



Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

June 27, 2021

* *Please stand if you are able*

Prelude: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

Arr. Jack Schrader

Gathering

WELCOME & LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Acolyte: May the Holy Spirit unite us in worship, point us toward Jesus Christ, and inspire us to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God. Come, let us worship God.

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths.

All: Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit.

Liturgist: Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:1-5 adapted

All Singing: 496 "Come All You People"

GOD'S GREETING

GOD'S PEOPLE GREETING ONE ANOTHER

All Singing: 303 "Healer of Our Every Ill"

Children ages 4–7 may come forward for a blessing before they leave for "Children in Worship."

CHILDREN'S BLESSING

Children: The peace of Christ be with you.
All: **And also, with you.**

Reconciliation

Liturgist: When I felt secure, I said, "I will not be shaken."
But when you hid your face, I was dismayed.

All: **To you Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy.**

Liturgist: What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

All: **Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me; Lord be my help.**

Psalm 30:6-10 adapted

All Singing: 668 "I Worship You, O Lord"

Liturgist: Just at the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

All: **God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Liturgist: And if, while we were God's enemies, we reconciled to him through the death of his Son,

All: **how much more having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**

Romans 5:6-10 adapted

Liturgist: For, you Lord turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.

All: **Lord my God, I will praise you forever.**

Psalm 30:11-12

* **All Singing: 227 "He Is Lord"**

Proclamation

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

All: **Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that in hearing, we may also obey your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Scripture: Mark 5:21-43

Minister: The Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon: Jairus Interruptus

* **All Singing: 296 "We Are Called"**

Dedication

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

* **All Singing: 358 “Give Thanks”**

Sending BENEDICTION

* **All Singing: 899 “Seek Ye First”**

Postlude: “To God Be the Glory”

Arr. Jim Hammerly

Worship Leaders

Pianist / Organist: Dora Diephouse
Postlude Pianist: Dorothy Wassenaar
Violinist: Bethany Keeley-Jonker
Percussionists: Jackie Archer
Paul Mulchrone
Preacher: Dave Larsen

Acolyte: Lauris Thomson
Liturgist: Kim Ottenhoff
Prayer: Wally Ottenhoff

Hymns are from *Lift Up Your Hearts* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013)
CCLI Copyright License 813746 | CCLI Streaming License 20253780 | OneLicense A-704612



5825 W 151st Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452
www.hope-crc.org

Mark 5.21-35

Jairus Interruptus

Hope CRC June 2021

When Michael Jordan decided to come out of retirement, he asked his agent to draft a press release announcing his return. Jordan read the first draft, a flowery one-page detailed description of the reasons for the decision. He didn't like it, and sent the agent back to the drawing board, then proceeded to reject the second, even more verbose version. Frustrated, Jordan then handed him his own version, which said simply and directly: "I'm Back!" It became one of the most famous phrases in the history of sports. Those words, simple and clear, said all that needed to be said. His agent got the message. And so did everyone else.

Mark would have appreciated Jordan's style. The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the Gospels. There's no birth of Jesus narrative. It begins with John the Baptizer announcing the coming of someone who would turn old lives into Kingdom lives. It's the most direct, straightforward, bare-bones account of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Missionaries often use Mark's gospel as the place to begin when spreading the good news of Christianity. Mark sets out to tell us who Jesus is and what the Kingdom of God is like through a series of stories and parables and miracles that read like a playlist of Jesus' greatest hits. Mark's gospel account is more microwave than oven, more sprint than stroll.

The passage we're listening to this morning is fast-paced and cinematic. There are crowds and movement and surprises. It's noisy and dusty and gives us a glimpse of disciples who still don't know what to make of Jesus.

It starts with one story—that of Jairus and his dying daughter—and is quickly interrupted by the woman with an unending hemorrhage. After this impolite interruption, the story picks up with the dying daughter once again.

Mark crowds this story of Jairus and the bleeding woman with so many actors and bystanders, perhaps to illustrate the variety of responses to Jesus. Surely there were others in the crowd in need of healing, for example, more who brushed against Jesus' garment, as the disciples point out. And there are certainly many in the story who remain skeptical, non-followers after the two miracles. But let's get the main characters straight first, then we'll look at the action again.

