

The Hope of Christianity

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[0 : 00] Friends, it's great to be back with you this morning and looking around in that last hymn. I was just looking around and thinking, I wanted to say, looking at you, you haven't changed at all.

I wanted to say that. And we haven't changed that much. So anyway, I just, let's get that out of the way. Anyway, the years don't do us a lot of good, do they? But anyway, let's move on. Let's move on.

I want to talk not only to those who've been Christians for many years, but also to you who are guests this morning. If this is your first time in this church, welcome. And this is an English accent. And don't be put off. It's lovely to have you here. I want to talk. I want to talk about clarity. I want to talk about what's really important in life.

And I want to say why the Christian faith is crucial. I want you to get clarity on that. And so, if you will, would you take these Bibles and turn to page 840.

[1 : 08] We're going to be taking and looking at this dramatic story in Mark chapter 5. The Gospel of Mark. Story of Jesus and this sick child. Child who dies, actually.

Now, I'm at a particular age where I'm targeted by online marketing. I don't know how they know your age, really. But I find, I get on my computer, I get bombarded by wonderful pictures of grey-haired couples in fabulous locations all over the globe.

Under the heading, 50 things to do before the unmentionable. The Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, historic Petra.

There's a whole industry dedicated to helping you make the most of your bucket list. And one such is actually called The Rough Guide to Making the Most of Your Time on Planet Earth.

And it lists a number of things you ought to do. One of which, surprisingly, is throw yourself into the nightlife of Liverpool. Which would probably kill me off if you know Liverpool.

[2 : 25] But anyway, now all that kind of advertising reveals something significant about ourselves. Some people have called this FOMO.

The fear of missing out. You see it in social media envy. And it is a contemporary problem of the affluent. Yes, there are people who simply don't have a roof to live under.

But who doesn't feel the fear of getting to the end of your life and not getting your money's worth? And lurking behind that fear is the fear that there's something coming down the tracks that's bigger than you and bigger than me.

And we can't do anything about it. And we will miss out because we are fragile. And we do break. And we are sinful even. And we are very human.

And this fear is realized in the story of the father in this particular passage. Whose daughter is in serious danger.

[3 : 36] Not just of missing out on a career. Not just of missing out on a relationship. But of missing out on life itself. And so it brings a painful clarity to this man.

That there are not 50 things to do before you die. There's only one thing that really matters. And we're going to look at that now. Two headings. If you are taking any notes or just remember them. The first is this. Life challenging circumstances. Life challenging circumstances. And we'll look at the synagogue ruler. The father.

His name is Jairus. And we're going to look at him. I can imagine his life was going wonderfully well. He was going through life happily.

The children were playing. And they were going to school. And they were getting their grades. And all this sort of thing. And suddenly something happens that turns his life.

[4 : 39] Her life. The whole family's life upside down. His daughter. It says. Was at the point of death. In verse 23. And so he does.

What perhaps. A number of you may have done. Rushed to Jesus. And said. Jesus help me. Help me. Now. I know something about that.

Talking with David. I was. I shared a little bit about our daughter. Claire. Our youngest daughter. And some of you know this story. And thank you.

By the way. Thank you for praying for her. It is a happy story in the end. But. Boys. It was something when it happened. 2014. I remember sitting down with my music director.

We were just discussing the hymns. For next Sunday. I get a phone call. It's the police. Are you the father of Claire James? Yes. I am. Your daughter has been in a.

[5 : 37] In a serious accident. She is in. Leeds. Royal Infirmary. Will you. Just come as quickly as you can. And so we dashed off.

We. We drove from Manchester to Leeds. An hour and a half. We did it in an hour. And. You. You. You. You kind of. You come to. What we call accident and emergency. I think you call ER.

Is that right? Emergency. We come to emergency. And. And we're ushered into a special room. With comfy sofas.

And free tea. And coffee. And Kleenex on the table. And you think. This is not good. This is not good. And they come in. And they tell you. This is a life changing.

