

**21** When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. **22** Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet **23** and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." **24** So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

**35** ...some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" **36** Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." **37** He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. **38** When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. **39** He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." **40** But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. **41** He took her by the hand and said to her, "'Talitha koum!'" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). **42** Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. **43** He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

I'm sure you know the person. The one you look at and say: he's got it all together. He has a prominent place at work. He is well thought of in the circles of people who know him. It's obvious he's got financial stability. His family seems tight. It seems that he doesn't have a care in the world.

Maybe you do the comparison game: You look at your own life and it seems filled with problems. You feel stressed. Demands are overrunning your schedule, throwing you out of whack, and leading the important – like your time with God, or your care for family – to be neglected. Sometimes that, or something else, leads to tension or frustration or an argument with your spouse / or with your parents / or with a brother/sister. War threatens to break out in three new places in the world, just as one conflict seems to subside. And for you that means – most likely – facing another lengthy separation.

Why is everything so much easier for "that guy"?

Then, the day comes when you see him race by. You have to take a second look. He passes by without a word, but his face seems to be almost screaming: those things *that really matter* in his life are all suddenly teetering on the edge of collapse.

The scene could as easily happen today.

It's a scene Mark tells us about from Jesus' day.

Jairus runs up, throws himself at Jesus' feet, and his heart spills out: "It's my little girl. She's about to die. Please, come and save her!"

At moments in life like this, everything becomes clear. Death is the terrible equalizer.

Oh, for sure, life keeps us busy with other problems. But they aren't the real problem. The real problem is all of those; but none of those quite get down to the bottom of the issue. The real problem is what causes all of them and eventually leads to death. Sin.

"Ok, we know about sin," you say. "We talk about it every week. We see the sins that blip-blip-blip their way across our days. We admit the problems our sins stir up in our lives." But, you see, now our attention is locked onto the depth of the problem: death is staring us in the face.

And so Jairus, who one moment seems to have everything going for him in life, is on his knees – reaching up for help. He's face to face with death. Not his own – worse! – his daughter's.

We're all brought along with him. We see both a day long ago in the life of an individual family; at the same time we can't help but make application to today. Families face the same heart-rending moment. A child – their child – is sick to the point of death, and then the child dies. Hearts fill up with grief. Lungs struggle to gulp in breath, between the cries that erupt out. As intense as the cries may sound to others, they are undoubtedly but a pale reflection of the ache inside.

Faced with this, people sometimes reply: "It's not fair! She was so young (or) he was such a nice kid." The same line of thought gets extended to adults: "She was such a good mother (or) they were so happy, and he was such a good husband: it's just wrong!"

But while tragic and painful – we certainly don't want to ignore that! God never made us to go through such loss –, God's Word straightens out our thinking. Death comes to all of us, because all of us have sinned (Romans 5). Here we come face to face with the deathly nature of sin. Each one of us is infected with the disease of sin. That is true of those that are the youngest among us – up to the oldest. We're all going to die as a result. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. If that sounds bad, this is worse: the prognosis, which comes with sin, is hell.

But God is loving & merciful. We heard this morning: "Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail." Jesus couldn't bear to leave us in such a desperate condition. The great Healer took the venom of hell into himself. How? "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [of the cross]." He took all our sin, He suffered horrifically, and he died. This, dear friends, is Love. Jesus gave up His life on the cross so those who look to Him – who believe in Him – never have to face eternal death. "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24-25); the one who trusts in him will never taste hell (1 Peter 2:6).

And today, here in Mark ch.5, we see the Great Healer walking the earth – compassionately caring for others, even as he walks towards *that* death. All the while, he is awakening life in soul after soul by calling people to believe the good news of who He is – what He does.

He's walking with Jairus, the distraught, desperate father, when Jairus is brought the news: "Your girl, she's dead. Don't bother with anything more. No one can do anything now."

Look at Jesus' remarkable reply: "Don't be afraid, Jairus. Only believe. You came to me trusting I could make her well. Go on trusting that very thing: I can make her live."

Jesus speaks of something beyond human experience. Beyond human logic, but within His power. Jairus listened. Jairus trusted.

