

Jesus and Delay and Death

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[0 : 01] Please turn to Mark chapter 5, and we're going to look together this morning at this passage of Scripture. May, by faith, see something of you, and in a real sense, be in your presence this morning.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Mark chapter 5, verses 21 to 43, is the story of Jesus with a sick girl, or perhaps a dead girl later on, and a bleeding woman.

It answers questions like, as follows, who is this? That's the question that was asked by the disciples in chapter 4, verse 41.

Who is this? Who are we reading about? Who is this person? Is he a teacher?

He gets referred to as teacher in this story. Is that what he is? Is he a conveyor of information? Is he an accomplished ethical master who tells us the right way to live, and gives us a great example of selfless living that we are to copy?

[1 : 40] Is that who he is? Because here, he does something over and above any of that, because he raises the dead.

Who is this? Could he actually be the Lord? The Lord of everything?

Could it be that we could rightly say, on the basis of stories like this, Jesus Christ is Lord? Well, that's the question. Who is this?

And then another question, how can we connect with him? How could we connect with this person? There are various answers to questions like that.

By duty, for example. How do we connect with Jesus? By doing our duty. By fitting in with an ethical system?

[2 : 37] Or perhaps a ritual system? We connect with him by going to a particular service? By standing in a particular way and sitting down at a particular time?

Or by making certain noises in certain ways? By rituals? By being good? By being good people? Or by osmosis?

By osmosis, I mean you come along where everybody else seems to be in touch with Jesus. You sit down there somewhere in there, and by sort of attraction or some mysterious way, you too get into touch with Jesus by osmosis.

Is that what is being said here? Because, well, it isn't what's being said in this story.

The thing that is pinpointed is actually faith. That these people connect with Jesus by this very simple, but actually very profound human action of trust.

[3 : 48] They get into contact with him by faith. Well, let's look at what the story says. Those are two questions that we can have in mind. There's the little girl and the woman, which I thought I'd put in for good measure.

The story so far. Well, the story so far in Mark is that we have seen Jesus' person and work once round, as it were.

We've seen the scope of what he does once quite quickly. And you might remember, if you were here when we did Mark originally, there was lots of immediately. It's immediately this, immediately this. And you get a whole set of snapshots of Jesus in his person and work.

And we're doing this all over again. There's another little sort of group of stories. They're longer stories, but they show the same thing, perhaps in more depth.

They particularly show his authority. And the question, as I've just mentioned, who is he? Who is he, they asked, even the wind and the waves obey him.

[4 : 51] Who has such authority? What sort of person is he, really? And he has authority over nature, over Satan and his schemes, which we saw in the first part of the chapter.

You know, the man who had many demons and the demons were cast out of him. And in the story we're going to be looking at, he even has authority over death.

And I don't think, well, I can't think of a higher authority than that. We also see a thing going on of Jesus and uncleanness.

And I just mention this in passing, because if you remember the story last time, it was a man with an unclean spirit in tombs. The place of death is an unclean place.

Do you remember that the demons went into the pigs, which are unclean animals? And here we're going to meet this woman who's bleeding. And that would make her ritually unclean.

[5 : 59] And we're also going to find another dead body that Jesus touches, which is another unclean thing. And here is Jesus in an authority or something to do with uncleanness.

His ability to tackle unclean. And instead of it contaminating him, he purifies it. Jesus who can purify the unclean.

And I'm reminded of the verse in, I'm sure it's Wesley's song, his blood can make the foulest clean. His blood works for me.

His blood avails for me. And here's another aspect of Jesus which we won't focus on, but it's worth noticing. That he can take our uncleanness, our foulness, and by his touch make it pure.

Which is a wonderful thing, isn't it? Before we get into the text, let me remind, or tell you some features of the text.

[7 : 08] It does use the word immediately. There are some things that happen quickly. In verse 29, you see immediately her bleeding stopped.

There are some things that happen quickly. And in verse 30, at once Jesus realized that power had gone out. So that's an immediately idea. And in verse 42, immediately the girl stands up.

It's worth noting that because not everything happens immediately, but some things do. Another thing about this story is that both of the people in it are referred to as daughter. I think it's the only place in Mark, or if not the only, but certainly very nearly the only place, where we have two daughters.