Accident. And. You go. And even just thinking about it now. It just kind of makes me. Kind of. Kind of turn over. And. I mean.

[6 : 33] It is. A miraculous recovery. I want to tell you. They. They gave a 10% chance. Of recovery. And. You know. She is. Virtually the same girl. I mean. Her memory is a little bit dodgy. But she's.

She's fine. And. She's doing very well. But. When you come to that. Moment. All sorts of things. Kind of.

Flow through your mind. One trivial thing. If you are called. In an emergency. I mean. You. You take your money.

Don't you take your phone. But there are three things. You forget. Just a little tip. Three things. You forget. The first thing. You forget. Is your toothbrush. Because you're going to have to stay overnight. Okay. The second thing.

You forget. Is the mobile phone charger. Yeah. And the third thing. You forget. Is a spare pair of underpants. Now. I don't know if you call them. I forgot all those things.

[7 : 26] And. Yeah. I kind of felt. You know. Anyway. There we are. That's just a little tip for you. Now. It was a wonderful. Happy ending. Okay. And. And. And I. And I don't want to. Scare you with that story.

Because there are a million people in Leeds. There were 12 people in the intensive care unit. There were two people in special beds at the back. One of which was Claire. So that's one. There were two really serious cases.

And that's two in a million. So. You know. It's. It's probably not going to happen. But. It happened to us. And. It happened to Jairus.

And. Jairus in desperation. Goes to the one person. Who can help him. Jesus. He's heard. About what Jesus can do. And so.

He says. My little daughter is at the point of death. Come. Lay your hands on her. So that she may be made well. And live. And the marvelous thing. Is that Jesus. Goes.

[8 : 21] With him. It's a journey. They enter into a journey together. But it's a journey. That does not go as planned. So. They're rushing to the house. And.

They. The crowd is pressing around them. The ambulance sirens are wailing. And wailing. And Jesus. Suddenly stops. Everything.

He says. Who touched me? And then. He calls. Who touched me? Who touched my gum? He said. He calls out a woman. And he takes time.

And he speaks to her. And he prays with her. And. And he says. My daughter. Your faith has made you well. Not the magic touch. But. My. Your faith has made you well. And just imagine.

How Jairus is feeling. At this moment. He and the disciples. Are thinking. This woman. Has been bleeding. For 12 years. She is a chronic.

[9 : 19] Case. The child. Is an acute. Case. If. If you were in emergency. Right now. And. And. And. You're doing what you're doing.

Jesus. This is negligence. You're not doing the right thing. Every life challenging. Circumstance. Causes you. Or can cause you.

To doubt. I mean. We wondered. Lord. What are you doing? What are you doing? Fortunately. I had a book. By R.C. Sproul. I.

On God's sovereignty. And that was the thing. That really. Really helped me greatly. But. I just. Share that with you. But. Some people. Can think. Jesus. Do you care?

And why aren't you doing. What I know. You should do. Yeah. You know what I mean. Don't you? Now.

[10:13] We know now. Don't we? That. To Jesus. To cure. A woman. Who's been bleeding. For 12 years. And to raise a child. From the dead. Is no different.

For him. He can do that. But. For reasons of his own. Jairus. Goes. He has to live. With the agony. As Jesus. Chooses to help. This poor outsider. Become a disciple. This poor woman. And then the situation. Gets. Worse. Verse. 35.

While. He was still speaking. Jesus was still speaking. To the woman. The messengers. Come. From the ruler's house. And they say. Don't bother the teacher.

Any longer. It's too late. She's gone. Your daughter's dead. Your daughter's died. And now. Comes the biggest. Challenge.

[11:07] To Jairus. Jesus. Speaks. Over their heads. Overhearing. What they said. Jesus said. To the ruler. Of the synagogue. And he speaks.

As it were. Over their heads. And he. I imagine him. Fixing him. Fixing. Jairus. With a look. And he says. Simply this. He says. Do not.

Fear. Only. Believe. Do not fear. What does Jairus do? Stick.

