**DON’T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE**

***Mark 5:21-43***

***“Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’” (v.36)***

In today’s passage, two very different people come to Jesus for help. But Jesus did more than solve their immediate problems. Jesus helped them to deepen their faith and experience the power of faith which was beyond their imagination. Jesus wants us to know him more and more deeply so that we may experience the fullness of his power, grace and love. Sometimes, though we have faith in Jesus, we are overwhelmed by practical problems. We may feel trapped by our sinful desires, bad habits or character flaws, as well as our circumstances. We feel that faith is one thing, but our practical life is different. However, Jesus wants us to come to him and know him through our problems. May God bless us to grow in our relationship with Jesus through our life problems! Learning faith in Jesus is an adventure. Let’s embark on this great journey together.

1. **Faith that comes to Jesus (vs. 21-29).**

This passage begins with Jesus surrounded by a large crowd after crossing back over to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee (21). Many people came to Jesus, eager for his help, in contrast to the people of the Gerasenes. Among them was a synagogue leader named Jairus. In Jesus’ time, though the temple was the center of the nation’s spiritual life, the synagogue was the place where Jews met locally for prayer and worship. Synagogue leaders were influential and respected men in their communities. At this point in his ministry, most synagogue leaders would not welcome Jesus, for he had been rejected by the Jewish religious leaders. But Jairus was different. When he saw Jesus, he stepped out from the crowd and fell at Jesus’ feet (22). It is amazing that he revealed his great humility before Jesus publicly. How could he come to Jesus like this? It was out of his fatherly love for his daughter, who was dying. Luke tells us that she was his only daughter (Lk 8:42). She was just twelve years old, about to blossom into a beautiful young teenager. It was time for her to study hard and dream about a bright future. She was more precious to Jairus than his own life. He would do anything for her.

When his daughter became sick, he must have searched for every way to heal her. But nothing helped. His money, his social status, his reputation, his record of good deeds—none of these could help save his daughter. He realized he was powerless and desperate. At this moment, Jesus seemed to be his only hope. So he came to Jesus 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” (23).*** He believed that one touch from Jesus would heal her. Obviously, Jesus’ heart was moved by his humble and earnest plea. So Jesus went with him (24a). Jesus is ready to help anyone who humbly asks him.

Along the way, a large crowd followed and pressed around Jesus (24b). Among them was a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years (25). It is hard to imagine how much she had suffered from her condition. Many women are sensitive about the smallest imperfections and obsess over them endlessly. But her case was so serious. Constant bleeding for twelve years had drained her beauty and strength. She could not hide her condition with makeup and fine clothes. Furthermore, ***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 (26).*** She lost everything and was dying a little more each day. She suffered not only physically, mentally and emotionally but also socially, for she would have been branded as an “unclean” woman according to the law (Lev 15:25-27). Whatever she touched was considered unclean. She was a source of uncleanness, so she was withdrawn, isolated and lonely. Shame and despair tormented her soul in whatever she did. She was hopeless.

But when she heard about Jesus, hope arose in her heart. She came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his cloak. How could she do this? Look at verse 28. ***“…because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.’”*** She had faith in Jesus. There were great obstacles before her, but with every step she took, she kept saying to herself, ***“If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”*** In her weakened physical state, she had to press through the crowd of people thronging around Jesus. Finally, when she touched Jesus’ cloak by faith, immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering (29). Her body regained its strength and her beauty was being restored. She was overjoyed.

The two persons, Jairus and the woman, are very different from each other. But they did have something in common: Each one had a desperate problem, and in their desperation they put their hope in Jesus, bringing the problem to him by faith. This shows us that it doesn’t matter what our background or our problem is; what matters is that we come to Jesus by faith. Coming to Jesus sounds easy, but it requires overcoming obstacles within us and barriers without. For Jairus, it was to overcome his pride and prejudice. For the woman, it was to overcome her fear, doubt, sense of uncleanness and the pressing crowd. When we come to Jesus by faith, however, he welcomes us, heals us and solves our problems. To Jesus, there is no human qualification. Whether we are rich or poor, educated or uneducated, humanly attractive or plain, morally more serious or less serious sinners, Jesus welcomes anyone who comes to him with faith. Our problems are channels to meet Jesus, and to Jesus, only faith matters.