The woman in the story in the middle is referred to as daughter in 34. He said to her, daughter, your faith has healed you.

And then in the next verse, the people accompanying Jairus say, your daughter is dead. So Jesus deals with two daughters. This is a particular story of Jesus' ministry to women.

[8 : 17] It's encouraging to see that, isn't it? Jesus' tenderness and understanding towards women.

And they're quite different women. The little girl probably went to public school, and she probably got a pony and things like that. She's in the top of the social ladder.

The woman who's spent all her money on doctors and got nowhere, and is untouchable, would be at the very bottom of the social heap.

And he deals with these two quite different women, but he deals with both of them. And that seems to me a commendable thing about Jesus and worth noting.

Also, what we have here in the text is a sandwich. So we start off with the girl. Then we have our attention diverted to the woman. And then we come back to the girl again.

[9 : 18] And that actually does have some cash value. It's not just an excuse for me to draw a picture. But Mark does use sandwiches, and he means us to take the whole thing together and let the different part of the sandwiches reflect on one another so that we think about them.

Another unusual feature of the text, which you might not have noticed unless it's pointed out, is that it uses the word save. It's translated...

It's not translated as save, but if I point out to you where it crops up, maybe that will be helpful. In verse 23, My little daughter is dying.

Please come and put your hands on her that she will be saved and live. That's what it literally says. I mean, it means healed, but it uses a strong word to be saved.

And in verse 28, the woman thought, If I just touch his clothes, I will be saved. And in verse 34, Daughter, your faith has saved you.

[10 : 26] That's just the original word that's in there. It means healed, because they were healed, but it opens the horizons for thinking of Jesus not just as a healer, but as a saviour.

And the words, Your faith has saved you, seem to me to have a much wider application than just to this woman's healing. And one other thing that I noticed when I was going through the text, there's a lot of muches.

The previous, there was a lot of megas. There is a mega in here, but there's a lot of much, much many. So verse 21, a large crowd, a much crowd was there.

Verse 23. Now, why did I say 23? They pleaded earnestly. They pleaded, he pleaded much.

And verse 24, a much crowd followed. Well, you needn't follow it all through, but it just seems to me to indicate the intensity of what's going on.

[11 : 35] There's a lot of, you know, whatever happens, there's a lot of it. And there's a lot of pleading and a lot of people. It's a very intense and full story in many ways. So let's follow it through bit by bit.

So first of all, the opening scene. Now, it's worth noticing what it does say. Verse 21. When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered round him while he was by the lake.

This ties it to the lake, doesn't it? And we've seen this before. This is a very characteristic ministry of Jesus that he's by the lake.

Lots of people come and we're going from one side to the other. We go beyond. We come back.

Let's go yonder. Let's come back again. And this is what it says. They crossed over yonder to the other side of the lake and there was a much crowd and they gather around him.

You sort of know what's going to happen because the crowd tends to squash around Jesus and not be terribly responsible about how they react.

[12 : 44] But this is what, this is the opening scene. So that prepares us. But what we do get is a surprise now. So one particular person joins this crowd or comes to the crowd.

Then one of the synagogue rulers, so one of the top people in the hierarchy of the area, his name is Jairus, which apparently means God enlightens.

He comes there and he sees Jesus and he falls at Jesus' feet. And several people, this is again a typical thing, doesn't always use the same word, but do you remember the man with the demons fell at Jesus' feet and here is this other one, falling at Jesus' feet.

And we find people characteristically doing this and with hindsight, we would say that's absolutely right. That's what we would want to do, to fall at his feet.

They perhaps didn't understand the full significance, but that's definitely what they did. And there is also, he falls at Jesus' feet and he does pleading and begging, which is the same as what was happening in the previous story, begging to be, going to the pigs and begging to come with Jesus.

[14 : 03] So it follows on that pleading and begging. He's pleading much with Jesus. And what is he pleading for? Well, he says, my daughter is having her last.

It means something like she's in her last moments. She's at the end of her time. Translated, my little daughter is dying. And he has this request, if you come, she's still alive, if you come now and lay your hands on her, because you need to touch her, if you come now and lay your hands on her, she will be saved and she will live.

