

SERMON ON JAIRUS DAUGHTER (Mark 5:21-43)

The reading we have had for our Gospel this morning is a very interesting one. I love it because it shows the extraordinary radical nature of Jesus's ministry as he walked among the Jews. Our Lord overthrew superstitions, the denigration of women, and the superstitious rituals regarding the dead.

But that is not what I want to talk about this morning. What I want to talk about this morning is that part of our reading that touches on Jairus and the death of his daughter. I think you will all agree with me that there is something unnatural about the death of a child. We know it happens. But we are never comfortable with the fact. And only a person that has lost a child can understand the devastation, the dejection, the disillusionment that comes when death snatches one of our little ones from our homes.

Well in our reading this morning we meet a family that came face to face with that harsh reality. The reality that death pays very little attention to age. The father's name was Jairus and while he was a prominent influential man none of his status could change the fact that his little 12 year old daughter was on the brink of death and would eventually succumb to its icy grip. And in desperation, and it is an awful desperation, a desperation that only a parent can understand, Jairus ran to the Lord Jesus believing that HE alone could rescue his daughter. He had heard of Jesus. He knew that he could do wonderful things. And even though much of the establishment was against this man he thought, 'may be this man can help.' So he went. And though delayed, as Jesus was that day, and seemingly too late, the Lord came when he heard Jairus's plea. He came and touched the lifeless body of that little child and with that touch came *new life!*

Well, I want to apply this story, but I want to apply this story in some very specific ways. And what I want you to do, if you can do this, I want you to view yourself in the role of Jairus. And then what I want you to do is view his daughter as the church. And just as Jairus's little girl needed to be revived I want us to realise the great need that we as members of the church, and our church as a whole, really need a revival!

I think we would all recognise that it is only the power of the Lord Jesus that can raise the dead. And that truth applies both for dead people and it applies for dead churches. There are some truths here we need to notice. First of all, there is the reality that confronted this man Jairus. When we meet Jairus, we meet a man who was facing the reality that his daughter was about to die. It was an awful reality. The situation was bleak and it was getting worse by the minute! Well you know we would like to be positive about the state of our church in our day. But I would have to say that this would be ignorant at the best. The reality confronting us today is that the church as a

whole has one foot in the grave of spiritual deadness. And I don't think we can deny the seriousness of the situation. All we have to do is look at church attendance.

Don't get me wrong, I love the church! It is my life. But as I look at it I can see we need a revival. And I don't just mean in the church of England, I mean the church throughout the western world. And what I want you to notice is just a couple of things that confronted Jairus, and how I think they relate to the reality of what now confronts us.

Firstly of all, he saw that there was a clear deterioration. Perhaps the little girl's sickness had started as something minor, and then it became worse and worse. The fever grew into something horrible. And in much the same way, you do not have to be a theologian or an expert in the church to be able to see that the condition of the church in our land has deteriorated. The numbers alone indicate that the church is in great trouble. We are a nation of 65 million people and I think the Anglican church, our part of the church, has 800,000 members. That is throughout the whole of this land! We know that there are more Muslims who are worshipping on a Friday than Christians on a Sunday. It is an awful thing. And we also know, and the statistics are there for all to see, that church attendance is going down dramatically, and amongst young people it is almost negligible.

Now Jairus saw the coming death of his daughter. In Mark's Gospel we are told that Jairus told the LORD that his daughter was at the point of death. You see, this father not only recognised that his child's health was deteriorating. He also had the foresight to see that her life was fading and he knew that unless the Lord intervened the little girl would die. And in the same way the spiritual pulse of God's people is weakening. And if something doesn't happen then we face spiritual death. We are becoming less and less of any sort of spiritual influence within this land of ours.

Now what do we do? Well there is another truth as we follow Jairus. You know the reality that confronted this man, but notice in that reality there was a request that consumed this man. He wasn't content to let his little girl lie there and die. Jairus, a prominent Jewish leader, decided to go to the Lord, to find Jesus, and he was determined that if his daughter was to die it was not going to be because his daddy did not try to do everything he could to save her. This man loved his daughter and he was absolutely bereft at the thought of what would happen to her and he was going to do everything in his power to prevent that from happening.