1. **Jesus wants to deepen our faith (vs. 30-43).**

Many people come to Jesus in their time of need. But once their problem is solved, they no longer seek Jesus. To them, Jesus is a problem solver. But Jesus wants to do more than just solve our problems. He wants us to know him personally and grow in faith. Let’s see how Jesus helped those who came to him to grow deeper in faith.

The woman came to Jesus secretly and wanted to leave secretly after being healed. However, after she had taken several steps, she heard something that stopped her in her tracks. She was caught by Jesus. Jesus turned around in the crowd and asked, ***“Who touched my clothes?” (30)*** Though many people touched Jesus, nothing happened to them, and Jesus did not show special interest in them. But Jesus was determined to find the one who had touched him by faith. Jesus never fails to catch those who come to him by faith. Jesus caught her, not to rebuke her for stealing his blessing, but to deepen her faith and form a personal relationship with her. Though Jesus already knew her perfectly, she did not know Jesus. So Jesus invited her to know him personally. Faith is not one-sided, but relational. In order to have a relationship with Jesus, she needed to acknowledge publicly what he had done for her. In other words, she needed to make a confession of faith. The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth (33). She shared her life testimony of how she had suffered from her bleeding problem physically, emotionally and socially and how she was healed by Jesus when she touched his cloak by faith. It was not easy for her to share the shame of her past life. But she confessed the whole truth, surrendering herself to Jesus.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 34. ***“He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’”*** Jesus called her ***“Daughter.”*** This means that Jesus accepted her as his own child and had a fatherly affection for her. Also, in the original Greek text, the word for “healed” means more than physical healing; it means salvation of the whole person. She was cleansed physically, ceremonially and spiritually. She was restored to the community, and even more, she became a member of God’s family. Now she could continually grow as a daughter of God. Her intention had been to receive healing and then sneak away. But Jesus helped her establish a vine and branch relationship with him and gave her the kingdom of God. This is the blessing that Jesus wants to give each of us.

Meanwhile, Jairus was waiting patiently for Jesus. Though the woman’s testimony was very encouraging, it seemed to go on and on. Jairus felt that time was running out for his daughter. Fear began to creep into his heart that Jesus would arrive too late. Then the worst case scenario happened. While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from Jairus’ house and said, ***“Your daughter is dead.”*** They bluntly assured him of his daughter’s death. The once lively body of the twelve-year-old girl now had no pulse, no signs of breathing, and no body temperature! Furthermore, they said, ***“Why bother the teacher anymore?”*** insisting that even Jesus couldn’t do anything in this situation. This news struck Jairus’ heart like a hammer and his faith was shaken. But to Jesus, it was the very moment to help Jairus grow in faith. Look at verse 36. ***“Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”*** This sounds like a very simple command, but it is packed with profound spiritual truth. Let’s think carefully about what the words ***“Don’t be afraid; just believe”*** can teach us about our own life of faith.

First, believe regardless of the situation. After hearing the news about his daughter, Jairus must have felt surrounded by utter darkness, with no way out. Total despair and hopelessness! But our Lord Jesus encouraged him, ***“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*** Jesus is saying, “Don’t be overwhelmed by the situation, but look at me instead.”

In doing so, Jesus declares that he is bigger than the situation. He is bigger than even the power of death. Why? He is our Creator God, who can give us life. He is the Almighty God, with whom nothing is impossible. Fear comes from Satan. Satan always tries to fix our eyes on the situation itself and plant fear in our hearts in many ways. Fear paralyzes us so that we become powerless. Fear can be overcome only by faith. We can have hope in hopeless situations; we can be assured of victory in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances because the object of our faith is God Almighty.

