

Wherever Jesus went during His ministry here on earth, He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, opened the ear of the deaf, helped the lame walk again, drove out demons, raised the dead, and gave meaning to life for those who were down and discouraged. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we have the story of Jesus healing two people. Back in May, we discussed Jesus healing one of these individuals, a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. This morning, let's look at the rest of the story in the fifth chapter of Mark, verses 21-24 and 35-43.

Read Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

One of the local religious leaders, Jairus, rushes up to Jesus and asks Him to come quickly because his daughter is dying. He was desperate, as we all would be when our children are in danger. Jairus immediately shows his faith when he states: "Please come and lay your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Jesus does not hesitate, but goes with Jairus. As we discussed back in May, along the way to Jairus' house, Jesus encounters the woman with the bleeding and because of her faith, she is healed.

Our story this morning picks up in verse 35 when some men come from Jairus' house and breaks the sad news that his daughter has died. Then the men ask: "Why bother the teacher anymore?" In other words, it's no use, the child is dead. Their doubt leaves little room for faith. However, ignoring their doubts, Jesus tells Jarius: "Don't listen to them; just trust me – keep the faith!"

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, a crowd of mourners had already gathered there. These mourners were inconsolable and stricken with grief. When Jesus told them that the little girl was not dead, but only sleeping, their cries of anguish turned into rumbles of laughter. "What a foolish thing for Jesus to say!" they likely thought to themselves. Jesus soon entered the girl's room accompanied only by her father and mother and three disciples. The doubters and disbelievers with their negative attitudes had already been put out of the house. Their disbelief would not interfere with the miracle that was about to take place. Soon, the little girl would be healed.

Now this was not the first or the last time that there were doubters or naysayers in the Bible. People have been doubting God and what He could do from the beginning of time, instead of relying on their own wisdom and abilities. Take Noah for example. The world had become so wicked and evil that God regretted ever creating the human race. Genesis 6:7 states: "The Lord was grieved that He had created human beings, and His heart was filled with pain." However, Noah had found favor in the eyes of God. So, when God decided to flood the whole earth, He saved Noah and his family in the ark that God instructed Noah to build. Now while we have no record in the Bible on how the people reacted to Noah building a large boat in the middle of the desert, you can just imagine the naysayers and doubters laughing at Noah and criticizing him and his project.

Then there is Abraham. God had promised that He would make Abraham the father of many people and nations. Of course, this initially seemed impossible since Abraham and his wife Sarah were well past child-bearing age. But nothing is impossible for God; He always keeps His promises. So, one day God visits Abraham and tells him that Sarah will have a son even though Abraham is 100 years old and Sarah is 90 years old. Hearing this, Genesis 18:12 tells us that Sarah, like the people in Jairus' house, laughs at this promise by God, thinking to herself: "Me, getting pregnant at my age?" But Abraham has faith and Sarah bears a son who is named Isaac which by the way means "one who laughs."

Now let's look at some examples in the New Testament. Do you remember the conversation between Jesus and the disciples prior to the feeding of the 5,000 on mountainside near the Sea of Galilee? When Jesus saw the large crowd that had followed them, He said to Philip: "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" Philip in doubt, and maybe in jest, replied that it would cost more than they had. But Andrew brings forward a little boy whose sack lunch included five barley loaves and two small fish. Jesus blesses these and has the disciples distribute it to the crowd. Not only were all fed, but there was food left over. Remember a little in hands of the Master is always a lot. God can take what little we have, bless it, and multiply our gifts for His service.

Throughout the gospels, you see Jesus constantly telling His disciples that He must be handed over to the religious authorities, be crucified, die, be buried and then on the third day rise from the grave. But did they believe Him or were there doubts? Remember what happened on Easter morning? The only ones who were up that morning were the women, and the only reason they were up that early was to go to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for final burial. In their doubts, they never expected to find the tomb empty or to meet the Risen Lord.

When the women told the disciples that the tomb was empty, the disciples didn't initially believe them; I bet they even laughed at them. However, out of curiosity, Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Peter went back home wondering what had happened – wondering, still doubting, and not believing what Jesus had said. However, all doubts and disbelief were removed when Jesus suddenly appeared that evening among them in the Upper Room even though the door was locked.

Of course, one disciple was absent that night, my namesake Thomas. Thomas in his doubts and sadness had gone off to grieve the death of Jesus by himself. When the other disciples told Thomas that Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to them, Thomas in doubt and maybe chuckling states: "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Because of this statement, he has forever been known as "Doubting Thomas." A week later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples and this time Thomas was with them. Jesus told Thomas to go ahead and put his fingers where the nails were, touch the spear wound in my side, stop doubting and believe. Then Thomas makes that great affirmation of faith: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus then tells Thomas: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus says the same thing to us this morning, stop doubting and believe in Me! Do you ever have doubts? Doubts about the future, your health, our country, your family or whether something is possible. The dictionary defines doubt as "to be skeptical or undecided about something; to tend to distrust or not believe."

