

Mark 5:21 – 43

May 20, 2018

Mark Twain, a man who would doubtlessly have millions of Instagram followers if he were alive today, once said,

“The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter – it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”

His point?

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is a big deal. A more distressing problem is when we use the right word but have the wrong meaning.

How different?

As different as lightning from a lightning bug.

Today we continue to follow Jesus around in the northern reaches of Palestine, right around the Sea of Galilee. And today, Jesus is going to teach us of a word that is commonly used but rarely understood.

Faith.

These days, many people use the word 'faith' meaning something like, "What I believe." OR if you are a Christian or have spent any time in church faith means something like, "How much I believe."

But the focus of both of those definitions are close but not quite right. The word, "Faith" is meant to shine a spotlight on not the source of belief but the object.

Faith is not so much about what I believe or how much I believe but WHO I believe in.

Faith does not save, faith in Jesus always does.

PROP: Believe in Jesus.

And today, as we follow Jesus we gain further reason to believe in Jesus.

We've been following Jesus around now for a few chapters. Jesus and his followers are moving around a bunch. They crossed the Galilean Sea and a mighty gale sprung up but at a word, Jesus dispatches the wind and waves and there is peace. On the other side of the Sea, the crew is met by a crazed demonized man but at a word, the demons are dispatched the man's soul is at peace.

They get back in the boat and push through all the dead floating pigs to get to the other side again. If you are one of the disciples, you probably stopped asking,

“Are we there yet.” Because you never know where you are supposed to stop.

They get to the other side and instead of landing in a graveyard, they land and Jesus’ popularity creates a first century flash mob.

And just like last week another man comes running at Jesus and throws himself down at his feet –

Vs. 21,

“And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. ²² Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” ²⁴ And he went with him.”

Jairus is desperate. His 12 year old girl is on the cusp of death. Jairus was used to ordering his life and being in control. He was one of the influential leaders of the synagogue.

But he could do nothing for his sick daughter. But Jairus knew Jesus could do something – so he begs Jesus to come with him and help.

Jesus obliges.

And so – Jesus points himself toward Jairus’ house to help save a girl from the clutches of death. As they go, the crowd comes too.

Vs. 24b,

“And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.”

Mark introduces us to another woman, an unnamed woman with a massive problem. This poor lady is just as desperate as Jairus. She was tormented BOTH by sickness AND doctor’s “cures.”

For 12 years, this lady had intensive, non-stop menstrual bleeding that doctors could do nothing about. She spent all her money in a vain attempt to gain relief, but all she got was worse.

This poor lady was at the end of her rope and so she makes a pretty desperate sounding plan. Mark lets us in on her thoughts as she thought about Jesus.

Vs. 27,

²⁷ She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.
²⁸ For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” ²⁹ And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.”

Maybe she thought – I don’t want to cause the teacher any great trouble, but I need relief. I know – I’ll just touch the hem of his robe and I’ll be better.

Why?

- Did she hear reports of his powerful robes? No.
- Did she hear that healing came from her touching his clothes? No.
- Does this really make sense at all? No.

She heard reports of Jesus and she believed he could do for her what the doctors could not do. She believed in the power of Jesus.

And it worked! Boom goes the dynamite.

But there is more,

³⁰ And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” ³¹ And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

³² And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Notice the disciples response when Jesus said, “Who touched me?”

They nearly mock and deride him – what do you mean who touched me? You are crazy. All these people touched me. All these folks are coming up and touching you – what are you talking about?

But Jesus ignores their misplaced mockery and looks for the person who touched the hem of his robe. This says a lot about Jesus.

He is not merely a dispenser of miracles but wanted to make a human connection. He wanted to meet the woman.

He asked her to show herself and just like Jairus came and threw herself at the feet of Jesus. She is trembling and obviously scared but she told him everything.

Why is she trembling?

The first reason is obvious, she is afraid because she is coming face to face with the one who had done what

no one else could do – give her relief after all these years. What power!

But there is another reason she was frightened.

What she was doing is illegal, and dangerous for her to identify herself.

What?

She is unclean. It was illegal for her to come in contact with anyone or anything because she transferred her uncleanness to it. She was dirty and made others dirty.

You might say she is contaminated and everyone she comes in contact with is unclean.

“If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.” Leviticus 15:25

She could be arrested for being in public.

That is the reason that she was afraid.

Jesus should have said, what are you thinking touching even the hem of my garment? What are you

doing contaminating me with your filth? What are you doing?

But instead she is healed AND Jesus says,

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Literally this could be rendered, “Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace...”

Do you see what happened?

If that lady touched anyone else in the crowd, she would make them unclean, but she touches Jesus and he makes her clean. It is not just that Jesus healed this poor woman but he made her clean.

He was able to absorb her contamination and make her pure.

Do you see that?

But he also wants her to understand WHY she was healed, it was because she believed that Jesus and Jesus alone could heal her.

Her faith was in Jesus.

She didn't know much about Jesus she had just heard reports that he was unlike any man on earth. You

might even say that she had something of a superstitious belief in Christ.