Notice the cast of characters in this section of Mark. There's Jairus, his deathbed daughter, the disciples and the inner ring of disciples, the pressing crowds, the professional mourners, and the unclean, bleeding woman.

Jairus rhymes with "virus." That should be easy to remember. Jairus was likely in charge of the financial and physical care of the local synagogue, a leader of the Jewish community to the outside world. Falling to his knees before Jesus was an act of desperation for someone of his social status. But he'd likely heard about Jesus' healing others, so he had the faith of a despairing father begging Jesus to heal his daughter.

So, we have a parent and a man of privilege and position in his community. Mark gives him a name and a title. He was no doubt wealthier than most around him.

There's the woman . . .

She is an unnamed nobody, cast aside by her religion as unclean. She was poor, having spent everything she had on failed medical treatments, seeking to cure a condition she'd had for twelve years. Obviously, Mark had no knowledge of HIPPA laws in broadcasting her shameful condition. She pushes herself forward to touch the garment of Jesus, maybe thinking he had some sort of magic touch where so many physicians over the years didn't.

What we may not notice at first is that the act of pushing through the crowd to get to Jesus was scandalous! Her culture and religious regulations deemed her dirty, unclean, illegal, exposing everyone she touches by her very presence. She was deemed infectious, and didn't know her place, or ignored it if she did.

It is hard to imagine anyone more on the fringe of her society, in contrast with the beloved daughter of a wealthy community leader. Perhaps this is why the woman enters the story and disrupts the flow of action: to get us to pay attention to what Jesus pays attention to.

And there's the dying daughter . . .

Also unnamed. And once she died, also ceremonially unclean like the woman who reached out to touch Jesus. A twelve-year-old girl, born in the same year the woman started her bleeding. Culturally, she was nearing the customary age for marriage. So we have a woman who suffered disease and indignities for twelve long years, and a young woman at the brink of adulthood, life fully ahead of her.

The action . . .

After earlier describing the Kingdom of God in a series of parables, Mark strings together incidents filled with fear and desperation: the unrestrained howling demoniac with an unclean spirit, the disciples in the storm, afraid because they sensed God was in the boat with them, the hemorrhaging, unclean woman, and Jairus' plea on behalf of his dying daughter.

It's as if Mark says: first listen to Jesus describe the Kingdom in parables, and then watch the Kingdom come to life: He is Lord over creation. He is God in the boat. He heals. He rules over death itself. These are marks of the Kingdom of God. Can you see it? Who among you will believe it?

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who slowly merge into traffic when highway lanes narrow from three to two, and those who speed up and cut all the way to the front. You know who you are! Here we have Jairus in faith born of desperation seeking Jesus, urging Jesus to act immediately, only to have a woman cut ahead of him in the healing line! Wait your turn woman! Get back to where you belong.

And everything stops. Can you imagine how Jairus felt? “Let’s move along now, Jesus, we’re wasting time! She’s a selfish, line-cutting, nobody. What about me! I did things right! Have her take a number. My innocent daughter is on her deathbed, remember!”

But Jesus stops. He seeks out the fearless woman, and in an amazing echo of the earlier conversation in Mark about who belongs in the family of Jesus even calls *her* daughter. Daughter one and daughter two. He speaks words of peace and healing and salvation. And just as she experiences healing and restoration, the story takes another turn. There’s yet another interruption. We leave the woman as Jairus gets the devastating news that *his* daughter has died. As that reality settled in, Jairus had to think that if the woman hadn’t interrupted Jesus his daughter might have lived.

Jesus doesn’t offer pastoral words of comfort for Jairus, but heads off to his house, past the large gathering of ceremonial mourners, probably larger than most because Jairus was a man of wealth and influence. They were wailing songs back and forth to each other, drowning out the fluteplayers. Eugene Peterson puts it this way in his paraphrase: “They entered the leader’s house and pushed their way through the gossips looking for a story and neighbors bringing in casseroles.” That gives a sense of the scene and the chaos Jesus entered.

Jesus takes the dead girl’s hand and says to the corpse: “Little girl, get up!” And she rises. Not even death is strong enough to stop Jesus’ saving power.

And there’s this detail: by reaching out and touching the hand of a corpse, Jesus ignores the purity codes of Leviticus and Numbers. Something new and someone new is on the scene. Yet another interruption. And another instance where Jesus reaches out to someone unclean, concerned only for healing and resurrection.

