

**Text:** Mark 5:21-43

**Date:** July 1, 2018

**Focus:** Because Jesus came to do the undoable, notice the unnoticeable, and save all souls – we have nothing to fear.

**Function:** As Christians, we are called to stop fearing and keep on believing.

*In Jesus Name, Amen.*

Today's reading brings up and highlights two realities of the Christian life: Fear and Faith.

Fear is everywhere in our story today, but the first time we see fear in our reading is in Jairus. Jairus was a leader of the local synagogue. He was probably equivalent to the congregational president in our world. He would have been an important person in his community. People would have looked up to him. He was probably highly respected. He was also afraid. Jairus is a good reminder that fear comes after EVERYONE. Not just the weak. Not just the poor. But even the powerful and mighty and strong.

Jairus was afraid for his daughter. She was only 12 years old, but it looked like she was coming to the end of her life. She was sick, and it didn't look good. And Jairus, was, naturally afraid. Anyone who is a parent here has to be able to relate to Jairus. He had probably gone through all the local doctors. He had prayed. He had sacrificed at the temple. But, none of it was working. And now He was terrified. Terrified at the idea of burying his daughter, of telling his wife that all hope was gone. Of what that meant about how God felt about him.

But, Jairus wasn't the only one dealing with fear. Because just after Jesus agrees to go and heal Jairus daughter, there is this woman who interrupts. And she's afraid too. If Jairus was the kind of guy you would expect to see in the front row at church, shaking hands, and volunteering at every event, this woman is the opposite. She would be the one sneaking into worship 15 minutes late, sitting in the back row, and then leaving 5 minutes early. This unnamed, anonymous woman been sick, bleeding, for 12 years. 12 long years. No doctors have been able to help her. Her prayers have gone unanswered. She's hopeless and helpless. And she's afraid. And now here is this miracle working man named Jesus she's heard so much about, a man who had healed so many others. What a blessing to cross paths with Him. But, even then, she has to be afraid. Because what if even Jesus can't do anything. What hope does she have then? What if He rejects her or condemns her or tells her to get lost?

And MEANWHILE! Can you imagine what Jairus is thinking with all this commotion going on? As Jesus stops and looks around to see who touched Him, as Jesus pauses to share a few words with this woman, I just imagine Jairus' fear growing. Because while this woman is getting healed, his daughter is dying. Time is running out. Hope is slipping away. He has to be fearing that this woman's restoration is going to mean his daughter's death.

This is a story clothed, wrapped, surrounded, immersed with fear.

I think most of us can relate to Jairus and the woman. Parents, you can probably easily relate to Jairus. Anyone who has ever dealt with a serious health problem can probably relate to the woman. But, all of us have dealt with our own fears. And here's the thing about fear – it just comes. It's not always justified or rational – although sometimes it is. But, there is little we can do about it.

Now, I would like to think of myself as a strong and courageous person who deals with and handles fear confidently. But, that's not exactly true. I am afraid, just like everyone else. And sometimes my fears are totally irrational. For example, at one of my previous churches I lived in the parsonage, like we do here, but at that church the parsonage was physically connected to the church building. And the way everything was set up and constructed, my garage was way out back behind the church in the alleyway. In order to get to my car and the garage I had two options. I could go out my front door, around the block and get into the garage from that alley. But, that wasn't always convenient or quick or fun when it was raining or snowing or cold. And so, when they built everything they had dug a tunnel that went from my basement and wound around to the garage. This tunnel was dark. It had twists and turns. There were cobwebs. And I was terrified of it. Every time I turned a corner in it, I would call out, "Anyone there!" If my mother wouldn't have laughed at my, I probably would have called her every time I went down it. I was 26 or 27 years old and here I was with this irrational fear of the dark.

But, that's how fear works. You can't always control it. It just comes. And sometimes it's much, much more serious than that. Some of us here today have fears over cancer or death. That's serious stuff. For others of us, we're afraid when it comes to paying our bills or the future of our job. Some of us here today are afraid what other people think about us – we are afraid that we won't be accepted or like. Some of us have spiritual fears. We wonder if, in a world full of 7 billion people, God could possibly have time to care about us. Or, we're scared about whether after everything we've done God could possibly forgive us.

Most of us, I think, can relate to our story today with all its fear.

But, today's story is not just a story of fear and worry. It's also a story of FAITH. And, just like fear, faith just comes to us. We're not in control of it. It's a gift that can't be earned or deserved, but is just poured out to us by God. It's a relationship that we are born into by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

And so, as Christians, as long as we live in this world we will live with both: fear AND faith.

