear the emotional and physical and spiritual desperation. How many of us have been there at those moments? Are you going to be there for me God? Lord, where are You? How long do I have to wait for You to act?

What I really appreciate here is the awkwardness of the grammar in verse three. The sentence itself is incomplete; it is twisted with discomfort. "My soul also is struck with terror, while *you*, O Lord...how long?" Sometimes real, raw, honest prayer is not eloquent; it just stumbles out of our mouths.

Here's the thing: this person's pain is real, it cannot be denied but in letting his doubts and fears be bluntly expressed to God something happens in the process. Hope breaks through.

Read on in Verse 9 toward the end of the Psalm: *"The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer."* At first blush we think how does verses two and three jive with Verse 9? One minute, God where are you, and then next minute super confident God has heard his cries. Note how the writer can't deny his agony, but he can't deny his God either. And isn't that exactly where Jairus seemed to live on that walk back to his house? Isn't that where we all live every now and then; in that torn, ambivalent place - somewhere between our pain and God's promises Between utter fear and the possibility of rescue.

Brothers and sisters, when you are with folks who are expressing lament, anger, doubt, and frustration toward God never think such lament is the expression of hopelessness or faithlessness. It's just the pain of reality seeking hope in God. It's fear seeking the possibility of rescue. We need to let people

pray this way. You see folks, if there is something the Psalms and the story of Jairus teach us it is this: Silence, hiddenness and repression cannot create hope. This is what we see in Jairus seeking out Jesus and voicing his need for His help. Again, it is because silence, hiddenness and repression cannot create hope.

This is also why we Christians need to be folks highly skilled in the art of being with those who have shattered hearts and broken lives because when we Christians know how to listen to despair and walk with others in it, just like Jesus walked with Jairus, you will see that hope breaks through.

I wonder if the words of Psalm 6 or some other lament Psalm found their way into Jairus' mind as he walked ever closer to his home and I can't imagine how as he got closer to home and heard the loud sound of weeping and wailing by the mourners, how his faith in the words of Jesus, "Don't be afraid, keep on believing," may have been so hard to cling to.

Think about it. As he got closer and closer and as the volume of the weeping and the wailing got louder and louder it would just seem to heighten his greatest fears and would confirm the thing he dreaded most, his daughter is truly gone. The faith it would take to keep believing as things sounded worse is amazing. It would have been so easy to let his Fear overtake his Faith.

Ever struggle with that? Ever struggle with your fears overtaking your faith because of what you see and hear? Sometimes we can listen too much to the wailing around us and not enough to the One Voice that matters. The Voice that says in the face of death, "I am the resurrection and the life. Death is not the last word. I am the One who makes all things new." The One Voice that says, "I am breaking into this world with My kingdom and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it!" Do you believe that today?

Do you believe it when you read the news or watch the news channels and hear a lot of "wailing" about the tragedies going on in the world? We all hear a lot of people saying its all going to hell in a hand basket. I totally get that from non-Christians. After all, what else do they have to put their hope in but their own wit and wisdom or political ideologies? So I get why there is a lot of weeping and wailing from them but the thing that surprises me sometimes is that we Christians join in on that chorus.

It's almost like we are forgetting completely that Jesus has the power to make *all* things new and that His love and resurrection changed the whole story line of History and still changes it as we Christians enact it into reality. Sometimes it seems we no longer consume the news, the news consumes us. Anyone know what I'm talking about? It consumes our hope, our faith, our courage and confidence in the power of Christ to change things.

It consumes our Christian compassion and grace toward others. Yes, there are times when the "weeping and the wailing" of the culture is loud and it feels like, looks like, and sounds like our faith has been in vain but Jesus is telling us this very day in the face of every headline you read and every broadcast you watch: "Don't fear. Just keep on believing." And the great thing is we can endure and have hope, because we like Jairus amidst the wailing, never walk alone. We walk with Jesus and that makes all the difference. Before I finish let me share just two things that can happen when Fear overtakes Faith. One is on a very personal level and the other on a larger, cultural level.

When we walk in a way where fear overtakes faith our minds and souls and emotions can't take much of that. We are not hardwired to handle too much anxiety. So we seek ways to deal with or cope with our fears and anxieties and after counseling hundreds of people over the years I have come to see we often deal with anxieties by *numbing* them.

Sometimes you feel that when you can't get what you need you need to numb what you have. We may numb ourselves through alcohol, drugs, or pornography. We may do it through shopping or activities that create high-octane adrenaline, or perhaps through binging on television or binging on food, etc. The list of escapist behaviors can be endless.

Only you know when you are doing things to relax and when you are doing things to feel numb and escape. That's between you and God. I bring this out so that you may choose faith instead of fear. That you would turn to the Lord as they pathway out of your anxieties. Again, this is just a part of the reason why faith isn't just necessary to get us to heaven; it's vital to a life well-lived on earth as it is in heaven. Faith in the power of Christ to change things helps us face our anxieties instead of avoiding or numbing them. That's the issue on a more personal level.