And you can imagine, if you were a dad in that situation and your little daughter was dying, you would be saved and there was the hope of Jesus coming, you would say, please come and come quick.

Treat it as a 999 call. Please come and lay your hands on her and I know that if you do that, she will live. It's a call on Jesus as a healer.

Now, perhaps there's more to it than that, but it's certainly, he's got an expectation that Jesus can heal. And personally, I admire that.

[15 : 29] I think he's right to do this. Good for him. I feel the same way about Jesus myself. I don't know whether you do, but my instinct is, yes, if I've got an issue like that, I want to bring it to Jesus and I'd want to bring it to him as quickly as possible and as earnestly as possible.

And that's what this man does and off they go. So Jesus went with him, a large crowd followed and pressed around him.

Oh, well, here they go, you see. This word is the same word that you do with grapes when you're squashing grapes to make wine. You know, you crush them, squash them. This is what they do around Jesus.

They always seem to do this. I think it is very unhelpful of them and undisciplined of them, but here they go and Jesus is going off and everybody squashes around him.

And we hope that he'll be able to get there quickly. But we have an interruption. Now, I wasn't sure whether to call it an interruption.

[16:32] I think it is. From one point of view, from this man's point of view, he's probably thinking, come on, Jesus, hurry up. But we are now introduced to a second important person, verse 25, and please notice the way she's described.

We're not told what she does until we've had her described to us. she is a woman with menstrual bleeding and she's had this menstrual bleeding for 12 years, which, I mean, sounds to me an awful situation.

I notice that the little girl is 12 years old as well, so there's a link there in a sort of coincidental way. But here is this woman who has this very awful condition.

condition. And in a Jewish situation, this is even worse. It's not just a medical condition, it's a spiritual condition, if you like, because blood, in Jewish thinking, is the most polluting thing and it is the most cleansing thing.

It's the most polluting thing if blood is in the wrong place. It makes people unclean. And the way you clean them is to apply sacrificial blood. It's funny that, isn't it, it's the most polluting thing and it's the most cleansing thing.

[17:52] But for her, it would be the most polluting thing. I mean, I don't know what she would have said to people, I don't know how people would have reacted to her, but she was not to be touched, and she shouldn't be touching other people because she's unclean.

And she's had this condition for 12 years, and Mark tells us, and he's great at explaining these things to us, he says that subject to bleeding for 12 years, she'd suffered much, there's another much there, she'd much suffered, she suffered a great deal, under the care of many doctors, that's not meant as a disrespect to the medical profession these days, but I think in those days things were probably a little bit different, and you don't really want to think about what things they tried on her to cure her, but she'd suffered much, under many doctors, and she'd spent all her money, she was now bankrupt, all the money that she'd saved up is all gone now, and he says, instead of getting better, she got worse, it's a terrible predicament for her to be in, it's another of these predicaments where human resources have come to an end,

I didn't point that out about the man in the chains, but I should have done, human resources could not tame him, that was what it was saying, and here human resources have come to an end, hopefully we get spiritual sense before we get to rock bottom, hopefully we don't have to learn spiritual lessons the hard way, but this poor woman was at the end, she'd come to the end of all her human resources, and she was no better, poor thing, she was worse, and only now do we get what she does, she came, she heard, and she touched, I think it was the other way around, actually, she heard, she came, and she touched, she heard about Jesus, she came, and she touched, and she touched him from behind, she came behind, so she's, there she is, she's, sort of reaching through the crowd, they're all pressing against him, so he's got loads of people pushing him, get on, you know, like that, and she touches the edge of his garment, the edge of his coat, and she's thinking, he's so great, that if I could even just touch the edge of his coat, then I would be healed,

I will be saved, in fact, and I, I don't know about you, but my instinct says, go for it, that's good, because I have the same thought about Jesus, he's so great, you don't need, his power is so great, you don't need a lot of it for my needs, I mean, just a little bit of it would be more than I need, just a touch would do it, and that's what she's thinking, she's a little bit misguided, because Jesus has to move things on with her, and clarify things, but I don't know, would you feel this way about Jesus, in your prayers, you know, you have a problem with yourself, or with your family, are you thinking, if I could just get this matter to Jesus, it would only need a touch from him, and everything will be okay, I mean, that's what she's thinking, and I think the same,