Each of us may be in some difficult situation in our home, school, work, ministry, or in other areas. Whatever it may be, at this very moment, our Lord encourages us, ***“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*** We need to believe that God has placed us where we are at in this very moment for a reason, to deepen our faith and to help us grow in our relationship with Jesus. We must trust in him that he can work through it all and that he is working for our good. C. S. Lewis once said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures…but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Jesus shouts through our problems to help us look at him. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and trust in him all the more regardless of the situation.

Second, keep on believing. Jairus came to Jesus by faith. But when he heard about the bad news, his faith was on the verge of shattering. Suppose Jairus had given up at this point. Nothing would have happened and this event would have ended only in tragedy. But Jesus helped him, ***“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*** Jesus is saying, “You began this journey by faith. Now keep going and complete the journey by faith.” Jairus accepted Jesus’ word and chose to walk with Jesus to the end by faith.

We may begin to pray for someone or some situation by faith. As in Jairus’ case, it is a journey of faith, whether shorter or longer. In this journey, we may encounter some encouraging news, but may also experience discouragement. At this discouraging moment, we may conclude that we already arrived to the destination of our prayer of faith. There are always temptations to give up due to feelings of helplessness. But the moment that we want to give up may be the same point at which Jairus met the people and heard the tragic news. Through Jesus’ word, ***“just believe,”*** however, we can learn that the journey is not yet finished and we must keep going to the end by faith.

George Mueller was a man of prayer and a man of faith. In his diary, he tells a story about how long we must keep on believing and persistently pray by faith: In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller’s friends, were still not converted. He wrote, “But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.” In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted—but after George Mueller died! Mueller understood what Jesus meant when he said, “***just believe.***” Our Lord is faithful and merciful. He never despises our faith. In John 11:40, he says, *“Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”*

Third, only believe. When Jesus said, ***“just believe”*** he asked Jairus to have faith alone. In reality, to Jairus, it seemed that there was nothing to do except believe in Jesus. However, we human beings have a tendency to rely on other things along with faith in Jesus. We want to depend on more visible and tangible resources like people, money, ability or our own senses than the invisible God.

But God wants his children to live by faith alone. God is pleased by our faith because faith is the expression of our utter humility and surrender to him. Jesus wants us to have confidence not in ourselves or other things but in him alone. He wants us to grow in faith to entrust our whole lives unto his hands alone. He wants us to trust in and follow him as our Good Shepherd even through the darkest valley of our life. So Hebrews 10:38 says, *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.”*

When Jesus reached Jairus’ house, he saw a great commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. The atmosphere was full of sorrow and the power of death was overwhelming. Jesus, the Lord of life, went in and said to them, ***“Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep” (39).*** To Jesus, death is like sleep. But they laughed at him (40a). Jesus put out all the unbelieving people and took only the child’s father and mother and three of his disciples into the room where the girl was. ***He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”) (41)***  Jesus woke her up like a mother awakens her little child in the morning. She got up, and began to walk around. She was so lovely and lively. She must have hugged her parents, saying “I love you mom and dad.” Jairus and his wife must have wept many tears out of their gratitude. Their agony and sorrow caused by once sick and dead daughter was completely washed away. The darkness ruled by the power of death in the room and Jairus house was now turned into joy and astonishment of resurrection (42). They all praised God.

After that, Jesus told them to give her something to eat (43b). Our Lord is so mindful, and it was evidence that she was fully restored enough to digest food. Jesus proved that he is the author of life and the life-giver. He revealed himself as the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25).

In this passage, we learned that our faith needs to continually grow. Many practical problems in our lives are actually God’s channels to lead us to grow in faith and in a deeper relationship with Christ. Through our current life problems and prayer topics, Jesus wants to reveal to us who he is. May God bless each of us to come to Jesus by faith, like Jarius and the woman, and experience Jesus’ power, love, and peace for us!