Or twist. What's he going to do? Well. That's what life challenging situations do. They force you. Into a clarity.

Who can help me now? Who can really help me? And for us. We ended up saying. We've hit rock bottom here. But actually.

[12:05] You're here. You're in. This room. In intensive care. And you are here. And that makes all the difference.

Don't. You know. People said to us. I can't imagine what you're going through. And actually. You can't. Because. The situation is very difficult. But actually. What people don't feel.

Is the presence. Of the son of God. With them. Which is what we had. But we. We came to that. Sort of. Moment of clarity. Where we said.

Where else can we go? Where else can we go? Friends. Why spend. Your life. Thinking about. The 50 things. To do.

Before you die. When there is. Only one person. One thing. That matters. For all the ultimate questions. It is Jesus Christ.

[12:59] The living. Lord Jesus Christ. Whom we read about. Here. In this gospel. So that's my. My first point. In life challenging situations. You gain a clarity.

You gain a clarity. Now. Secondly. Let's look at a life changing savior. And this is my second point. And. We're now not going to look at Jairus. We're going to look at Jesus. And so.

Verse. 38. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. They came to his house. And. They see the weeping. And the wailing. That is taking place there.

And then Jesus makes his next astonishing statement. And he brings Peter and James. And they all come into the. Just those people. And they. They enter the house.

And he says to them. Why are you making a commotion. And weeping. And here it comes. This child. Is not dead. But sleeping.

[13:58] Now they laughed. And I want to say. I mean. There are some. Commentaries on this. That say. Oh well. You know. Obviously the child wasn't dead. No. No. No. No. The child is not in a coma.

They knew. About death. They knew. And I've seen. A girl in a coma. For four weeks. I know what it looks like. No. You know.

No. She was dead. But. What Jesus was doing. Was with this miraculous sign. He is changing death forever. And so. If you read on.

With this lovely. Sort of tenderness. He says. And you see. The original Aramaic there. I think. Talitha kumi. Which.

Translated. Means. I guess. In. In Canadian. It means. Honey. Let's get up. Honey. Get up. Just. [14:55] Come on. Wake up. It's okay. And. She gets up. And he shows. By saying that death. Is just a sleep. He says. He shows that death. Is not an eternal separation. From God. Or our loved ones. It is a sleep. From which. We wake. Jesus says. I am the resurrection. I am the life. He or she. Who believes in me. Even though they die. Yes. We do die. But you shall live. Now you're listening to me. And you're saying. Especially if you're a guest. Come on. Now you're moving into the realms. Of things. That seem crazy talk. This is crazy. The Christian story. Is full of crazy things. You might say. And the average person. You know. Will say. And in the UK. And I guess in Canada. Hey. The virgin birth. [15:55] But I know where babies are from. Miracles. They don't happen. When you're dead. You're dead. And it's as if God says to us.

Good. I'm glad you know your science. But you don't know me. That's what I'm like. Here is life changing power. That's extraordinary. But if you'll stay with me. There is also life changing love here. And it's very subtle. It's just under the surface. But I wanted you to notice in the story. Not just the power. But the love. Do you see the emphasis on touch. In the whole story. So right at the very beginning. Jairus comes to Jesus. And he says. Would you lay your hands. On. My daughter. And then. Later. With the woman. [16:53] With the issue of blood. He says. Who touched me? And then the disciples say. Why are you asking? Who touched you? And then later.

