

Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43 + When Life Doesn't Make Sense...

Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY + 6th Sunday after Pentecost + 1 July 2018

Where would you turn? The young girl was fading fast, and her parents were nearly out of options. When the girl first became ill, her parents didn't go searching for Jesus. It didn't seem that serious. Perhaps a home remedy would help, but she got worse. Some with a little more medical knowledge tried to help, but still she got worse. The girl's condition quickly worsened beyond the basic medical care her parents could provide.

It all happened so quickly. It didn't seem right. It didn't seem fair. It didn't make sense. This young lady had all kinds of hopes and dreams and years ahead of her, but none of that was on her parents' mind at that moment. With a knowing nod from his wife and the clock ticking, Jairus ran out of their house. Word had traveled quickly when Jesus and his disciples arrived in town, so Jairus knew where to go. The worried father rushed through the growing crowds with one goal in mind—bring Jesus to his daughter's side. Jesus could help his beloved, little girl!

Jairus wasn't just a concerned father. He was the man in charge of the local synagogue. He was a leader in the community. He had heard about this Jesus, this rabbi like no other. God's Word doesn't tell us if Jairus ever heard Jesus teach or if he had ever witnessed Jesus heal someone. Yet some from his synagogue came back with breathtaking stories—loved ones healed, demons cast out, teaching like no other. We don't know how much Jairus and his wife knew about Jesus, but they did know that this Jesus could help their dying daughter. So Jairus hurried through crowds of people clamoring to be healed by Jesus or receive his blessing or touch his garment.

Following the crowds and trying to make his way forward, Jairus knew he was getting close, but would he reach Jesus in time? Just then the crowd parted. There was Jesus—the only one who could help his dying daughter. With tears in his eyes, the ruler of the local synagogue fell to the ground at Jesus' feet. He urgently pleaded to the Lord on behalf of his daughter. ***“My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”*** Where else could he turn in that moment of desperation?

In that moment when life didn't make sense, as his daughter's life was slipping away, Jairus did the only thing that made sense. He went to the Lord for help, and Jesus didn't ignore Jairus. In fact, he didn't even hesitate to go with Jairus. Jesus was going to heal that girl that day, but there was a problem.

That huge crowd by the seashore wasn't about to let Jesus go off alone. Wherever Jesus went, they were going. They followed so closely that they pressed up against him and his disciples. The crowd continued to clamor for Jesus' help. Jairus wanted Jesus to get to his daughter's side yesterday. You can almost see Jairus tug on Jesus' sleeve. “C'mon, Teacher! Let's hurry!”

...But then Jesus did something that didn't make sense. Mark tells us about a desperate woman in the crowd who had suffered from a flow of blood for 12 years, a woman as desperate as Jairus who reached out to touch Jesus' garment trusting that she would be healed. Mark tells us that not only was she healed, but Jesus stopped to talk to her. He stopped? What about Jairus?

Time was running out and Jairus was getting frantic. Maybe he's tapping on Jesus' shoulder. “Ah, Lord? Don't forget you have a young girl to save from death! Can we get going?” Jairus wanted Jesus to save his daughter, but Jairus needed to learn about his Savior first.

Why stop for that woman when his daughter was dying? That woman could be the death of Jairus' daughter! What was Jesus thinking? It didn't make sense! Jesus could save his daughter's life if he would just get going. If she died, what good would Jesus be for her? Delaying didn't make sense.

Yet the Lord moves at his own pace. Death always dies when Jesus speaks. Jairus could tap his toes and tug on Jesus' sleeve for weeks...and Jesus could still save his daughter. In fact, he was going to do so. She was as good as saved. Why? Jesus is our Savior-God and he was going to save her, but Jairus needed to wait because Jesus cares for each and every soul.

Just as Jesus was finishing talking to the woman, some messengers came from Jairus' home with heartbreaking news. ***“Your daughter is dead...Why bother the teacher anymore?”*** All the air, all the energy, all the urgency rushed out of Jairus' body. His little girl was gone. He was too late. Jesus couldn't heal her anymore. His heart sunk into his stomach.

