

## FAITH IN THE FACE OF DEATH

### MARK 5:21–43

#### Monday – Big Picture Overview (Mark 5:21–43)

Read Mark 5:21–43 in one sitting. Jesus returns to Jewish territory, where a synagogue leader named Jairus falls at his feet, begging Jesus to heal his dying twelve-year-old daughter. As Jesus makes his way through the crowd, a woman who has suffered from chronic bleeding for twelve years reaches out secretly to touch his cloak, believing that even this contact will heal her. Jesus stops, identifies her, and pronounces her healed by her faith. Meanwhile, messengers arrive to tell Jairus his daughter has died—but Jesus tells him not to fear, only believe. Arriving at the house, Jesus takes the girl by the hand and raises her from the dead. Mark has woven these two stories together—one inside the other—so that they interpret each other, both revealing how Jesus' power meets desperate human need and transforms fear into faith.

1. How does Mark structure these two stories, and what effect does this create?
2. What do the two stories share in common (consider numbers, themes, characters)?
3. How do the themes of fear and faith appear in both stories?

**Theological Prompt:** Jesus' power confronts both the slow death of chronic illness and the sudden finality of physical death, demonstrating that God's kingdom brings life wherever death—in all its forms—threatens to destroy.

**Practical Application:** Identify a situation in your life that feels marked by death (loss, decay, hopelessness). How might Jesus meet you there?

**Prayer Prompt:** Ask the Lord to help you bring your deepest fears and needs to him, trusting that his power extends even to situations that seem hopeless.

## Tuesday – Jairus's Desperate Faith (Mark 5:21–24)

Jairus held a position of responsibility as a synagogue leader in Capernaum. Jesus' controversial ministry—challenging religious authorities, gathering followers, proclaiming God's kingdom—likely made him an uncomfortable presence in the community. Jairus may have preferred to stay distant, maintaining neutrality. But when his twelve-year-old daughter falls gravely ill, all political calculations and social concerns disappear. Desperate love overcomes pride and fear. Jairus throws himself at Jesus' feet publicly, begging for help. His willingness to humble himself and risk association with this controversial teacher shows the transforming power of crisis. Sometimes it takes disaster to break through our carefully maintained distance from Jesus. Jairus learns that when your daughter is dying, religious controversy and political danger become insignificant compared to the hope of life.

4. What does Jairus's willingness to approach Jesus publicly reveal about the relationship between desperation and faith?

5. What risks does Jairus take by publicly associating himself with Jesus?

6. How does crisis strip away the pretenses and calculations that keep us from Jesus?

**Theological Prompt:** True faith often emerges in desperation, when our carefully maintained distance from God collapses under the weight of genuine need.

**Practical Application:** Consider what fears or concerns keep you at a distance from Jesus. What would it take for you to set those aside?

**Prayer Prompt:** Pray for the courage to approach Jesus without pretense, bringing your most desperate needs to him.

### Wednesday – The Woman's Trembling Faith (Mark 5:25–34)

While Jesus walks toward Jairus' house, a woman in the crowd reaches out to touch his cloak. She has suffered from chronic internal bleeding for twelve years—the same amount of time Jairus' daughter has been alive. Her condition made her ritually unclean, with devastating social consequences: no physical contact, no worship in the synagogue, isolation from family and community life. Twelve years of failed treatments have left her physically worse and financially devastated. She comes to Jesus in desperation, but also in fear—afraid to ask openly, afraid of rejection, afraid of being discovered. Her faith is genuine but mixed with trembling. She believes that even touching Jesus' clothes will heal her. When power flows from Jesus and she is healed, he will not let her slip away anonymously. He calls her forward, and she must tell “the whole truth.” Jesus addresses her tenderly as “daughter” and declares that her faith—however fearful and trembling—has saved her.

7. What does the woman's condition tell us about the relationship between physical suffering and social isolation?

8. How does Jesus' response to the woman move her from fear to peace, from isolation to restoration?

9. Why does Jesus insist on identifying the woman publicly rather than letting her slip away anonymously?

**Theological Prompt:** Faith is the channel through which Jesus' healing power flows—not a magical formula, but the openness of desperate trust that allows God to work.

**Practical Application:** Reflect on how Jesus calls you not just to healing but to relationship—to step out of the shadows and be known.

**Prayer Prompt:** Ask God to give you courage to bring your hidden struggles into the light, trusting Jesus' tender response.

### Thursday – The Raising of Jairus's Daughter (Mark 5:35–43)

Just as Jesus finishes speaking to the woman, messengers arrive with devastating news: Jairus' daughter has died. There is no point bothering the teacher anymore. But Jesus immediately speaks to Jairus: "Do not fear, only believe." The command seems impossible—how can you not fear when your daughter has just died? Yet Jesus takes Jairus, along with Peter, James, and John, to the house where professional mourners are already wailing. Jesus' pronouncement that the child is sleeping, not dead, draws mockery. But he clears the room, takes only the parents and his three disciples, and enters where the girl lies. He takes her by the hand and speaks in Aramaic: "Talitha koum"—"Little girl, get up!" She rises, walks around, and Jesus tells them to give her something to eat. The eyewitness details and the preserved Aramaic words suggest the scene made a lasting impression on those who witnessed it.

10. What does Jesus' command to Jairus—"Do not fear, only believe"—demand of him in this moment?

11. Why does Jesus use the language of sleep rather than death, and what does this anticipate about his own resurrection?

12. What do the eyewitness details (the Aramaic words, the command to feed her) reveal about this event?

**Theological Prompt:** Jesus speaks the language of resurrection—calling the dead to wake as from sleep—foreshadowing his own victory over death and the final resurrection of all God's people.

**Practical Application:** Where do you need to hear Jesus' words 'Do not fear, only believe' in the face of situations that seem utterly hopeless?

**Prayer Prompt:** Thank God that Jesus has power over death itself, and ask for faith to trust him even when circumstances seem beyond hope.

### Friday – Signs Pointing to Resurrection (Mark 5:21–43)

These two healings serve as signs pointing beyond themselves to the greater work Jesus will accomplish. They are not random acts of compassion but part of the larger story Mark is telling about God's kingdom breaking into the world. Jesus does not come to be a one-man emergency medical center, healing every sick person and raising every dead body. Instead, these acts are signposts—powerful demonstrations that God's power is at work to defeat the ultimate enemies: sin, death, and the forces that dehumanize and destroy. The woman's healing and the girl's resurrection both point forward to Jesus' own death and resurrection, where he will confront Death itself and overcome it decisively. These stories show us that faith, even when mixed with fear and trembling, becomes the channel through which God's healing power flows. The kingdom of God does not avoid suffering but enters into it, bringing life out of death.

13. Why doesn't Jesus heal every sick person or raise every dead body during his earthly ministry?

14. How do these two healings serve as “signposts” rather than destinations in Mark's larger narrative?

15. How do these stories help us understand that faith—even trembling, fearful faith—opens the channel for God's power?

**Theological Prompt:** Jesus' miracles are not the destination but signposts pointing to the greater miracle—his death and resurrection, which defeats death decisively for all who believe.

**Practical Application:** Consider how your current struggles and sufferings might be places where God is preparing to demonstrate his resurrection power.

**Prayer Prompt:** Pray for eyes to see beyond immediate circumstances to the ultimate victory Jesus has won over sin, death, and all that destroys.