

Mark 5 | Jairus' Daughter

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

Based on NLT

Transition (Mark 5:21-24)

After Jesus healed the man with the evil spirits, the villagers asked him to leave. So Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Then a leader of the local place of worship, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live." Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him.

Transition

Along the way, Jesus healed a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years.

Mark 5:35-36

While he was still speaking with the woman he healed from bleeding, messengers arrived from...Jairus' home... They told him, "Your daughter is

dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now."

But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just believe."

Mark 5:37-39

Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn't let anyone go with him except three of his closest followers. When they came to the home..., Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep."

Mark 5:40-43

The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three followers into the room where the girl was lying. Holding her hand, he said to her..."Little girl, get up!" And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

Introduction

This story again calls the audience to radical belief in Jesus. Jairus' daughter was dead, and yet Jesus continues on his way to heal her and exhorts Jairus to not be afraid and to believe in him. In this story we see salvation from both unbelief and from death. This miracle is a precursor to the miracle of Jesus' death and resurrection that culminates in our salvation, and, like the other miracles recorded in Mark 5, this miracle is a picture of spiritual salvation.

Story Structure/Seeing the Story

1. The request
2. Jesus on his way
 - a. Interruption by bleeding woman
 - b. Twist: the daughter has died
 - c. Jesus' exhortation to Jairus and continuation on the path
3. Scene at the house
4. Healing

Characters

Jesus

Closest Followers

Jesus' closest followers were with him for much of his public ministry, traveling with him everywhere, learning from him, and sometimes being sent out by him to preach the Good News of the Kingdom and heal the sick. If the language has an understood term for the devoted followers of a guru, you may use that term here. We've designated the twelve disciples as *closest followers* and the other disciples simply as *followers*. You may want to differentiate between the two groups in the same way, as well. Be sure that the term you use is not the same one as "apostles," as these men were not yet "sent out ones."

Bleeding Woman

The woman's bleeding, regardless of from where, makes her religiously unclean. Others would have shunned her because contact with her or anything she had sat on or lay on would have caused them to become unclean as well. They would then be required to wash themselves and remain unclean until evening. The uncleanness for the woman only passes when she stops bleeding and after she has gone to the temple to offer the appropriate sin and burnt offerings. (See Lev. 15:25-33)

Jairus (and his wife)

In each synagogue there was usually a body of governing elders from which the chief leader was appointed. In addition to the chief leader or ruler, who directed the worship and instruction, there was an attendant who helped him. Although these men were laymen and basically administrators, they would have been highly respected and influential in their communities. Jairus is probably one of the elders in the synagogue rather than the chief leader who has ultimate responsibility and authority, but Mark does not give us that detail.

Messengers from Jairus' house

The Bible does not tell us how many messengers came from Jairus' house (Luke 8:49 only mentions one messenger, whereas the Mark account uses a plural form of the word.)

In any case, these messengers did not show compassion in the way that they gave the message of the daughter's death and sarcastically told Jairus that it was no use to bother Jesus anymore.

Three closest followers

Mourners

In those days, professional Jewish mourners were hired when someone died. The more influential or wealthy a person was, the more mourners he would be expected to hire. A leader of a place of worship would be considered influential enough to be required to hire several people. The professional mourners danced while singing and clapping, increasing in intensity as the burial drew near. This was the commotion that met Jesus when he arrived at the house. The fact that the mourners could turn so quickly from mourning to laughter at Jesus shows that this tradition had become very artificial. You should talk to your crafters about their mourning customs. Is it normal to weep and wail at a death? Do you have professional mourners? Include implicit information as necessary in the story so that the audience rightly understands what is happening.

Jairus' daughter

This girl was probably Jairus' only daughter, and was 12 years old.

Background Information

Historical

Biblical

The setting for this story is presumably Capernaum. Jesus had just come from the other side of the lake, where he had healed the man possessed by evil spirits.

Teaching tool: You may want to draw the lake on a piece of paper or in the dirt, showing where Capernaum is. When doing this story in sequence with the next two stories about the demon-possessed man and the bleeding woman, the participants will see where Jesus went and his journey across the lake and back.