But faith in Jesus is also crucial on a macro level. As I just mentioned when faith in God is weak or absent from our souls fear and anxiety rises in our minds, and very often fear starts to take the lead. In other words, it starts to dictate not only what we see, but how we see. Furthermore, fear starts to dictate how we will respond to what we fearfully see.

Sometimes when I don't have faith that God can change people, even the worst of them, I can end up fearing and distance myself from those people, can't I? And as a result a couple of things can happen: I can perhaps miss God-given opportunities to bring Jesus to people who need it the most, and I can turn people, whom God loves, into my personal enemy. Not always, but sometimes. And that can lead to actions inconsistent with the Bible.

For example, you hear much fear these days about foreigners coming into our country. Perhaps some of these fears are even legit but how can we Christians make a Faith-based response to such an important issue and not a Fear-based response?

My first full time job in ministry was to live and work in a refugee Camp. After that I spoke at churches and conferences advocating for refugees. At that time we Christians used to be very open to receiving refugees, it was a great way to reach non-Christians and love the hurting of our world. People used to see it as God bringing the mission field to us to share the message of Christ but times have changed.

A recent Pew Research study just came out in May about American's view on our responsibility to take in Refugees. Let me be clear, I'm not talking about illegal immigrants, but legit refugees devastated by war, brutality, hunger, etc. The study looked at the issue through five different categories, Gender, Race, Age groups, Educational background, and Religious affiliation.

The study showed that it was the evangelical Christians who had the greatest percentage of people who said that the US does not have a responsibility to accept refugees and it was by a huge margin. Over two thirds said that we do not have a responsibility to receive refugees. In fact, Evangelical

Christians beat out every other category of people by at least 18%.

Brothers and sisters, is that the best Faith-based response we can come up with? Or is it a Fear-based response? As I said a moment ago, we weren't always this way, but now I wonder is it because much of the refugee population is Muslim? Is this what changes our Faith into Fear? Don't we believe anymore that God can change even them? Look I know this is a very complicated issue.

Answers and solutions are *not* going to be easy. But if we Christians start off the solution process with a Fearful view point like this and not a Faith-filled one we can end up contradicting a lot of scripture and undermining Jesus' mission to bring His Gospel to the world.

Let me give one quick example. In Matthew 25 we have Jesus talking about judgment day. In it He is the king that says this: (vv.34-35) *"Then the king will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger (foreigner) and you welcomed me..."* Not, "I was a foreigner and you kept me at a distance, or you didn't think you needed to welcome Me."

The word, "Foreigner" here in the original language, is *xenos*. It's where we get the

word Xenophobia, the fear of foreigners. That is a fear-based activity, not a faith-based one.

This week can I ask you to take a spiritual pulse as you watch the news? As you hear yet another round of wailing do you still have faith that Jesus is breaking into our world with more of His Kingdom and that He has the power to defeat evil, sin, and the gates of hell? Do you believe that today? Or are you letting the wailing of culture and political ideologies create fear instead of faith; to create Enemies where God has none?

Again, perhaps this is part of the reason why Jesus wants us to be filled with faith in Him, because whom we fear we can easily reject and vilify and because faith in His power to change people can create greater compassion and outreach to those we may fear, and it may extend my ability to love and share Christ even with my enemy.

After all, if the church cannot do this what hope is there for things to change? These are just a couple of reasons out of hundreds about why it may be crucial for us to not fear, but to keep on believing in Jesus.

So now let's finish up this high suspense walk with Jesus back to the house of Jairus. In verses 39-40 we see Jesus meeting up with the 'Weepers and the Wailers' and telling them to chill out because the girl is not dead but "asleep."

In verse 40, after they “laugh” at Jesus, it says “He put them all outside.” The English translation is quite polite with this. In the original language (Greek), the word is more forceful. It implies Jesus threw them out.

You can almost picture Him: “Okay, that’s it. Now its time for you folks to leave!” Then in Verse 41 Jesus says to the girl: “*Talitha cum*” (an Aramaic phrase). The basic meaning of Talitha is “lamb.” It’s an endearing term of affection used for children. After Jesus says this she gets up. Then Mark 5:42 says: “*At this they were overcome with amazement. . .*”

Let me ask you this. How do you picture Jesus as this point? Is He standing back with a serious face and thinking “whew, that was a lot of work”? Or is He standing there with a ho-hum, yawn because this is just par for the course when you’re God.

I wonder if Jesus kind of stood back, maybe leaned against the wall, and smiled at the whole thing. Smiled at the joy of the parents. Smiled at the astonishment of His disciples. Smiled at the look on the little girl’s face as she got up. Smiled because the kingdom of God had come and His will was done on earth as it is in Heaven, all because a man took that long hard walk in faith.

So how is your journey with Jesus today? Do you need some Hope Restored? Maybe you feel like the woman who has suffered long, or like Jairus having fearful anxiety over a

loved one. Or maybe you just feel like life is overwhelming and you are walking that journey between your pain and God’s promises. We want to pray for you. You never have to walk alone. Jesus wants to walk with you, and so do we.

+ + + + + + + + +

*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org
The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting:
fpchkoolau@gmail.com*