I don't know what you think, that's what the, well, it works, so I think this could all have been done on the hoof, but, and so the man's thinking, just move a little bit faster, Jesus, if you wouldn't mind, but now we stop, oh, hold, everything, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, so goodness knows what the father's thinking, but Jesus is definite about this, let's see, verse 28, if I touch his clothes, I will be healed, immediately, this is quick, immediately, her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering, suffering is too weak, a translation, her plague, her scourge, thing that ruined life for her, immediately, she was freed from this, and immediately, Jesus realized, he knew something too, that power had gone out from him, and he turns around in the crowd, and says, who touched my clothes?

[22:50] it's an interesting question, isn't it? Because he's got all these people pushing around him like a football crowd on a really, really, really busy day, and he says, stop, now, who touched me?

The disciples, Mark is always candid about the way the disciples react, and here they say, you see the people crowding against you, his disciples asked, and yet you can ask, who touched me? You know, how stupid, I mean, they're all touching you, what on earth do you mean by this? They're very, Mark portrays them as having a very low view of Jesus in some ways, don't they? They often seem to think he's, he either doesn't care, or doesn't know what he's doing, or incompetent in various ways, I'm surprised the Lord puts up with it, actually, but he doesn't rebuke them, he just keeps looking round, and he waits until the woman pops up, I don't know what she must have thought, it must have been very embarrassing, because she's tried to do this all on the hush-hush secret, hiding behind other people, and Jesus says, no, we're not going an inch further until whoever it was owns up.

Right, just, no, I'm not going, come on, come on, come on, no, somebody touched me in a particular way, they know who it is, I want to see who it is, and the woman came, well, eventually, I don't know how long it would have taken, verse 33, then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet, and told the whole truth.

[24 : 45] That must have been a little bit embarrassing for her, I don't know whether other people knew what her medical condition was, but I suppose if she told the whole truth, she would have had to say something about what she'd been healed from, but I don't know whether everybody went quiet, you know, right, tell us what happened, and she has to stand up, Jesus really makes her do this, doesn't she, he makes her stand up, sorry, she falls at his feet, he makes her tell, she's trembling with fear, told the whole truth, and only at this point does she hear the words from Jesus daughter, your faith has saved you, go in peace, and be healed from your scourge, from your suffering, be freed from your suffering, so it's interesting that Jesus makes a point of stopping in so definite a way, and what's going on here, it seems to me that what she had,

I mean, she had the healing, didn't she, she'd exercised faith, and she had the healing, but because it was all done on the secret, what she doesn't have is any establishing of relationship with Jesus, he knows, she knows, but she doesn't know that he knows, and he doesn't know that she knows, if you see what I mean, there's no closing of the loop there, so, Jesus says, you've received my blessing, you've received it, but I don't really want to do this in secret, it doesn't work like that, I want this to be a public relationship, I want you to say in front of people, what it is that I've done for you, and what it is that I am to you, because that's the way I do it, I want this, you know, not to be a secret thing, but a up in front of everybody thing, and it seems to me there's an important point about the Christian life, I'll come to the faith thing in a moment, but maybe

Jesus is saying to you, you've received my blessings, you've come to me in faith, but you've never actually stood up in public and said so, and it's been so secret that nobody even knows what's happened to you, you need, for your relationship with Jesus to go on, to be what it ought to be, to develop, you need to bring it out of the closet, as it were, and bring it into the public realm, you need to be saying you're a Christian, of course, one of the, if not the way to do that is to be baptized, and maybe you have come to faith, you've received Jesus' blessings, maybe your relationship with him has got a little bit stuck, and this might well be the answer, because you haven't taken that step, like this woman had to do, of standing up and saying, it was me, this is what he's done for me, so there's an important point there, that Christian faith, the Christian life, goes hand in hand with a public testimony,

I'm not saying that you have to go up and down London Road saying, I've become a Christian, I've become a Christian, I mean, there are ways of doing it, but it needs to be public, and baptism is the appointed way of doing so, you might say, well, it's all going to be rather embarrassing, and people will watch me, well, it was the same for this woman here, wasn't it?

