

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Grant Park, Illinois
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 1, 2018

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. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet 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." So Jesus went with him. 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?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, ""Talitha koum!"" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

What is one of the worst experiences you can have in life? Personally, I believe it is watching someone you love die. You see the person in pain. Your heart drops as their breathing becomes staggered. They might be on medication and no longer know who you are. Finally, you recognize that when death comes there is no more tomorrow. No more conversations. No more laughing. No more time together. Nothing can prepare you for what you are about to face.

Where can we turn when death comes calling? Our gospel lesson illustrates a place where Christians can turn when facing death, because it helps us appreciate the way our God views death. He doesn't view death as death. No, he calls it a sleep. This view of death will shape our sermon today. We'll see without Jesus death only brings mourning while with Jesus there is hope and this hope isn't in vain.

Mark sets the scene for us this morning by introducing us to a man named Jairus. **“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. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet 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.’ So Jesus went with him.”**

Jairus is in a bad place. His beloved and only child is sick. It isn't a cough or cold kind of sick. It is serious sickness and his daughter's life is literally hanging in the balance. Can't you just feel the desperation which drives him to find Jesus? His feet barely touching the ground cause they're flying so fast. His eyes frantic searching for Jesus. His shoulders heaving as he sobs and says over and over, “My daughter is dying,” while lying at Jesus' feet and begging him to come.

Jairus is in a bad place, but it gets worse. **“Some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they said. ‘Why bother the teacher any more?’”** Messengers come from his house with the terrible news. His daughter is dead. The messengers recognize the inevitable truth. The girl is dead and hope has died too. Maybe Jesus could have helped her while she was alive, but not now. Don't bother him. Let him be on his way while you come back and mourn.

The cold reality of a dead daughter greets Jairus. **“When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.’ But they laughed at him.”** Jesus suggests the girl isn't dead, but sleeping. What is the response he gets? The people laugh at him. They know the girl isn't sleeping. She is dead. Not sleeping. Dead.

How do you approach death when it comes near? There can only be one thing which death brings for people who don't know Jesus: mourning. People will often try to hide the fact they are mourning or that death doesn't bother them, but pull away the mask which they put on for others and you'll find something different. You'll find people who are angry because the person they loved is gone. You'll find people who are hurting because they miss the person so much.

You'll find people who try to laugh it off and pretend nothing will happen to them. You'll find people who are desperate and scared because they know death will one day come for them and they don't know exactly what is going to happen to them. What is the source of all these different reactions? It is the fact without Jesus death only brings mourning because you have no certain place to turn or the ability to hear words which console you.

Yet, our story this morning shows us death is nothing more than a sleep to Jesus. **“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. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet 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.’ So Jesus went with him.”**

Jairus is in a bad place. His beloved and only child is sick and will soon die. He goes to the one place where he finds any glimmer of hope: Jesus. He comes and begs Jesus to come with him. What is Jesus’ response? He answers Jairus’ prayer and goes with him. Yes, the bad news soon came that the little girl had died, but what fact hadn’t changed? Jesus was still with Jairus. Not only hadn’t Jesus left, but he makes Jairus a promise after hearing the terrible news. **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”**

What can you and I learn from Jesus interaction with Jairus? Well, how often in life don’t you get terrible news like Jairus? The cancer treatment which you had hoped would cure your cancer didn’t take. You’re back to square one and time is ticking to try and get you healthy. Or maybe your chest doesn’t quite feel right. You go to the doctor and end up having to make an appointment with a cardiologist a week from Tuesday and you’re scared about what it will bring.

Your parent’s health has been failing for years. You have known this day was coming, but you weren’t ready to face it. However, weekly trips to the hospital (sometimes even multiple trips in the same week) have forced your hand to have the difficult conversation about what to do. Or to bring it even closer to home for some of you: tragedy strikes when a man blows a stop sign and kills mom and all the kids in the car. Where do you turn when horrible news hits?

You and I have the privilege to go to the same place Jairus did: Jesus. Jesus is our refuge and strength in times of duress and trouble. Jairus went to Jesus in fervent prayer. He begged him to come with him and what did Jesus do? He answered the prayer and went with Jairus. Jesus has promised you and me because we are his followers he will answer our prayers too. He will hear and he will answer, but we need to learn something about Jesus’ answer to our prayers.

What do you pray for when you get the news you have cancer? Or you’re facing an uncertain visit to the cardiologist? Or when you have to have the conversation about pulling the plug on someone? Or you hear someone is in a horrible car accident? Don’t you pray for the cancer to go away? The visit to be nothing major? You don’t need to pull the plug? The car crash victim’s life to be spared? It is what we all pray for, but how do you react when Jesus doesn’t answer the way you want?

Do you think Jairus wanted his daughter to die? No! He wanted her to live. It is why he came to Jesus in the first place, but even when Jesus answered the prayer what happened? The girl died. Where is the comfort in the story? It is in Jesus’ words, **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”** Jesus is right there when Jairus gets this horrible news and what his response? Don’t be afraid. Trust in me. I’ll do what is right and best for you and your daughter.

“(Jesus) went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.’ 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha kum!’ (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old).”

“At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.” Jesus was right there with Jairus when he received the horrible news his daughter had died. Jesus was right there with words of comfort and reassurance when he said, **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”** Jesus was right there for Jairus with a powerful demonstration of love for fallen mankind.

Jesus said the little girl wasn’t dead. She was asleep. People laughed at him, but Jesus proved his words were true when he walked into the room, took dead girl by the hand and said, **“Talitha koum! Little girl, I say to you, get up!”** What happens? The girl gets up just like she would from sleeping. The disease which killed her? Gone! The girl who hadn’t been able to eat for several days? Ravenously hungry. The man who said she was asleep? Proves his word.

Dear Christians, your faith in Jesus isn’t some pious wish or hope things will turn out for the best. It is based on Jesus and his love for you. Jesus demonstrates his love for you by exercising power over your strongest enemy death. Not only did he raise a dead little girl back to life, but he raised himself after he had been crucified and murdered by his enemies. Jesus has power over death and promises to exercise this power to benefit his followers.

How does this story benefit you? This story shows us two things. One, Jesus is right beside you when you get bad news in life. He’s right there with you when the doctor tells you that your cancer treatment didn’t take and you’re back to square one. He hasn’t left you when you’re on your way to the cardiologist and you don’t know what is wrong. He will continue to stay with you when you have to pull the plug or you here your loved one perished in a car accident.

Not only will Jesus be with you during your distress, but remember what he calls death. He calls it a sleep. It isn’t permanent and one day he’ll instruct all the dead to arise. You and your loved ones included. He will raise you and give you life. Not another life here on earth. He will awaken you to spend eternal life with him in heaven. A place where you no longer need to worry about mourning or pain. A place where you get to dwell in peace and security forever with him. Amen.