Jairus asks Jesus to lay his hands on his daughter so that she would be healed/saved. Laying on of hands for healing occurs in both Jewish and pagan traditions, although it is not found often in the Jewish Scripture. However, Jesus often either lays hands on people in order to heal them, or is asked to do it. He complies with tradition as he heals.

Jairus **fell at his feet**, not in that he stumbled and fell down, but in respect and supplication to a great teacher. If your audience will not understand the reason for his actions, you may either explain them, omit them, or state that he came *with respect, asking fervently*...

Jairus had already shown great faith by coming to Jesus and assuming that he could and would heal his daughter. When the daughter dies and Jesus exhorts Jairus to believe, he is calling for extreme faith in the face of death itself.

Touching a corpse would have made Jesus ritually unclean. Although the characters in the story seem to take no notice, we notice that this is one of a series of stories in which an unclean element is present—the demon-possessed man, the woman with an issue of

blood, and this corpse. In Mark 7 Jesus explicitly teaches on what true purity is, and these stories may act as a sort of precursor to that teaching.

Jesus did not want everyone to see what happened, so he only took the girl's parents and his three closest followers with him. These happen to be the same three followers who saw his transfiguration (Mark 9:2) and were taken with him farther on in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). If these followers will play a significant role in later stories, you may want to include their names here, but be sure that the names do not detract from the story.

Jesus says that **the child isn't dead; she is only asleep**. Some have interpreted this to mean that Jesus was saying that the girl was never actually dead, but simply in a deep state of unconsciousness. However, it is highly probable that both Mark and Luke understand that she was in fact dead. Luke speaks of her spirit/life returning to her, implying that she was indeed dead. Mark uses the same verbs for "get up" and "stood up" in vs. 41-42 that are often used in connection to Jesus' and to Christians' resurrection. Jesus' statement most probably means that the girl's death is not final.

We have omitted the Aramaic phrase *Talitha cumi* and have included only its translation. It is most likely that Mark included the Aramaic to emphasize that these are words Jesus actually spoke to the girl.

Jesus commands that the witnesses not share what they had seen with anyone. This may seem surprising, as it will quickly become obvious to all that Jesus had raised the girl from the dead. However, throughout Mark Jesus keeps a balance between disclosing who he is and not sharing too much, thus prematurely calling attention to himself. In addition, Jesus tends to be more reserved among people who blatantly disbelieve him, as the mourners who laughed at him did. He may have also wanted time to leave the area before the crowd acclaimed him too much.

Jesus tells the parents to give the girl food to eat. He cares about our daily needs, and he also wanted to show that she was truly alive.

Key Terms

Faith/Trust/Belief

This describes man's response to God's promise. It probably implies more than mental agreement, but putting one's faith/confidence in God.

Teaching tool: Ask a volunteer ahead of time to help you with this. Place a chair in the center and ask the volunteer "Do you believe that this chair exists? Do you believe that this is a chair? Do you believe this chair is strong enough to hold you?" The volunteer should say "yes" to all these questions. Then ask, "I know you are tired, so here's this chair for you to sit in." The volunteer should refuse to sit in the chair. Go over this several times, asking why the volunteer won't sit in the chair even though he/she knows it is there and says that they believe it is strong enough to hold them. Explain to the group that this is an example of what faith is about—more than just "theoretically" believing, but acting on that belief.

Place of Worship/Synagogue

Synagogues were Jewish places of worship outside of the main temple in Jerusalem, and lacking the sacrificial role of the temple. These were local congregations of Jews who assembled together on the Sabbath and feast days (and sometimes mid-week) to pray, read Scripture, hear teaching, and perform certain judicial powers.

Teaching Tool: One way to show this in a crafting session is to collect several stones of various sizes, but with one stone much larger than the rest. Place the large stone in a slightly higher place than the smaller stones, and use this word picture as you discuss what people did at the temple versus what they did at a synagogue.

Teacher

This is a respectful form of address used by Jesus' followers to show that he was a teacher of the things of God and had disciples/students who followed him and listened to his teachings. Be sure not to use a term that only refers to a schoolteacher.