Jesus said, not going an inch further until we sort this bit out, so there's a point, the thing that he focused on, you see, was faith, and that's why I was trying to say to the children, it isn't just a physical touch of Jesus, because loads of people physically touched him, didn't they?

[28 : 41] They were crowding around him, it was the touch of faith, and it wasn't even the touch, it was the faith that was the important thing. How do we get in contact with Jesus?

These stories tell us again and again, faith. Are we living by faith? Are we exercising faith? Do we have faith in Jesus?

Do we think he's a trustworthy person? There's a wonderful illustration of a visitor centre, I think it's overlooking the Grand Canyon, I could be completely wrong on that.

You know the Grand Canyon got a huge gorge and great cliffs coming down and the visitor centre is up at the top and they've made an observation room out of glass, with glass walls and a glass floor.

Now glass, you don't usually tread on glass, do you? You would usually avoid treading on glass in case it breaks. You might like to imagine the engineer who invented this glass and measured it and seen it put in place and the builders say to him, do you trust that glass?

[29 : 55] He says, yeah, I've measured it, I know it's trustworthy, I've done the thicknesses, done the calculation. He said, you sure you trust it? He says, yeah, I trust it. They say, right, go and walk on it then.

Well, that's where faith comes into its own. If the engineer says, yeah, I do trust it, I've done the calculation, see, there we are. Well, that's faith, that's faith in action.

And the Christian life is not just an abstract faith, it's faith in action. Let's move on. So we left the little girl seriously ill in her last moments, and something awful happens now.

The people from Jairus' house, while Jesus is still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler, and they say, your daughter is dead.

Why bother the teacher anymore? That word bother is only ever used in this context. Why trouble him? Why make his life a misery? Why make his life difficult by adding this to his to-do list?

[31 : 15] Why bother the teacher anymore? Your daughter is dead. That's the, if you like, the ultimate damper on faith, isn't it? There's been a delay, and now we're faced with the last enemy, death.

And Jesus turns to the man and says, even in the face of these two things, delay and death, I still want you to trust me. It's a very remarkable thing for Jesus to say, isn't it?

What is the thing that puts the worst damper on all our hopes and fears is our mortality. I mean, I know that with my dad dying, and we've had other funerals during this autumn, haven't we?

The thing that is most likely to squash everything, and Jesus says, even in the face of death, don't be afraid, just believe.

So we have a delay which leads to death, but the delay does not defeat Jesus. Despite the delay, Jesus can conquer death, and he says, I want you to believe it.

[32 : 31] Will you believe me? Will you trust me in this matter? And it strikes me that this demand of Jesus for faith in the presence of delay is very appropriate in prayer, because sometimes we're asking Jesus for things, and it doesn't happen, or something else happens and interrupts and gets in the way.

And do you not think that Jesus says, well, even in the face of this, just trust me. You know, we pray for the salvation of our children, and time goes on, and Jesus doesn't seem to do anything, and other things get in the way, and he says, I want you to trust me.

And perhaps we have illnesses, and we pray, and nothing seems to happen, it just seems to go on and on, and Jesus says, just trust me.

And perhaps there are other things in our lives, perhaps regarding our own family members, where we pray, we know Jesus is on the case, but nothing seems to happen, and he says, do not fear, just believe.

That's quite a challenge, isn't it? It must have been a big challenge for this father. But he does seem to do it, and I was going to add, if it's a case of delay, it's also the case of death, because believers die.

[34 : 08] And you might have been forgiven in those early days, you might have been for thinking, if Jesus conquers death, then Christians won't die. But of course, Christians did die, and that must have been an exercise of faith.

I thought Jesus saved us from death, and here so-and-so's died. And Jesus says, I'm on the case. I know the issue.

I'm not going to answer immediately. Well, there's other things he did immediately, but this he delays. One day, I will, I might delay a long time to solve the problem of death.

I might delay thousands of years, but I will come. You just keep believing. Keep hanging on in faith, because don't fear, just believe.