Because there’s Jesus . . . Always the main character and always the center of the action in any gospel account. What’s going on here?

This is about Jesus pointing us to the richness of salvation that comes with the Kingdom of God.

There are no limits to where we will find God at work. God was in the boat. Here Jesus heals those society considered unclean. No ritual laws can stop God’s work or the signs of His Kingdom. A bleeding woman and a dead girl both found new life. Jesus didn’t hesitate to bring life and restoration. He interrupts sickness and death.

And maybe, just maybe, there is something about the serial interruptions in this passage that speaks to the nature of the Kingdom of God: it’s unexpected, unpredictable, found in the strangest of places among the most unusual suspects. Jesus’ healing and power and authority crosses boundaries, ethnic boundaries, racial boundaries, gender boundaries, man-made boundaries, religious boundaries, reaching the top and bottom of the social scale in the process. Jesus is all about interruptions. The Kingdom of God is all about interruptions: turning lives around, restoring what is broken, providing hope to the hopeless, breaking into lives and situations to bring life, abundant life, as only Jesus can and does.

Author Andy Crouch observed that between 1455 and 1899 no book was published with the phrase “Change the World” in the title. But between 2000 and 2010 there were 220 books published with that phrase in the title. There are more added to the list every year since. Apparently, we must think things need changing and that we’re the ones to do it. But as Crouch points out, perhaps with Christians in the Reformed neighborhood in mind who often talk about transforming the world, we are essentially powerless to change it. It’s too grandiose. It’s beyond our reach. It’s hard enough for us to see change in ourselves, right? The way to change the world, Crouch suggests, is to watch what God is doing and run to it. Get in step. Join the change where you see God at work. The way to give our world hope is to cultivate a holy curiosity about God’s work, take notice, and get in step. Watching God at work and joining with our heart and soul and mind and strength and gifts is how the Kingdom grows. We become interrupters for the sake of the Kingdom of God. We are the seed God waters.

In Matthew’s Gospel, in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives the Constitution of the Kingdom and the ground rules for Kingdom life. His opening words to the gathered crowd give us direction to see where God is at work. Start with people who are blessed. Look for people who live in and live out these blessings:

The poor in spirit

The mourners

The meek

Those who hunger and thirst for justice.

The merciful

The pure in heart

The peacemakers

The persecuted for the cause of justice

These are those who see God at work, see God in the boat, know the Kingdom to be a mustard seed operation, and know that God waters the seeds he plants, and faith and growth follow. Jairus and the woman put this faith, however unsophisticated or impulsive to work, trusting Jesus.

So what? Where does this leave us in the light of this passage?

Well, for starters, here’s a commercial:

Recently our Church Council commissioned a new committee, named Micah 6:8. Maybe you read about it the past several weeks in the Hope News and Notes. This committee will help lead Hope through the following activities: Education, Action and Advocacy.

- **Education:** assisting in learning about issues related to racial and social justice

- **Action:** generating tangible, hands-on activities that facilitate acts of racial and social justice in our communities, near us and around us.
- **Advocacy:** creating a gathering space for those who already regularly engage in social and racial justice. The committee will encourage the congregation to listen, encourage, and lend its voices in support of their work.

One of Micah's first initiatives is to deepen and strengthen our relationship with Roseland Christian Ministries Center and Roseland CRC. To that end, as a beginning step, a number of Hope members will go to Roseland Christian Ministries Center to meet with Pastor Joe Huizenga and several RCRC leaders for a listening session on Wednesday, July 14, at 6:30 PM. We will simply listen to their experience of our relationship over the years and what hopes and dreams they have for ministry in the Roseland community. We need to listen to this and let it marinate together. We hope this may spark a vision for our future work, worship, and ministry together.

The Micah 6:8 initiative is one way to see God at work, see God in the boat, know the Kingdom to be a mustard seed operation, know that God waters the seeds he plants, and faith and growth follow.

Jairus and the bleeding woman, from different castes and desperate situations both fell at the feet of Jesus. All they knew of him was all they needed to know. We know far more.

We've been taught since childhood that interrupting is impolite. Speak when it's your turn, and not before.

The Kingdom of God is all about interrupting. Jesus saw it as his mission. The Holy Spirit invites us, prods us, equips us to join that work.

Thanks be to God!