

*Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church / March 1, 2020 / Pastor Jeff Harrison*  
Following Where Jesus Leads Series  
**Fear and Faith** (Mark 5:21-43)

### **Surgery story introduces our temptation to fear**

Pam, it's been so great serving with you on staff, you're a great friend and have done a great job serving our church, so thank you Pam!!! Now as we come to God's Word, let's ask for His help...

A couple of years ago, my wife Stephanie and I wake up at 3am and drive to a surgery center. There we groggily wait in the waiting room, until a nurse leads us to where they prepare Steph for surgery, doing things like placing her IV in, as I sit in a chair near her hospital bed. And then, around 6am, it's time. We lock eyes, and I say, "I love you" and she says, "I love you too" as she gets wheeled back for surgery.

It's a routine ankle surgery, and she's young, and we've been praying and asking others to pray, so it should be fine. But I have some "worst case scenario" thinking in me, and as we say "I love you", it feels weightier than normal. It's because in that moment, fear is starting to grip my heart, as I think this could be the last time I ever talk with my wife.

### **Relevance: we're tempted to fear which harms**

Life is filled with uncertainties that can tempt us to fear. We can struggle with fears about all sorts of possibilities, like what could happen in surgery, or when your kids ride their bikes in the neighborhood, or your high schooler gets behind the wheel.

These sorts of fears, if we give in to them, thankfully only last a couple of hours before we see the outcome. But other possibilities can be worried about for years. Fears like that you're not enough and never will be, or that you'll always be alone, or that all your accomplishments will never inspire the love you crave.

And life doesn't just have fearful possibilities, it also has fearful circumstances: like seeing your career and finances fall apart, receiving a diagnosis, or being betrayed by a loved one.

If you've been in church a while, you've probably heard that the command "do not fear" is found 365 times in the Bible, inevitably followed by some joke about a "do not fear" for each day of the year.

“Do not fear” is in the Bible a lot because it’s important. When we give in to our fears, it harms us and the people we love. Giving in to fear can paralyze us from needed action at home, at school, at work. Giving in to fear can lead to sleepless nights, and stress-filled days, and some of our very worst choices are made when we’re afraid.

### **Orienting to God’s Word**

So we’re talking about the very challenging and important subject of fear and faith from Mark chapter 5. So if you’ve got a Bible or Bible app, open to the gospel of Mark, chapter 5. If not, no worries, we’ll have the verses on the screen. And if you’re new to reading the Bible, the big numbers are chapter numbers, and the little numbers are verse numbers.

In Mark chapter 5 we meet two people wrestling with fear and faith. The first is Jairus. Jairus is a respected man in his community, a leader in his synagogue. And Jairus owns a multi-room house, so he’s at least middle class in this culture, maybe wealthy. To sum it up, Jairus is the respected kind of man able to approach and talk to Jesus even when there’s a large crowd around Him.

### **Teaching: Fear in difficulties and faith in Jesus**

*Jairus’ fear for his daughter and faith in Jesus (21-24)* – But despite his advantages, Jairus has a fearful issue he’s powerless to solve, which we see starting in verse 21. **(21-24a)**

<sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He 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.” <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.

By this point in Jesus’ ministry, the national religious leaders like the Pharisees had rejected Jesus as a false Messiah, that Jesus didn’t come from God. So the Pharisees would hate a synagogue leader like Jairus, in front of a large crowd, falling at Jesus’ feet and begging Jesus to heal his daughter. This is a striking scene of bad public relations for the Pharisees. And the PR will only get worse if Jesus leads a healing service for a synagogue leader before a large crowd.

But when your little daughter is in pain and dying, in that fearful desperation, Jairus is ready to take whatever risks to save his little sweetie. He has faith that Jesus can heal, so he risks his position in the synagogue and humbly begs. Jairus' desperation and begging before Jesus put Jairus in touch with his deepest fears and needs. Maybe there's something like that in your life that you're begging God for, as you're in touch with your deepest fears and needs. To Jairus' great relief, his risk and humble begging pay off, as Jesus agrees to go to his home and heal his daughter.

*The woman's fear and deepening faith in Jesus (24b-34)* – But on the way to Jairus' house, a new person puts Jairus' plan at risk, starting in the middle of verse 24. **(24b-26)**

A large crowd followed and pressed around him.<sup>25</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.<sup>26</sup> She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

Here we meet a woman brought low by 12 years of suffering. For us, 12 years ago, 2008, is back when *The Dark Knight*, *Mamma Mia*, and *Wall-E* came out. From back then until today is a long time to suffer.