At the end of the story. With the little girl. He takes her by the hand. There is something about touch here. In this story. There's something about a connection. With the son of God. He wants to make. A connection. With you. To touch. Your life. There's a lovely old hymn. Isn't there? Thy touch. Has still. Its ancient. Power. No word from thee. Can fruitless. Call. Fall. But to touch you. I mean. You may feel. I don't know. I don't want you that close. You know. Stay back. Stay back. [17:47] Jesus. But if he does touch you. It will come at a cost to himself. And here's a little explanation. Stay with me if you can. In Jewish law. A dead child. And a woman with an issue of blood. Were by law unclean. You're not supposed to make contact. With such people in Jewish law. But Jesus does. His touch. Brings. Life. But that idea of touch. Is also in the Old Testament. And in the sacrifices in the Old Testament. To cleanse God's people. To forgive them. To give them life. The Old Testament priests. Would. Would take a lamb. And they would lay. Hands on the lamb. They would touch the lamb. And by doing that. They would transfer. The uncleanness. [18:43] The sin. The. The death. If you like. The deadly. Deadly sin. That we have. Would transfer all of that. Onto the lamb. And the New Testament says. That Jesus. Is. The lamb of God. So to make you whole. He had to take your uncleanness. And everything. On. You. On. On himself. Sorry. On himself. To make you whole. Now how do you respond to that? How do you. How do you. How do you grasp that? It's actually quite hard. Isn't it? You. You. You're not sure how to respond. When you hear that Jesus died for your. Sins. Or paid a price for you. I want you to imagine that a friend. Is staying in your house. And. There's a. A letter from the revenue. Is it revenue Canada? Is that what. They're called. You don't like those letters. [19:44] Do you? Yeah. I know. They're not very pleasant. Okay. And. Anyway. A letter comes. And by accident. Your friend. Opens it. And sees. That you owe money. And. So. When. When you come back. He says. Hey. Look. I'm really sorry. I opened. This. This bill. From Revenue Canada. But I. I paid it for you. Now. How should you respond? Except. Don't open my mail. But I mean. How do you respond? Well. You don't know how to respond. Unless you know how. The size of the bill. Do you? You simply. You don't know simply whether to say. Well. Well. Thanks. That's. That's very kind of you. Or whether to fall at his feet.

As though dead. And say. Thank you. So. Much. And the closer you get to Christ. The closer you begin to realize. That for him to touch you.

[20 : 40] There was an enormous debt to pay. That cost. Had to cost him his life. He. As it were. Had to die. In. In your place. Instead of you. For you to live.

He had to give up his life. Okay. Now. I digress there. But I simply wanted to tell you. That what you're seeing here. Is not simply raw power. It is. Naked love.

As well. Why am I telling you this? I'm telling you this. For clarity. Jairus in the story would say to you.

I was in the worst circumstances. Of my life. But I saw with a stunning clarity. The one person I needed to see.

And I needed to walk with him on a journey. That was very difficult. But I stuck with him. I was afraid. I was afraid. But I believed. And I trusted in him. And I came for a healing.

[21 : 40] But I got a resurrection. I saw I needed a life changing savior. What do you do?

Take a deep breath. Some of you have been Christians for a while. But instead of the one thing. There have been 49 other things coming in.

You know. And you've lost the clarity. Some of you are just looking into Christianity right now. And you're beginning to think. I hope.

And see what's really important. I once sent in a moment of risky boldness to somebody. I have this, you know, habit of opening my mouth. And wishing I kept it shut. But at this moment wasn't too bad.

I said to this person. Wouldn't you be kicking yourself to get to the end of your life. Never having looked at the one thing that really matters. And I then went. Are you all right with that? And she said.

[22 : 40] Thank goodness you told me. Salvation is the one thing that really matters. Friends. There may be 50 things to do before you die. But it turns out that there's only one thing that really matters.

So can I urge you to look at Christ. Or come back to Christ. With a blinding clarity. And an overwhelming sort of love for him again.

Just in awe of the grace that he should do that for you. We have. Or this church has within these Bibles somewhere.

This little card called Connect. Maybe we should call it Touch. Or Get in Touch. Ask Jesus to touch you.

Touch your life. I mean I know you'll be scared. Honestly. Or retouch it as it were. I know you'll be scared. Because you know your priorities. Everything's going to be thrown upside down.

[23 : 43] But ask Jesus to do it. And on the card. Just write a little. Just write your name. And maybe a cell number. An email. Or whatever. So that people can get in touch with you.

And help you. With that. 50 things to do before you die. It turns out that there's only one thing that really matters. Will you pray with me?

Thank you for your time. Thank you.