

Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.



Mark 5:21-43

*Once again, it is important to remember that in the Bible, "faith" is **NOT** about "beliefs," or "ideas," or "understandings." It is about trust. And so Jesus' observation: "My daughter, your faith has made you well," is better understood as: "My daughter, your trust / loyalty / bonding with me has made you well."*

Year B

Pentecost 5

July 1, 2012

Sunday between June 26 and July 2 inclusive

Proper 8, Ordinary Time 13

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [Mark 5:21-43, The Message](#) or [Mark 5:21-43, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#) for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

This text is a "Mark sandwich," a story-within-a-story, that is meant to be digested as a whole.

Jesus has just returned from foreign territory on the other side of Lake Galilee, and once again a large crowd gathers - the gossip network is successfully spreading news of Jesus; successfully increasing his public status and honour; and thereby also increasing his potential threat to the established authorities.

Indeed, his reputation has increased to the point that two members of the elite take the risk of crossing strict social boundaries to seek Jesus' aid: Jairus, an official of the synagogue, and an unnamed woman who had spent all her money being treated by many doctors - to no avail. We know that Jairus belongs to the elite by virtue of his office. We infer the unnamed woman is also among the elite by virtue of her having money to spend on doctors. She is also probably a widow, since otherwise the money would not be hers to spend. We can also assume that Jairus has also had doctors treat his daughter - also to no avail.

Thus, in a nut shell, the context of this lesson is two elite members, who have used their socially accepted resources to no avail, step out of their gated communities and join the crowd of low-class people on the street to seek help from the rising folk hero - Jesus of Nazareth. A daring come down for them.

The lesson begins with Jairus approaching Jesus in public. Throwing himself at Jesus' feet is an action that Jairus would only do for a person Jairus acknowledged as being greatly superior to him. The crowd, of course, would be taking all this in and adding it to the stories that were spreading about Jesus.

The story of Jairus' unnamed daughter is then interrupted by the story of an unnamed woman.

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An elite woman out by herself in a crowd such as this has placed herself in a position to be permanently ostracized by her own family network. A dangerous, life-threatening gamble on her part. Her audacity is highlighted further by Mark revealing that she came to the crowd with the thought that **SHE** would **TOUCH** Jesus' clothing. Gasp! Shocking! It is bad enough that she would be in the crowd. But that she would also go with the intention of touching a man's clothing is completely outrageous. At a minimum, the most she should do is what Jairus did, abase herself at Jesus' feet and beg for his aid.

Again, Mark highlights the extraordinariness of her touching Jesus with the comments and questions in verses 30 to 32. Unlike everyone else in the crowd who had bumped into Jesus, the unnamed woman had deliberately touched Jesus; she had faithfully, hopefully, touched Jesus. Notice that she is healed at once, and she knows it. All without Jesus having said or done anything.

However, Jesus does feel power going out of him; is also aware of a change in his body. He knows he has been touched for healing and not just accidentally.

Now the woman comes before Jesus, humbling herself as Jairus had done, acknowledging Jesus' superior status. But Jesus, immediately calls her, "My daughter," placing her within his kinship, and since kinship was the paramount definition of one's social standing, these two words quite literally redefine this woman's place in the community.

Once again, it is important to remember that in the Bible, "faith" is **NOT** about "beliefs," or "ideas," or "understandings." It is about trust. And so Jesus' observation:

My daughter, your faith has made you well.

is better understood as:

My daughter, your trust / loyalty / bonding with me has made you well.

As if to emphasize this for us, Mark immediately has messengers from Jairus' house say the exact opposite of what Jesus has just said:

Your daughter has died, don't bother trusting that Jesus' can make her well.

However, Jesus overhears and ignores the messengers and encourages Jairus:

Don't be afraid. Instead, trust.

(Which ought to remind us of [last week's lesson](#) - Jesus' words to his followers in the midst of the storm.)

The rest of the story basically shows us how an honourable Holy Man would act: With authority and directness; excluding curious / skeptical by-standers; including disciples (for their mentoring) and parents (for their position as parents and for their confirmation as witnesses).

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Jesus' command that the little girl be given something to eat is to confirm that she indeed fully alive as before and is not a ghost or zombie. Eating would also restore her into the family's circle and routines. (Healing disease is always a two-step process: The correction of the physical symptoms, followed by acceptance and restoration into one's normal social context.)

Again, this story ends as did [last week's](#) with everyone completely amazed. And again, it is important not to get side-tracked by the "miraculous" healing and restoring to life - though they are both pretty amazing.

But the real story here is about the quality of relationships with Jesus. Jesus does **NOT** want us to be amazed. He wants us to trust God. To trust without hesitations or reservations. To trust without fear. Now **THAT** would be amazing.

David Ewart

www.holytextures.com

Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, see link below, pages 166-168.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

Mark 5:21-43 (NRSV)

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

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³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

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Mark 5:21-43 (The Message)

²¹ After Jesus crossed over by boat, a large crowd met him at the seaside. ²² One of the meeting-place leaders named Jairus came. When he saw Jesus, he fell to his knees, ²³ beside himself as he begged, "My dear daughter is at death's door. Come and lay hands on her so she will get well and live." ²⁴ Jesus went with him, the whole crowd tagging along, pushing and jostling him.

²⁵ A woman who had suffered a condition of hemorrhaging for twelve years—²⁶ a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before—²⁷ had heard about Jesus. She slipped in from behind and touched his robe. ²⁸ She was thinking to herself, "If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well." ²⁹ The moment she did it, the flow of blood dried up. She could feel the change and knew her plague was over and done with.

³⁰ At the same moment, Jesus felt energy discharging from him. He turned around to the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?"

³¹ His disciples said, "What are you talking about? With this crowd pushing and jostling you, you're asking, 'Who touched me?' Dozens have touched you!"

³² But he went on asking, looking around to see who had done it. ³³ The woman, knowing what had happened, knowing she was the one, stepped up in fear and trembling, knelt before him, and gave him the whole story.

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³⁴ Jesus said to her, "Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed! Be healed of your plague."

³⁵ While he was still talking, some people came from the leader's house and told him, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher any more?"

³⁶ Jesus overheard what they were talking about and said to the leader, "Don't listen to them; just trust me."

³⁷ He permitted no one to go in with him except Peter, James, and John. ³⁸ They entered the leader's house and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and neighbors bringing in casseroles. ³⁹ Jesus was abrupt: "Why all this busybody grief and gossip? This child isn't dead; she's sleeping." ⁴⁰ Provoked to sarcasm, they told him he didn't know what he was talking about.

But when he had sent them all out, he took the child's father and mother, along with his companions, and entered the child's room. ⁴¹ He clasped the girl's hand and said, "Talitha kum," which means, "Little girl, get up." ⁴² At that, she was up and walking around! This girl was twelve years of age. They, of course, were all beside themselves with joy. ⁴³ He gave them strict orders that no one was to know what had taken place in that room. Then he said, "Give her something to eat."

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