

THE RESURRECTED DAUGHTER

MARK 5:21-24; 35-43

RESURRECTION MIRACLES OF JESUS #1

Charlie dreamed of being an actor. There was just something about being on stage, in front of all those people, leading their imaginations into another world that intrigued and fascinated Charlie. So Charlie signed up for acting lessons. And he worked hard to learn his new craft. Charlie practiced 6 hours a day - getting out of a chair dramatically, walking across a room with flair, expressing a myriad of emotions. And at the same time, Charlie began to memorize dozens of key plays that he would likely perform in life - just to be ahead of the game. The Lyceum Theatre was Charlie's target. If he could act on that stage, he just knew that he would be successful as an actor. Finally, Charlie got an audition for a play that would be running for some time at the Lyceum. So excited was Charlie that he worked feverishly for 2 weeks to prepare for his audition. But his diligence actually worked against him, for Charlie so drove himself, that he came down with a severe cold 2 days before the audition and lost his voice. Scheduling was so tight that Charlie could not be squeezed in at a later date. He would have to wait and try again next season.

Needless to say, Charlie's spirit was crushed. But it was in the midst of his depression that another light began to glow. For Charlie found it therapeutic to write down his feelings on paper. And when he did this, he found great enjoyment in writing. So Charlie began to write some stories. It was if he were acting out, not only 1 part, but dozens of roles on paper. Charlie never did go back to acting again. He had considered that cold and laryngitis as the worst possible misfortune of his life at the time of his audition, but the world has considered Charlie's illness as a great blessing. We might have never known the actor, and even if he would have become famous in his day we most certainly would have forgotten him by now, but almost every student in school knows his name and has read a novel by Charles Dickens.

How often in life do situations that at first appear to be disastrous eventually turn out to be blessings in disguise? Such was certainly the case for a prominent man named Jairus about 2,000 years ago. Jairus was an important man in his day. He was a ruler in the synagogue - very likely the president of the board of elders that was in charge of running the synagogue. This was among the most highly honored and respected positions in his day. Jairus was a wealthy and influential citizen - the number of servants and mourners in his household would indicate something of his wealth and prominence. But with all that Jairus had going for him in life, there was a domestic situation that had developed in his household that was crushing his spirit. His 12 year old daughter, his only daughter, had become seriously ill and was now lying on her bed, fighting for her very life. Jairus would have given everything else that he had - all of his position and influence - just to have his daughter restored to health. We know this because he was in essence giving up everything that he had by coming to Jesus. For those who identified themselves with the Messiah were being expelled from the synagogue when Jairus sought out Jesus. And here was the president of the synagogue board coming to Jesus for help. But this situation that at first appeared to be most unfortunate for Jairus would turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to him, for Jairus' apparent tragedy would lead him to the Lord Jesus Christ and

would in turn lead to Christ's first resurrection miracle.

Miracles were certainly an important part of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The Lord performed 35 separate miracles that are recorded in the gospels authenticating his claim to be the Messiah sent from God. 23 of these miracles were healing miracles. It is interesting that Dr. Luke the physician emphasized the healing miracles of Jesus the most of the gospel writers - 15 out of the 20 miracles that Luke records (75%) were of the healing variety. 9 of the miracles that Jesus performed demonstrated his power over nature. It is interesting that John who grew up as a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee recorded a greater percentage of these. 4 out of the 8 miracles that John records (50%) were miracles over nature. But of all the miracles that Jesus did, there is no question that the most powerful and astounding were the people whom he brought back to life from the dead. Christ's resurrection miracles made the greatest impact upon people. There are 3 resurrection miracles that are recorded in the gospels. The raising of Jairus' daughter recorded by all 3 synoptic gospels, the raising of the widow's son recorded by Luke alone, and the raising of Lazarus that is the only resurrection miracle recorded by the Apostle John. The final resurrection of Lazarus became the critical turning point of Christ's whole ministry. We would like to look at these 3 resurrection miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ as we prepare our hearts for this special Easter season this year.

Each of the resurrection miracles of Christ share some common threads. The most obvious is the basic nature of the miracle - giving life back to a person who had completely lost it. And in each case, the recipient of Christ's power was singularly precious. The young man was the widow's only son, Lazarus was Mary and Martha's only brother, and this young 12 year old woman in Mark 5 was Jairus' only daughter.

But there are some distinctive differences in these miracles that Jesus performed as well. In the case of the widow's son, Jesus Christ and his disciples happened upon the funeral procession in the town of Nain. In the case of Lazarus, Jesus heard of the death of his dear friend and came of his own accord. The case of Jairus' daughter is the only one where a specific request is given to Jesus. Now, granted, the request was not made by Jairus for Jesus to raise his daughter for she was not yet dead when he left her to come for Jesus. But the request for Christ's help was made, nevertheless, and this shows some faith on Jairus' part.

