

More Than Death

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Let me pray for us as you stand. Father, we thank you for your words. I pray that you will help us to hear your voice speaking. I pray your spirit be very active amongst us. Amen. Thank you. Please take a seat. Well, good morning. It's really good to be here. I have been in the UK for two years and even Africa for two months, but I always consider St. John's my spiritual home, and I have longed to be here for the two years, so it's a very happy thing for me to be here. My parents tell me that some of you have prayed for me, so thank you very much for all your prayers. So we're looking at Mark chapter 5 this morning, and here is the point of this morning's passage. I'm going to tell you right at the beginning so you can remember it if you remember nothing else. Here's the point.

The point is we should trust Jesus in the face of death. We should trust Jesus in the face of death. Not all of us are about to die. Not all of us are at death's door, but in some way we do all face death on a sort of regular basis. But what do I mean? Well, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul asks this question, where, death, is your sting? And I think if we stop for a second and think about it, the answer to that question is everywhere. The sting of death hurts us all, doesn't it? The Bible says that death has permeated through all of life. Death is unraveling all of God's good world, like termites that have infested a house.

The walls are eaten through. Death has touched everything. That's what this story is about. Death is touching this synagogue ruler. His precious little daughter is at death's door.

That's touching this woman as well with the bleed. It's unraveling her. I look down at verse 25. It says, and there was a woman who had discharged of blood for 12 years and who had suffered much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. So this woman is physically unraveling, physically dying. She's bleeding a slow death. She's financially bleeding out. She's financially unraveling. She's spiritually coming undone too. She's unclean. She can't go to the temple. She can't meet with God's people or God as a Jew would. And she's probably socially unraveling. She's isolated. People weren't allowed to touch her or come close to her. She is a very desperate situation. And this is the power of death.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Grief Observed*. And he wrote it after his wife died in 1960. And it's his describing of what it is to grieve, really. And he talks about grieving this way.

[3 : 2 6] He says, of the whole thing is deadly. So with this, I see rowan berries reddening. And I don't know for a moment why they, of all things, should be depressing. I hear a clock strike, and some quality it always had before has gone out of the sound. What's wrong with the world to make it so flat, shabby, worn out looking? Then I remember. C.S. Lewis is talking about a particular death, death. But I think the same is true in a smaller way, and sometimes a larger way for everything.

Death has permeated the world. It colors everything. It tastes everything gray. I can't pretend to know all of your joys and all of your sorrows. But I do know that in some way, death has touched your life at some point. Maybe in the death of a loved one. Maybe in your own sickness. Maybe in relational problems and brokenness. But I do know death has touched your life, and it will touch your life again. So what do we do when death touches us? And the answer is, we need Jesus to touch us. The Gospel of Mark is about Jesus defeating death. Death is unraveling the world, and Jesus is putting it back together. The woman, she knows her need. She comes up and touches Jesus' garment. And it heals her physically. The bleeding stops. But that's not enough for Jesus. He wants to put her back together completely. So he searches for the crowd, searches in the crowd for her. He stops and asks for her. And he speaks to her, and he touches her soul. He changes her life forever. In verse 34, he speaks to her, and he pronounces, daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace and be healed of your disease. That last line could be translated, be cured from your whipping or freed from your hurting. Jesus has restored her physically, but so too spiritually and socially. He has put her back together. And he has made sure that her faith is in him as a person. And so also with Jairus and his daughter. The daughter is unraveling. But by the time Jesus gets to her, she's already dead. But Jesus has the power to raise her back to life. For Christians, death is like sleep.

[6 : 40] It's real. It's real. But it's only temporary. Death is not the final thing. So these two miracles are pictures of the kingdom of God. Death is unraveling the world, taking it apart.

But Jesus is putting the world back together. He did it, finally, by going to the cross and dying. He took the sting of death on himself. He was unraveled, totally. And now he offers his restoring life to us.

If there's a mother with a child, and there is a bee coming, and the bee is coming to sting the child, what will the mother do? She will take her arm and put it around the child. And she will take the sting of the bee herself, like that. And Jesus has done the same thing with us. He's put his arm around us, because he loves us. And he has taken the sting of death.