As a Christian have you ever doubted God or your beliefs? If so, don't worry or be ashamed; it's only natural. After all, we are only human. Fortunately, God understands such frustration and has provided stories of similar struggles to help us in the midst of our doubts. There are many throughout the Bible, but one that might hit closer to home comes from John Wesley. Many of us have heard of his experience at Aldersgate when his heart was "strangely warmed."

Wesley had previously taken a mission trip to the colonies in America, only to discover that he was not a minister but a lost soul. Most of the time, the story ends at Aldersgate as if he lived "happily ever after." But less than a year later, Wesley wrote in his journal: "I know that I am not a Christian. I know it because I do not feel that I love God and His Son Jesus Christ as my Savior." Despite his personal doubts, he would later lead England in a great spiritual awakening, sparking a revival in America as well. In 1784 he established the formal beginnings of the Methodist Church. Even great men of God have their doubts. However, what we do with these doubts will dictate whether or not our faith is strengthened or weakened. Will they drive us away from God or will we grow closer?

Now I personally believe that it is okay to have doubts or to question your beliefs, because that is how we grow in our personal relationship with the Lord. As a matter of fact, that is why we will be studying *Think Like Jesus* in our Wednesday Night Bible Study. It is good to have questions about God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. That's how we grow in our faith and personal relationship with the Lord. Don't blindly accept everything I or other preachers and teachers say. That's how cults are created. Instead, question us, dig into the Bible, read it each day, participate in a weekly Bible study, have an inquiring mind. Your faith is unique and should be based on your own personal relationship with the Lord. Don't base your future in eternity on someone else's faith and beliefs, make it your own.

Like Jesus in our story, have you ever had anybody who doubted your word and laughed at your plans. You know those naysayers who say it can't be done. As I have shared with you before, when we started the reconstruction of the Big I in 2000, there were a lot of people who doubted us and said could not be rebuilt in just two years. Although it took a lot of hard work and faith, the project was completed in under two years and almost within budget. Now I will admit that I have recently had doubts and questions concerning why it is going to take three years to reconstruct I-25 from Comanche to Candelaria, a smaller project.

You know when someone is convinced that something can't be done, they will cling to that conviction even in the face of the most obvious contradiction. The story is told of the time when Robert Fulton gave the first public demonstration of his steamboat. One of those "can't

be done” fellows stood in the crowd along the shore shouting: “He can’t get it started.” Suddenly, there was belch of steam and the boat began to move. Startled, the man stared for a moment and then began to chant: “He can’t stop it.”

At times, we like Jesus must dismiss the doubters and naysayers in our lives. Otherwise, their second-guessing and skepticism will not allow us the room to do what is necessary, to do God’s will. Who are the doubters in your life? Who are the whiners, the wailers, and the laughers that you need to put aside? Don’t let them hinder your plans and dreams. Don’t let them steal your faith and happiness.

This brings up another question - do we have doubters in the church; those who say it can’t be done? O yes, I know from experience that they are in every church. Throughout my twenty-two years of ministry, I have heard it all. Remember there were those who wanted to close High Desert. Those who didn’t think we would ever move out of the office building on Meadowlark. And there are those who think that we are over extending ourselves in mission and outreach projects, taking on too many projects. Some questioned our involvement with St. Joseph Mission School. Let’s admit it, we all have thought this over the years. But look where we are today. All because we walked in faith and tried to follow the guidance of the Spirit the best we could. Remember when God wants something done, it will be done one way or another.

You know things happen in life for a reason. Sometimes God sends us trials, problems, and doubts to help us grow spiritually. Also, when one door closes, God usually opens another. Now while God opens the door, He also expects us to learn something from every situation in life. As I look back over the past few years, one of the biggest lessons for me has been to walk in faith. Many mornings during my quiet time, after reading the Bible and my devotionals, I write in my journal: “Walk in faith; trust in the Lord and see what He will do.”

This is reaffirmed in 2 Corinthians 5:7 where it states: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The *Message* paraphrases it this way: “It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going.” We all have times in our lives when we have doubts and must walk in faith and trust in the Lord. So, how would you define faith? Once when asked by her minister what is faith, a woman replied: “Well, I’m not that smart or educated, but to me it is taking God at His Word.” Now that’s a great definition! Philip Yaney said that faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse.

Our country and the Church are facing a lot of problems right now. Many of us have doubts. I don’t know what the future holds, but I know one thing and that is that God is in control. Therefore, I trust in His words in Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” I also know that nothing is impossible for God. When He wants something done, it will be done. The Apostle Paul understood this when he wrote in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

So, what can we learn from this story? Well, for a starter, don't be like the people gathered to mourn in Jairus' house filled with doubts. Instead, believe in Jesus and that He can do what would otherwise seem impossible. Also believe that He can work through you and this church to accomplish great things. Do not doubt His faithfulness, and do not underestimate your abilities. Believe that God can still do miracles through you and this church. Walk in faith trusting in God and enjoying each day God gives you. Unlike the people in our story, trusting in God is no laughing matter! Amen.