READ MARK 5:22-24a

²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ 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." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

1. Now we certainly sympathize with the heartache of this dear father here, don't we? Charles Kingsley once wrote, "The death of a soldier is touched by heroism, the death of an old person is surrounded by the glory of completion, but the death of a child demonstrates something wrong somewhere." Luke tells us in his account that Jairus' daughter was 12 years old. This was especially significant in the Jewish culture. For according to Jewish law, a woman came to age at 12 years and 1 day, and the male child came to age at 13 years and 1 day. So here was a girl who had just come to the place in her world where she was recognized to be a woman, here was a person who should have

been ready to really begin living life, and she was dying instead. Instead of bright hope for the future, her life was coming to a premature end.

We can understand Jairus' grief. Luke tells us that this was Jairus' only daughter. His coming to Jesus, risking his career and standing in life that was so important to him, shows the depth of his concern. And certainly, Jairus' coming to Jesus is proof of his faith in the power of the Lord. But I want to focus your attention first of all on that faith, for there is a great lesson in it for each of us. Jairus had faith - there is no question about that. But it is also clear from the Scriptures that Jairus' faith at the time when he met Jesus was a weak, developing faith. "Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." That was the request of Jairus. He needed Christ's presence for assurance. He needed his touch for confidence.

How different was Jairus' request from the Roman Centurion that Matthew spoke of in the 8th chapter of his gospel? Both were in a similar predicament - one close to them was deathly ill. With the Centurion, it was a beloved servant who was close to death. But the Centurion had a different request, didn't he? After Jesus volunteered to go with him and heal his servant, the Roman soldier responded, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go' and he goes; and that one, 'come' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'do this' and he does it." (Matt. 8:9) The Centurion's faith was a deep, mature faith in the Lord, wasn't it? Its no wonder that Jesus responded by saying, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." (Matt. 8:10)

Now I bring this comparison to your attention not to disparage or belittle the faith of Jairus. It took a great deal of courage and faith for Jairus to do what he did. But I rather bring this comparison to your attention in order to understand the rest of the miracle of the raising of Jairus' daughter. And I also mention is to encourage each of us. For we often think that God only honors great faith. If my faith were only strong enough, then God would recognize me and answer my requests, we often tell our self. It is easy for us to forget that the power is not in the faith, but the power is in the object of the faith. A tiny amount of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is far better than a great amount of faith in a weak object. Jairus' faith might have been weak and developing, but it was placed in the right object - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that doesn't mean that we should disparage strong faith or take it lightly. The simple fact is that the Centurion's servant was healed the moment Christ spoke. If the Centurion had taken Jairus' approach, his servant might have died and had to be raised back from the dead by Christ. And conversely if Jairus would have taken the same approach as the Centurion, his daughter never would have had to go through the process of dying at all. So there are certainly blessings and benefits from strong faith. But God honors weak faith as well - and we must never forget that.

2. And that brings us to look at the delay that Jesus allowed before the miracle. For this miracle is unique in that there is a miracle within a miracle - there is another miracle that takes place between the time when Jairus first makes his request of Jesus and the time when Jesus actually arrives back at Jairus' home. That miracle is recorded in Mark 5:25-34 - the healing of the woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. And lest we think that this

other miracle was just a coincidence, it is interesting to note that Jairus' daughter was 12 years old and this woman had been suffering for 12 years as well. This older woman had begun her physical problems at the very time that Jairus' daughter was born. It is as if God had been preparing for this great display of Christ's power for over a decade.

Now, at first glance, we tend to think that this delay in the healing of Jairus' daughter wasn't that long. For the miracle of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage who touched the hem of Jesus' garment seems to have taken place as Jesus is just journeying to Jairus' home. But a careful study of the scene shows this to be a longer interlude than at first imagined. The delay was long enough for Jairus' daughter to die - but of course the young woman could have died soon after Jairus left. But then it was long enough for messengers to reach Jairus and tell him of her passing. And it was even long enough for many of the funeral preparations to be made and put into place, for when Christ arrives at Jairus' home, mourners have already been brought in as part of the funeral proceedings. The fact that they were professional or hired mourners as part of the Jewish funeral proceedings is seen in their response to Christ's statement that we will look at in a moment. So you see, Jairus' daughter had not been dead just a few hours when Christ arrives at the home. Funeral plans had already been put well into motion. And the manner in which the Lord Jesus deliberately handles the situation with the woman who touched the hem of his garment and was healed, seeking her out from the crowd, and drawing a confession out of her, and then teaching the people, must have seemed both surprising and somewhat distressing to Jairus in light of his emergency. Jairus' patience is very admirable. For there is no indication that he complained about Christ healing the infirmed woman. But undoubtedly, all of the delays even to the point of his daughter dying, must have been frustrating to him.