And so what did this influential man in Jewish religious life do? what did he do? He fell down at Jesus' feet, an itinerant preacher, and he besought him to come into his house. Jairus was not too proud to get on his knees and beg! The severity of his situation forced him to seek the Lord and beg for divine intervention. If we can clearly see the dire situation that the church in our nation faces then our only option is to seek the

Lord as Jairus did. You see it is too late for man's solutions. *Revival is only a work that God can do.* We have tried everything else. And do you notice this man? What he was asking was an utterly sincere request. Take a look at him! Picture this man of status and prominence. He falls down in the dust at Jesus feet. Gone are all vestiges of self-reliance. Gone are all the signs of pride, of positions of prominence. The man was on his knees. And with that sincerity comes desperation. This man calls on the Lord. You see, let's be absolutely honest here, in most churches some prayers are offered for the well-being of the church. In lots of prayer meetings there is usually some obligatory prayer for God's blessing and help. But the problem is, so often our prayers are not clothed in true desperate sincerity. This is a criticism of us all. There is a great temptation, as long as the budget is being met, and as long as everyone is reasonably happy, then like the Church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:16), which we find in the Book of Revelation, we find no real need of God to intervene. You know, sometimes we ask half-heartedly, for God's touch. But deep down there is no aching. There is no pride abandoning sincerity behind our prayers. Too often all we want to do is pay the bills and follow the program. Well, in our Gospel reading this morning Jairus got a response from the Lord. And do you know why? Desperation moves the heart of the saviour. And desperate humble prayer always gets God's attention.

This is what God says in 2 Chronicles Chapter 7 verse 14.

For God said, 'if my people which are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive them, and I will heal their land'.

That verse describes desperate sincere prayer. The type that moves God to intervene. And then do you notice something else? When Jairus arrives at the feet of Jesus he makes a specific request. It is important to note *how* this man prayed, but it also important to note *what* this man prayed. When you compare the three gospel records of this account you will find that Jairus was very specific in what he wanted the Lord to do. In Luke he says, 'he besought the Lord that he would come into his house.' Matthew adds to the account by saying, 'Jairus asked the Lord to lay his hand upon her.' There were two very specific requests that Jairus made of the LORD and they speak to us of what we need from him as well.

Firstly, we need him to come into our house. By this I mean we need his presence in our churches. You know, so often in our day, as in Revelation Chapter 3 (Rev. 3:20), the Lord is outside the doors of our churches longing to come in. But nonetheless we are quite contented to leave him outside. Not only do we, like Jairus, need the Lord to come into our house, we must have Jesus in our midst and in our hearts. We need his touch! You see so much of the activity in our churches today is done without the anointing and power that is God our Father, that is Jesus our Saviour, and that is the

Holy Spirit in our midst. We learn from Jairus, that we can no longer rely on programs, on policies, and people. The old song writer wraps it up when he says,

*'All is vain unless the Spirit
Of the Holy one comes down
Brethren pray,
and Holy manna will be showered all around*

It is the Holy Spirit. Our Living God. Active in our hearts which is needed. That is the final truth.

Well, let's get back to the account of Jairus. While Jesus was trying to make his way to Jairus's house tragic news came regarding the little girl. *'Your daughter is dead, do not trouble the master.'* It was an awful bit of news, but listen to what happened next. 'Before Jairus had a chance to respond to this terrible report the Lord Jesus tells him. 'Fear not Jairus! Believe only and she shall be made whole!' Wow! As bad as things may be for our church in our day the good news is that she is still the church of Jesus Christ. And as long as he is the head of his church there is hope for her to be revived and recovered. No church has gone too far that she cannot be revived by the Lord Jesus Christ. The dead church, believe you me, can live again! The Lord responded to Jairus and he will respond to us today. If we make the cry he will respond.

I hear so many people say the Church of Christ has had its day. And even in our church people say, 'things are not what they were' and they feel it will never be the same again. However, take a look at our story this morning. The story of the raising of Jairus's daughter. There were at least two people who believed that day. And when he went into the place where the lifeless little girl lay, he took with him her mother and her father. They had called him! They so loved that little girl. And they believed he could revive their daughter. And believe me, in just the same way, if just a few of us call on the Lord he will hear us, and he will respond to our request. If our hearts are breaking for the revival of our church, the Lord will hear, and he will respond! And as we fall on our knees and pray for revival our hearts will melt and we will want to know everything about the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving grace, and we will want to work in the power of the Holy Spirit to go out and do what he would want to do through us.

So let me finish. The situation looks bleak. and many in the West have begun to mourn our death. But the church can live again. It must begin however with us, the people who make up the church. You and I, like Jairus, must desperately seek the LORD through prayer. I am sure you must be like me. We cannot be satisfied by sitting by the bedside and watching our churches die. We know what we have to do. We must seek the Lord, and like Jairus, earnestly ask for the touch that will revive us. **AMEN.**