Jesus overheard what the messengers had told Jairus. The time had come for Jesus to focus his compassionate love on this grieving father. Jairus didn't know that he was bringing God himself to his daughter's side. He didn't

know that only Jesus can say if he's bothered or not. He didn't know that to God, death is nothing more than a hiccup to be brushed aside. So we can forgive Jairus if he didn't understand Jesus. ***"Don't be afraid. Only believe."***

Jesus wasn't asking. He was commanding Jairus to believe. Believe what? The answer to that question was standing right in front of the synagogue ruler, an answer whose power over life and death fills that ***"Don't be afraid"*** with peace and promise and hope for sinners lost in the senselessness of this life. Those words had brought peace to countless souls before Jairus and have brought peace to countless souls since. The answer to fear and faith is Jesus.

From that point forward, Jesus no longer allowed the crowds to follow him and Jairus. He even left behind nine of his twelve disciples. Only Peter, James, and John could follow them to Jairus' home, and what did they find? A big commotion. Jesus, Jairus, and the three disciples entered the home. People were weeping and wailing. Family and friends, neighbors and synagogue members had gathered to mourn with the family. It was loud. It was emotional. It was heart-wrenching. When Jesus spoke, what he had to say in that emotional moment sounded like nonsense. ***"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep."***

In that emotional moment, what did all those grieving mourners do? They didn't nod in agreement. They laughed at Jesus. They ridiculed him. They knew death all too well. They knew what death looks like. The girl was clearly dead. Asleep? Ha! They did what people often do when Jesus says he will bring life back to the dead.

This didn't stop Jesus, however. ***"He put them all out."*** Mark uses the same word that the gospel writers use to describe Jesus cleansing the temple. He cleared out the house with the exception of his three disciples, Jairus and Mrs. Jairus, and the young girl about to be raised back to life.

They went to the room where the child's body was. Jesus took her lifeless hand and told her, ***"Talitha koum!"*** ***"Little girl, I say to you, get up!"*** And what did she do? Did she slowly sit up and stretch and yawn? No! Death left her as soon as Jesus spoke. Immediately, the young 7th grader got up and walked around. Of course, everyone except Jesus was utterly and completely amazed at what had just happened. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Death takes a lot out of you and the girl had an empty stomach.

Jesus also told her parents something that does not make sense. ***"He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this."*** Surely, word would get out once they saw Jairus and Mrs. Jairus celebrating the resurrection of their daughter! Why not tell anyone? Jesus' mission wasn't to be a faith healer. He had come to suffer and die for their sins and to defeat death by his own resurrection. He couldn't stay because he had to save the world from death.

There are times in all our lives when we feel like Jairus, when life doesn't make sense, when life doesn't seem fair. So where do you turn in such times? You have hopes and dreams and expectations for your life, for your marriage, for your family, for your business, but things don't go the way you expect.

You expect success up the corporate ladder. You expect a lifetime of wedded bliss. You expect your child to be the next great athlete or scholar or entrepreneur. You expect a lifetime of good health for yourself and your loved ones. You expect your business to succeed, but what happens?

You get downsized or can't find a job that matches your degree. Two sinners under the same roof can lead to arguments, conflicts, or even worse. Kids rebel or veer down harmful paths. Your body breaks down or you receive a life-changing diagnosis. The economy bottoms out. So where do you turn?

Where do you turn when life doesn't make sense? Do you look inside for help? Try to find the answer yourself? If I just try hard enough, if we keep trying to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, I will succeed. We will survive, but what happens in those unguarded moments when you can't anymore?

Do you look outside of yourself to your friends or family or to the wisdom or distraction of society or science or sports? They can only do so much. Before long, you find yourself in the shoes of Mr. and Mrs. Jairus—out of options and desperate for a solution. So where do you turn when nothing in your life seems to make sense? Where can you turn when you feel like Jairus and it seems like you have no more options ahead of you? You can turn to Jesus!

You turn to Jesus who focuses his compassionate love on you and your situation. At that moment, you might feel desperate, frantic, confused, unsure, worried, because you don't know what to do. Yet there's Jesus putting his nail-scarred hand on your shoulder, wiping the tears from your eyes, and telling you, ***"Don't be afraid. Only believe."*** Believe in what? Believe in whom? Believe in Jesus. Believe in the One who takes your fears away

because he faced a lifetime of them for you. Believe in the One who is the ultimate solution to your big problems of sin and death and therefore will help you even through this momentary trouble. Believe in the One who takes your worries away because he is the Lord of life and death. Believe in the One who takes your desperation away because he conquered death for you.

When life doesn't make sense, turn to Jesus and see him give life to the dead. See him make the foolish and senseless wise. See him replace fear with confidence, doubt with hope, and grief with joy. See Jesus and live! Amen.