For all that time, this woman has been suffering with a chronic bleeding condition. With ongoing bleeding she's suffering from anemia, and perhaps other physical issues. Additionally, verse 26 says she's also suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors, whose treatments have made her worse rather than better.

Our kids wanted to go to the Alamo, so we took them recently. There Kate and I learned about the medicine of that time. Back then they didn't know about germs, so most of their so-called "remedies" consisted of miserable attempts to expel things from your body, which they thought would also get rid of the disease. I'll just leave it at that. And this poor woman in our text lived over 1,800 years before the Alamo, a time of even more primitive medicine.

And to keep piling on the troubles, this woman once had enough wealth to pursue the care of multiple doctors, but now all her money is gone. And her chronic bleeding condition also makes her perpetually unclean in the eyes of the people, so she's marginalized too.

This woman is in a fearful place: physically suffering, penniless, perpetually unclean, so on the fringes of society, having exhausted all of her resources and options, and yet her bleeding continues.

Some of us can identify with this unnamed woman in the crowd. Maybe, like her, you have physical problems that have led to financial problems, and both won't go away no matter what you try. You're not dying, but you're so sick and weary that you don't really feel like you're living. Lord bless you. Or your problems might be different, but like this woman, you've been suffering a long time, and you've exhausted all your resources and options, you've tried everything, and yet your bleeding continues. Lord bless you.

For the bleeding, unnamed woman, who's been in that kind of place, a new hope rises as she hears of Jesus. Perhaps she heard about Jesus healing others of their diseases, or calming a fearful storm, or restoring a demon possessed man. And she has faith that His power can heal her too. So she approaches in verse 27. **(27-28)**

<sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

Unlike Jairus, the woman didn't talk with Jesus, instead approaching from behind and touching His cloak. The text doesn't say why the woman did it this way. Perhaps she feared that Jesus wouldn't have time for her on His way to heal a synagogue leader's daughter. Whatever her reasons, things change for the woman in verse 29. **(29)**

<sup>29</sup> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

After touching Jesus' cloak, her bleeding instantly stops. Imagine the joy and relief she feels in this moment, finally free after 12 long years of fearful suffering.

Jesus gives her the healing she longs for, but then He starts responding in verse 30 and surfaces a new fear for the woman. **(30-33c)**

<sup>30</sup> At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" <sup>31</sup> "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" <sup>32</sup> But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear...

The text does not say why the woman is so afraid to be called out by Jesus. Her chronic bleeding condition makes her unclean, so perhaps she is afraid she's in trouble for touching a holy man while unclean. Or perhaps she's afraid of engaging with Someone so powerful. In Mark chapter 4, after calming a storm, Jesus' disciples are described as terrified as they ask of

Jesus, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!” So perhaps the woman, having just experienced Jesus’ power, feels that same kind of awe and fear.

Whatever her reasons, this woman is not glad about Jesus calling her out, verse 33 says she trembles with fear. The woman wanted only healing, but now Jesus takes her somewhere unexpected and undesired by calling her out. It’s because Jesus wants more for this woman than just her healing, He wants to invite her to a deeper level of faith and intimacy with Him.

And to the woman’s credit, despite trembling with fear, she still moves forward in faith. The end of verse 33 says she comes and tells Jesus the whole truth. And in verse 34, Jesus responds. **(34)**

<sup>34</sup> He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Here Jesus affirms the woman’s growing faith and blesses her. Since the woman just touched Jesus from behind, perhaps she didn’t feel worthy of Jesus’ time. But now she knows for sure that Jesus wants relationship with her: He’s seeking her out, talking with her, and addressing her as daughter. She’s actually the only woman in all the gospels given this reassuring name of daughter.

And Jesus also helps this daughter move beyond a possibly superstitious understanding of His power. Jesus clarifies in verse 34 that it’s not about her touching Jesus, but rather her faith in Jesus that has healed her. And by showing the crowd that the woman is healed, and thus ceremonially clean, Jesus also restores her socially by calling her out.

And then Jesus sends her out with a blessing: “Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” A wonderful resolution, her suffering and trembling fear transformed into complete healing and growing faith as daughter.

But imagine if you’re Jairus watching this unfold, how much fear and frustration you’d feel. Your little girl is on the verge of death, and yet Jesus stops to heal and chat with a woman who has a lower social standing and non-life-threatening condition. An ER doctor treating two patients in this order could be sued for malpractice. Like Jairus, as we fear and don’t understand what Jesus is up to, sometimes we can get so frustrated when Jesus doesn’t hurry up and do what we want on our timetable.

