

INTERRUPTIONS (Mark 5:21-43)

by
Ken Green

On the way toward what we desire, plan, and expect our lives to be, we encounter many interruptions. There are surprises, some pleasant, some difficult. Letting them do their work in us is key to our growth on the journey.

We never know what awaits us just over the next hill and around the bend. Life held for me no big plans as we entered 2021. I expected to turn 80 this year. I'm not as confident of that now. I was active. I was healthy so far as I knew. I continued to work out at a local gym two or three times a week, take my vitamins, and, I must admit, prided myself at least a little on doing so well.

All that was rather rudely interrupted when some unknown illness entered the picture. I've lost 60 lbs. I'm weak as a kitten. Finally the culprit was identified. Pancreatic cancer. My brother, seven years my senior, died of the same dysfunction a few months ago.

Reactions vary to such developments. With me, I am actually somewhat surprised with how calmly I received the news. My faith and worldview have long persuaded me that from birth, I along with everyone else, have a terminal status. The human death rate is 100 percent. So there have been no pity parties. I have not asked, "why me?" My response has been, "Why not me?" Such comes to others. So why not to me? I've lived well past my three score years and ten. I have not suffered greatly in life. I have been richly blessed; privileged, certainly beyond what I deserve. Why not me?

Jesus was on his way to "the other side" when he was interrupted by Jairus, one of the leaders of the synagogue. Jairus had been interrupted from his busy life by his desperate concern for his little daughter who was "at the point of death," that most notorious interrupter of all. He begs Jesus to come and touch her so that she might live.

On their way they are interrupted by large crowds pressing in. A woman who had been interrupted from her normal life for 12 years by hemorrhages — the entirety of the dying girl's life — interrupts the crowd, pushing through them to touch Jesus. He says her faith has now interrupted the flow of blood, and she can go in peace, no longer trapped in disease.

And so the river of life rolls, from interruption to interruption. These have been described as disguised messengers of life's best secrets. Interruption says, we don't need to know what will happen next.

Whatever it is, we can reach out for help. We are part of a story much bigger than our own. When we try too quickly to classify interruptions as good or bad, helpful or disruptive, we risk never receiving the good gift.

What if Jairus had seen illness as God's punishment, or had seen his daughter as undeserving and less dear to him than a son? What if the bleeding woman, who likely had been shunned for 12 years, had believed the established "fact" that she really was unclean? She would have missed hearing Jesus call her his daughter, greatly beloved.

Jesus interrupts all the lies, all the tipping points of death, within us. He says to each of us, "Rise up!" Little one, come back into your life."

That's what the interruptions can do for us if we let them. They are life's little instructions, guiding us sometimes by gentle nudges of affection and at other times by a firm yank in a new direction. They are warnings; they are invitations, arriving daily, reminding us we are more loved than we know. They beckon us to be more ready to give ourselves away for what really matters.