When death arrives, the world is left with only a shrug of the shoulders and an empty “don’t bother.” Jesus has the power to say: “I’ve got this. Don’t Fear. Only believe. Go on trusting in me.”

Jesus’ remarkable reply to death bears repeating. That’s exactly what we get to listen in on, as the group arrives at Jairus’ home. People are already gathered at the scene. “Why are you wailing?” Jesus says to them. “I’ve come to wake her up.”

At the sound of Jesus’ words, they turned from their weeping... to laughter. “Ha! Ha! He doesn’t know what he’s talking about. That’s foolishness. I know better than that: dead is dead. I saw no breathing, and no thing I’ve ever seen changes that.” These are laughs of ridicule. It’s unbelief in reply to God’s truth.

It shouldn’t surprise us, really, to hear such replies to Jesus’ claims. “It is in the nature of Jesus’ words to contradict everyone else’s and our own sight and reasoning” [Prof. Daniel Deutschlander].

Look at Jesus’ remarkable reply to the ridicule.

He goes in. He takes with him Jairus, his wife, and the 3 disciples who are with him. He sends the rest out, His Word left as a lasting witness to them. Then in that quiet room... just emptied of its wailing...

Jesus shows death’s hold has no hold on one whom He has chosen to have life. Jesus takes hold of the girl’s hand and gives the command: “Little girl, arise.”

Jesus’ power over death here points us ultimately to Jesus’ own resurrection. He freed himself from death’s grip. His power over death is complete. He lives to this day. And on the Last Day he will give the command, and he will raise each of us, and give eternal life to us - to all who believe in him.

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him... The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command... the dead in Christ will rise... And we will be with the Lord forever. Encourage each other with these words.”  
– 1 Thes. 4:14-18

Our weeping is turned to rejoicing at Jesus’ words. Death for us is merely a sleep for our bodies.

And let’s not leave out our souls. What does Jesus’ say about our souls? He says that at the moment of death he takes the souls of those who believe in him to enjoy paradise with Him (Luke 23:43).

We learn today the reply Jesus gives us to death. We also learn, along the way, how to reply to skepticism and mockery of Jesus’ words, which we should expect from the world.

Remember, we all started as skeptics. Unbelief reigned in each of us at one time too. But then the seeds of God’s truth were planted. The Holy Spirit did what only the Holy Spirit can do – he has brought us to believe. To believe...

- that the universe in its vast array truly was created in 6 twenty-four hour days.
- ...that God doesn’t need millions of years for the universe to take shape and man to evolve – he commanded the universe into existence, formed Adam and Eve from the dust of the ground and breathed life into them.
- ...that the scheming devil, in the guise of a friendly serpent, deceived our first parents.

- ...that the jarring, painful, even “your-heart-feels-like-its-being-ripped-out” travesties that occur on a daily basis in our world really are the result of sin.
- ...that the virgin Mary was actually a virgin, when she gave birth to her firstborn, a son! ...that the child she bore is the eternal Son of God, come into our sin-pocked world on the mission to save us sinful humans.
- ...that the miracles of Jesus recorded here [the Bible] are as true as the fact the earth made another rotation and the sun is shining in the sky overhead.
- ...that the greatest of Jesus’ miracles, raising himself from death to life, is true.
- ...that his resurrection means life after death for me, for it means his work of taking my sins was completed, his death and his perfect life were accepted by our Father in heaven, and God’s declaration is “not guilty” to me and to you.

I believe “this is most certainly true.”

People will often laugh at this – at my faith, at your faith. The world’s view of us “believers” is many times: what simple-minded, uneducated, misguided people. “Your pie-in-the-sky, head-in-the-sand ‘believing’ is a waste of time,” they say.

Jesus teaches us: “don’t fear when they say what they say – only believe what I’ve told you – go on trusting in me.” Trust in Jesus is never misplaced. Trust in Jesus’ words has never proven wrong, and never will.

Guard His Word, which is planted in you. Call upon Him in every trouble. Put aside the messages of doubt and despair and discouragement others – the world – will bring. Our Lord Jesus is the very Lord of Life who has power over death. He will remove the difficulties in life that He in his wisdom knows need removing. He will carry us through the difficulties that remain. He will remain with us, giving us His Peace. Don't be afraid, child of God. Go on believing! Amen.