Why would the Lord Jesus Christ take Jairus through such a drawn-out process? It is obvious from the context that Christ was taking a person with weaker faith and leading him through a process to strengthen his faith. And that would finally be accomplished when Jairus had the privilege of being one of the 5 in the room along with Jesus to witness the raising of his daughter.

How often does God use irritations and delays and frustrations in each of our lives to strengthen our faith? How often do we begin a day with the schedule carefully planned out in great detail? But if we start out in our own strength, invariably it seems as if interruptions begin to come. How often do we have a personal problem in our lives that we have prayed and prayed about, but God isn't answering quickly? And pretty soon, we are at the end of our rope. But in the process, God has strengthened our character and faith.

Most of us want our faith rewarded immediately. But God wants to do more than just grant our request. He also desires to strengthen our faith in the process. So quite often, he allows delays and irritations and frustrations which will cause our faith to grow.

The oyster is an interesting illustration of this principle from nature. From all outward appearances, the oyster is an animal that has it made in life. It just sits on the bottom of the ocean and allows the water bringing nourishment to flow through it. Everything that the oyster needs in life comes to it. What a life! This would be like sitting in our favorite easy chair and having everything that we need in life come to us without ever having to move. But God has

instilled within the oyster an irritation. A grain of sand gets stuck in that oyster and begins to irritate it. To protect itself from that irritation, the Oyster begins to secrete a substance from its body. It is that nacre that is secreted in thin layers over that irritating sand that eventually produces the beautiful pearl that is treasured in jewelry. The most valuable contribution of the oyster does not come from its easy side of life, but it rather comes from its irritations in life.

So it often is with us in life. Abraham waited for 25 years after he received the promise of God before he saw the fruit of his faith. During that time there were many irritations, much frustration and a lot of patience necessary. But it was throughout that period that he became a great model of faith for all of us.

So when the messengers come with the despairing news that the girl is dead, it is useless to bother the Savior any longer, Jesus ignores what they said. Isn't that phrase interesting. Verse 36 simply says, "Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, Don't be afraid; just believe." Faith was the issue here, and Christ's lesson on faith was right on schedule.

3. When Jesus and Jairus arrived at the house, they walked into a scene filled with grief and commotion. Now we have to understand just a little bit about the pageantry of the funeral in the Middle East to appreciate this scene. Whenever there was a death, there were mourners to lament the departed loved one. This mourning was very public. The family and loved ones, of course, would mourn. But so that there would be continuous mourning going on, professional mourners were hired to lament and join in the grief. The Mishnah stipulates that even the poorest husband in Israel should hire not less than 2 flutes and one wailing woman when his wife died. Now taking into account the wealth and position of Jairus, we can just imagine how many mourners there were here in his house and the wailing and lamenting that was going on here. By the way, this oriental custom explains the reaction of the mourners to Christ's statement, "The child is not dead but just asleep" (vs. 39). The Bible says that the mourners laughed at him in verse 40. Close loved ones who were in deep personal grief wouldn't immediately begin to laugh, would they? But hired mourners very well might laugh. They wouldn't have had the same emotional attachment to this scene that family members would have had. But the Lord Jesus Christ planned to have the last laugh here, didn't he?

Christ took 5 with him into the bedroom where the deceased girl lay. Peter, James and John were the only 3 who witnessed every one of Christ's resurrection miracles. And then Jairus and his wife were invited into the bedroom as well. With the command, "Talitha Koum", "Little Girl - Get Up", the dead child began to breath again. The Bible says that she immediately got up from the bed and began to walk about. The Lord Jesus Christ had demonstrated his power, even over death. And in the process, the faith of Jairus had grown and matured. It hadn't been an easy process. Jairus had felt the pain of seeing his daughter weakened by this crippling disease. He had experienced the frustration and irritation of not being able to get the Lord Jesus Christ to his home fast enough to prevent his daughter from dying. He had known the weight of hopelessness as he heard the words from the messengers, "Don't bother the teacher anymore, your daughter is now dead." But in the end, he had seen firsthand the power of God - and his weak faith had grown and matured.

I read recently about a group of tourists that were visiting this small, picturesque village in the European Alps.

The group passed by an older man who was just sitting on a stump enjoying the beauty of the day. In a rather patronizing manner, one of the visitors asked the native, "Have there been any great men born out of this village?" The wise old man just smiled and replied, "Nope, only babies."

We all need to remember that there aren't any great men or women born. Everyone is born the same way, as a baby. Great people are those who develop the character and discipline and abilities needed in life to achieve that greatness. And so it is in the Christian life. There are no spiritual giants born again into the family of God. We all are born again as spiritual babies. But God has a plan for each of his children to bring them into full maturity of faith. It takes time, it takes patience, there are frustrations and irritations, and disappointments along the way. But the Lord Jesus Christ has power over every obstacle - He even has power over death. As we walk with him, he will lead us into maturity of faith.