And we're told that one day he will reverse death for all his people. We will not all sleep, we're told, but we will all be changed.

[35 : 13] The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised. One day, even though Jesus delays. Let's come to the house.

So we come to the house. He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. And when they come to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly.

Now, either they were already booked, or there might have been a longer journey than we think, because it seems surprising to me that they've got all this in place by the time Jesus arrives.

I mean, maybe it was some hour's walk. I don't know. But when they get there, there is confusion, weeping, and the word much again, much wailing.

And they're really into this, weeping, shouting, wailing, everything. And Jesus arrives.

[36 : 17] Verse 39. They were probably brought in professionally. I don't think they were just family members. They were mourners. He went in and he said to them, why all this commotion and wailing?

The child is not dead, but asleep. See, that's a, what a radical statement that Jesus makes. When I come, I change death into sleep.

Jesus says, you know, that's the reality of it now. Now I'm here. She's not dead, but sleeping. And instantaneously, it seems, the mourners change gear into hilarity.

They laugh at him. So I wonder whether they were terribly sincere in the first place, to be honest.

But Jesus puts them out, takes the child's father and mother and the disciples who are with him, and goes into the little room where the child is.

And he takes her by the hand, which as we've said, would be an unclean thing to do, because you're touching a dead body. He took her by the hand, and he says to her in this very gentle way, in her own, in the language that she would have understood, Talitha Koum, little girl, get up.

[37 : 38] Koum is the get up, and Talitha is the little girl bit. Little girl, get up. Isn't that lovely?

Takes her hand, little girl, up you get. Jesus can say things like that.

And immediately, this one's immediate, up she gets, and walks round. She was 12 years old, we're told. And at this, they were completely astonished.

What it actually says is they were beside themselves. It uses the word which we now say ecstasy, which actually means to stand outside yourself. And it says, they stood outside themselves with a great standing outside.

That's a very clunky translation, isn't it? But they were absolutely gobsmacked. I don't know what to make of this. Absolutely.

So completely astonished. Doesn't do justice to it. They stood beside themselves with mega standing beside. And Jesus says to them, don't tell anybody.

[38 : 44] He gave much orders not to let anyone know about this. Because it's such an explosive piece of information, isn't it? It's such a significant incident.

You could well imagine people getting completely the wrong end of the stick and getting a completely distorted view of Jesus. I mean, it's real. He can do this. But there's other things we need to know as well.

Like his death on the cross, for example. He says, so, you know, this is not, you know, don't put this, we don't want a press handout on this. But what he does say is, give us something to eat.

I think that's fantastic. So he says, little girl, up you get, don't tell anybody. Have you got any beans on toast around? Because that's what she'd like. And there she is, jumping around, hungry.

Brilliant, isn't it? What were our two questions? The two questions were, who is Jesus? Well, who is he?

[39 : 46] He can rule nature. He can overpower Satan, the strong man. He can bind the strong man. We can't. He can make the unclean pure.

He can raise the dead. We might have to wait for that, but he can do it. And I want to say, I think that this proves that Jesus is the Lord.

Capital letters, Yahweh, the name of God. That's who he is. It's a case that's been built up, not by just saying, this is the answer, but it's building up the case sort of piece by piece.

But I think we've got enough pieces of the jigsaw puzzle there to say, this is the only possible answer. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. He's the Lamb upon the throne to be worshipped and trusted and adored.

I don't know whether you agree with me, but I think that that's who we're looking at here. And how do we relate to him? Not by rituals, not to do with rituals. It's not to do with, Jesus doesn't say, you know, I will come and heal your daughter if you undertake the following nine tasks.

[41 : 00] Go to a distant island. Bring me the fruit. He doesn't do any of that, he just says, trust me. What he commends is trust, faith, believing.

And the trust that he's talking about is trust that leads to action. The faith that will step out and say publicly, I believe in Jesus.

the faith that hangs on despite adverse appearance and despite delay. And to such faith, Jesus says, as he says to this woman, go in peace.

Go in peace. What a brilliant thing to say. What could be a better thing for Jesus to say to us?

We've finished looking at the scriptures. Go in peace.

Let's sing together. Let's sing.