*Jairus' severe test experiencing fear (35-40a)* – And in Jairus' case, Jesus' seemingly frustrating delay leads to a fearful verse 35. **(35-36)**

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

<sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

What temptation to despair and unbelief Jairus must feel as he hears that his daughter is dead. And in this moment, one the darkest, most fearful ones of his life, Jesus says to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.”

Jairus came to Jesus with a measure of faith, that Jesus could heal his daughter from sickness. But now, in delay and fearful circumstances, Jesus calls Jairus to trust Him for more, as Jesus just invited the woman to trust Him for more. Jairus must now have faith that Jesus not only has power over illness, but over death itself.

Think of the emotional rollercoaster of messages that Jairus hears in just three verses. In verse 34 Jairus hears Jesus bless the woman’s faith as He says, “Daughter, your faith has healed you.” But then in verse 35 Jairus hears the fearful message, “Your daughter is dead.” And then in verse 36 Jairus hears from Jesus, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.”

Jairus must decide which story to live in, the story of fear, of “Your daughter is dead”, or the story of faith in what’s been promised, of “Daughter, your faith has healed you.” In fearful times, we face that same choice: give in to the fear we’re feeling, or to hold on to faith even in fearful circumstances. Let’s see what Jesus does next in verse 37. **(37-40a)**

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

<sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” <sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him.

As if Jairus’ faith hasn’t been tested enough, this poor guy must keep believing even as mourners at his own house mockingly laugh at Jesus’ statement. The text doesn’t tell us what is going on inside Jairus in this moment. We don’t know if he is faith-filled, or if he’s fearing that Jesus might not have power over death, and he’s about to be devastated a second time at an unsuccessful resurrection.

Jairus' faith in Jesus deepens (40b-43) – Let's continue in the middle of verse 40. **(40b-41)**

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. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

So Jesus goes in the room where the girl has been laid to rest. And Jesus takes the girl by the hand and addresses her with the Aramaic term *Talitha*, a term of endearment. Then verse 42 shows what happens when Jesus speaks. **(42-43)**

<sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Jairus' unimaginable sorrow transforms into unimaginable joy as his sweetie is resurrected back to life! Back when Jairus approached Jesus begging Him to heal his daughter, I bet he didn't imagine that including stopping to heal and chat with a woman with a non-life threatening condition, or going through the death of his daughter first. Those were unexpected and undesired parts of following where Jesus leads for Jairus. We have our unexpected and undesired experiences too as broken people in a broken world.

But as Jairus keeps holding on to some measure of faith as he waits on Jesus in that frustrating and fearful darkness, in the end, his faith and intimacy with Jesus grows. Jairus now has the confident faith that if Jesus has you by the hand, even death is mere sleep. Like the woman bleeding for *12 years*, Jairus' faith increases after fearful circumstances, as his *12-year-old* daughter is raised back to life.

## **Next Step**

Like the woman and Jairus, our faith is tested in fearful times, times like when we've exhausted all of our resources, and yet we keep hemorrhaging. Like when our worst fears come true. In these times, like the woman and Jairus, as we hold on to faith in the Savior Who holds on to us, He will lead us to deeper faith and intimacy with Him.

Like the woman, Jairus, and with Steph's ankle surgery, our fearful circumstances sometimes resolve well, thank God for that. But sometimes they don't. Sometimes we keep praying and trusting in Jesus in our fear, and yet our hemorrhaging continues. Lord have mercy.

Our Savior knows what this dark experience is like. In the garden of Gethsemane, praying in anguish over His fearful circumstances, His sweat is like drops of blood falling to the ground. And while He stops the woman's blood flow, His continues as He chooses the cross, bleeding and dying for all of our sins.

And as there were redemptive purposes in Jesus' suffering, and in the woman's and in Jairus', so God brings good out of our fearful circumstances as we hold on to faith. So our next step this morning is to hold on to faith in Jesus.

In fearful times, may we, in Jesus' power, hold on to faith in Him. Faith that Jesus understands our pain, and wants to redemptively work through our hardships to bring us to a new level of faith and intimacy with Him. Faith that our bleeding, brokenness, and death are followed by resurrection in this life and the next.

As we reflect on these hard and hopeful truths, Rick will lead us in the Lord's Supper. Here we remember Jesus' death and resurrection, the source of our faith and hope in fearful times.