So at the beginning I said, the point was to trust Jesus in the face of death. Death might be touching you right now. You might be struggling, maybe with sickness, maybe with depression, isolation. Maybe you're facing the death of a loved one. It's all the touch of death. Or maybe death might touch you tomorrow. Well, here's the important thing.

[8 : 14] Christian faith is faith in the face of death. Real faith is faith in the face of death. Just like this ruler. You see, in verse 35, horrible news comes to him.

Let me read verse 35. While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further? It's too late, Jairus.

Let's go back to the funeral. Death has already won. And you might be in a similar position. The situation seems hopeless. Like death has won. Well, this is the moment where Jesus speaks.

This is where Jesus says the words in verse 36, which are wonderful words. And if you are in this situation, hear these words of Jesus to you. Verse 36.

Do not fear. Only believe. Jesus hears the world and he hears the world give up. And his response is this.

[9 : 21] Trust me. He says, trust me. Again, this is C.S. Lewis. He struggled with his faith after the death of his wife.

And he said this. Bridge players tell me that there must be some money on the game or else people wouldn't take it seriously. Apparently, faith is like that.

Your bid? For God or no God? For a good God or a cosmic sadist? For eternal life or non-entity. Your bid would not be serious if nothing much was staked on it.

And you will never discover how serious it was until the stakes are raised horribly high. Until you find you are not playing for counters, for pennies, but you are playing for every penny that you have in the world.

Nothing less will shake a person out of his or her merely notional beliefs. He has to be not silly before he comes to his senses. Only torture will bring out the truth.

[10 : 27] Only under torture does he discover it himself. It's in the trials of life that our faith is refined as gold.

It's in these trials that Jesus' power becomes real. And it's in these trials that we need to look to him and to his cross. So we need to trust Jesus when we face death.

Death is unraveling the world and it touches us all. But Jesus is putting it back together. He is going to win finally and we can trust him.

And he says, don't be afraid, only believe. So that's the point. But this passage also gives us two encouragements to help us.

These might be two objections that people have. And the first might go like this. I struggle with the timing of Jesus. I think this is a struggle for me.

[11 : 30] When death comes to touch me, my first reaction is to say, sure, Jesus will someday fix the world. Why can't he do it now? Why does he delay?

And I'm sure that's exactly what Jairus thought. Jesus is on the way to heal the daughter and he stops to heal this woman and he takes time with her to speak to her.

Now, her problem was a terrible one but it wasn't urgent. And while Jesus solves this long-standing problem, the urgent one seems to be forgotten and the daughter dies.

And it can seem that way for us. We say, Jesus, this problem is the urgent problem. Well, we can see in the story that Jesus knows far better than the synagogue ruler.

Jesus knew the outcome. He knew what was going to happen and he has the power to raise the dead. The same is true for us. Jesus does know far better than we do.

[12 : 33] Why God delays with this disease, that sickness, I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us that. But we are told that Jesus knows exactly what he is doing and we can trust his timing.

The second objection might go like this. Well, maybe he's in control. Fine. But it's clear he doesn't care. It's clear he's not a compassionate person. Otherwise, he wouldn't let this happen.

Well, this passage shows us clearly also that Jesus cares. Jairus might have thought this as well, mightn't he? That Jesus simply didn't care about the daughter.

You know, here's my daughter. She's dying. Don't you care, Jesus? But that's not the case at all. In verse 41, we see Jesus healing the daughter and Mark records the words in Aramaic of what Jesus says.

That's the original language that Jesus probably spoke. and Mark likes Aramaic more than Matthew or John. I think Luke never uses Aramaic. And I think that Mark uses it when he wants to capture the power of emotion of the words in the original language.

[13 : 47] So, the verse does mean something like, little girl, I say to you, get up, arise. But a more emotional translation would be like this. Jesus sits down and says, honey, it's time to get up.

come on, little lamb, it's time to get up out of bed. And you can see him, can't you? He's sitting there, he picks up her hand and he smiles and he says, come on lamb, it's time to get up.

And she opens her eyes, yawns, and says, okay, it's not always easy to understand this world, but the story is clear.

Jesus is in control and he cares deeply. He cares about us, more than we can imagine actually. Just like a loving father cares for his precious little daughter.

And we know he cares for us too, not just the girl. And we know it because he gave his very life for us. So when we face death, let us remember the words of 1 John.

[14 : 51] This is love, not that we love God, but that he sent his son to die for us. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.