I think it's important to recognize that and to call it out, because sometimes we think that if we have fear, if we are afraid, that that means we don't have faith. Or we think that once we come to faith, all our fears will just go away. As a pastor I've had plenty of people ask me questions like that, something like, "Pastor, how can I call myself a Christian when I have this fear?" or "Why is that I still have all these fears even though I trust in Jesus?" But, one of the things we're reminded of is that faith is NOT a reflection of our emotions. So, if you are feeling scared or worried that doesn't mean that you have a weak or scared faith. Faith in Christ is

trusting in Jesus no matter your emotions. No matter what your thinking. No matter what fear your feeling. Fear is subjective feeling based on your present circumstances – and ALL of us are going to be afraid sometimes - but faith is a relationship you have been brought into that is founded upon Christ's forever faithfulness for you. Today we are reminded that as long as we live in this sinful world we will have reasons fear. But, as Christians we will also have faith. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Here's another good example, I think. Parents, maybe you can remember a time when your children woke up in the middle of the night with some totally unjustified, made-up fear. Maybe your kids feared the monster under their bed or the alien in the closet or maybe it was a bad dream. Whatever it was, they were afraid. They had fear. But, they also might have shown that they had faith. Like when they ran into your room for the third time in one night and climbed up into your bed because they knew that you could protect them. They knew that with *you* they were safe. They had fear AND faith. As Christians, as long as we live in this world, so will we.

And yet! Jesus encourages Jairus, and I believe us too, with these words today in verse 36, "Don't be afraid, just believe". Which seems like an impossibility, right? How can we not be afraid when we live in such a scary world! Jesus seems to be telling us to impossibly just shut off our feelings, right? So, what does Jesus mean when He tells us to stop being afraid and only have faith.

Well, first we need to remember that one day, when Jesus returns, we will live in a world with no more fear. Because we will live in a world with no more sin. One day our King Jesus will come back to raise the living and the dead, gather together His people, and cast out sin, death, and the devil for all time. There will be no more fear.

But, until then, I don't think Jesus is denying that we will be afraid sometimes. Until Jesus returns we will have plenty of reasons to fear. And there's not much we can do about that. But, I think Jesus is reminding us that when it comes to our fears we have 2 options.

First, we can turn towards our fears, embrace them, and let them lead us. And, quite often that's what we do. We grab onto fear and let it drive us forward. Whether it's our fear of a sickness or death or the fears we have of being accepted and loved, sometimes we become so absorbed in them that they are all we see.

But, with Jesus we have another way. It's the way of that unnamed woman. In the midst of her fear, she turned to Jesus and reached for Jesus. She trusted that He could pull her through and lift her up and carry her to where she needed to be. And brothers and sisters, as Christians, we are called to do the same. The way through our fears is not to let them lead us, but to reach for Jesus. To cling to Him. To grab onto Him in faith. If we reach for our fears, they will only drag us down, but if we reach out for Jesus He will lift us up and out.

Now, maybe you're thinking, "Well, what does that look like? How do I reach for Jesus? He's not exactly here like He was for that woman, walking down our streets" Well, throughout

history, God's people have reached for Jesus and turned to find Him in three places: His promises, His people, and prayer.

Brothers and sisters, when you are scared, cling to God's promises. To the promise He made you in baptism where He made you His child, put His name on you, and washed you clean. Reach for the promise He makes you here at this altar with His Body and Blood. Turn to the Scriptures, which are full of His promises of life and love and grace. That's what will get you through your fears. Now, God doesn't promise that He will fix every problem or wipe away every scary situation, but He does promise an eternal victory. He does promise to be with us THROUGH those fears. And so He invites us to grab onto His promises.

And you can also turn to God's people. They are often His representatives in this world. Jesus isn't here like He once was, but His children are. And you all are surrounded by His people here, with brothers and sisters who can remind you of those promises. Who can comfort you in your fear. Who can encourage you in your faith. Rather than turning towards our fears we turn towards and reach out to God's people.

And finally, we turn towards prayer. Prayer causes us to lift up our eyes away from our fears and towards the one who can conquer them. Prayer welcomes us into a conversation with the one who can and has and will raise the dead. Prayer is a turning away from our subjective, present circumstances and feelings and a turning towards the objective Lord and Savior of the universe.

So, yes, fear is a part of life. But, so is faith. And by faith in Jesus, as we cling to Him, all our fears are overcome.

In Jesus Name, Amen.