Imperfect faith is welcomed by a perfect Savior.
Weak faith is embraced by a strong Savior.
Little faith is not rejected by our great Lord.
Small faith is still faith.
A little faith can lay hold of a powerful Jesus.

Now put yourself in Jairus' shoes. Your daughter's life is ebbing away and Jesus is stopping and talking to someone with a far less serious condition.

I'd be tempted to say, "Jesus, she has suffered this for 12 years, what is 12 more minutes? My daughter is dying."

It is strange that Jesus delays.

A little girl is about to be swallowed up by death—and seems to be taking his sweet time. Jesus chooses to deal with a chronic problem before he handles the acute issue. He seems to ignore the urgent for the pedestrian.

And then all seems lost,

³⁵ While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶ But

overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

Here is Jairus one of the leaders of the synagogue who knew the Bible and was a religious leader and Jesus has to tell him don't be afraid, just believe.

Jesus has to help the faith of Jairus but he did not have to do that with the unnamed lady. Her belief in him was commended.

You would think the lady would need to have her faith bolstered, but it was the religious leader. And so Jesus continues to go see the little girl.

³⁷ And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was."

These folks weeping and wailing are professional mourners. In that culture you showed the value of a life by publicly wailing and making a scene when someone died. They would be paid to weep and carry on and the rest of the crowd would follow suit.

And Jesus says, “Why are you guys crying?”

And they deride him.

Noticing a pattern?

Remember in verse 31? When Jesus said, “Who touched me?”

And his disciples say – what are you talking about all these people touched you. Are you off?

Here we have the same thing.

Jesus comes in and says – she is not dead – she is sleeping. And everybody laughs at him. They were paid to cry but they laugh for free.

But Jesus just goes about his business.

I would not have responded like that. I might have said, I’ll give you something to laugh at you fake criers.

But Jesus sends them away and calls his new inner circle, Peter, James and John and then this happens –

Vs. 41,

⁴¹ Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”
⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.”

Talitha cumi is Aramaic. The sense of what he said was something like, “Hey sweetheart, time to get up.”

And she did.

And again Jesus came in contact with something unclean. He took the little girl’s dead hand. He should have been contaminated.

That is what the Bible says,

“Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him.” Numbers 19:13

Coming in contact with something unclean should have made Jesus unclean. It didn’t.

That’s unexpected.

Instead of becoming contaminated, Jesus healed.

It seems Jesus is flaunting the sacred laws of the land – it seems Jesus is saying – those don't apply to me. Rather, with his actions he is saying something entirely different –

He is saying – I clean the unclean.

And he has been saying this for a while – Remember?

- He spent time in a graveyard – unclean.
- He touched a man who lived in a graveyard – unclean.
- He was touched by a woman with menstrual bleeding – unclean.
- He touched the hand of a dead girl – unclean.

Instead of becoming contaminated, Jesus cleans the unclean. He is not afraid to go to a graveyard and absorb the filth of the demonized man.

He is not afraid to be touched an uncleaned woman

He is not afraid to touch the hand of a dead girl.

Jesus is not made unclean – he makes the unclean – clean.

The reason that the OT is consumed with uncleanness is not because it was written in a germaphobe society.

No, there was a different message being sent – you are unclean and nothing can make you so clean that you will never be dirty again.

And then Jesus comes along.

Jesus makes the unclean, clean.

What can we take away from this interaction with Jesus?

Mark is clearly telling us something by putting these two accounts together in this manner – did you notice the similarities?

- Two females in trouble
- Jesus addresses both as daughter
- 12 years (the girl's age, length of sickness time)
- Both are unclean
- Both have no hope

And then here comes Jesus.

At a touch, both are healed.

They are similar but they are also dissimilar.

- Jairus is male, influential and a man of respect and standing. He feels no shame in coming directly to Jesus and asking for help. He approaches directly.

- The woman is nameless, overlooked and has lived life of shame & rejection. She wants to be invisible and get aid from Jesus secretly. She approaches from behind.

The only thing that these two people hold in common is that they have heard of Jesus and they believe that only he can help them.

They both have nowhere else to go.

And they both come to Jesus.

They both believe that only Jesus can help. That, my friends, is what faith is all about. We miss the point of faith if we look inside and ask – how much do I believe?

Rather, we MUST ask – WHO do I believe in?

Believe in Jesus.

Your faith does not save you. Your faith in Jesus is what saves you.

The point is not how much faith you have – but WHO you believe in. The woman with the issue of blood believed and was saved. Jairus had to have his trust in Christ bolstered but his daughter was saved.

These are two very different people with very different kinds of faith, but both trusting in Jesus.

What does this mean?

1. The object of your faith is what matters not the amount of your faith.

One of the MASSIVE mistakes that Christians make is to worry about the amount of faith in Christ we have. I have talked to so many followers of Christ who wonder, do I believe in Jesus enough?

The answer for all of us this morning is – NO!

Let's be clear none of us have the amount of faith in Christ like we ought to. Not a one of us. The question is not how much you believe, but who you believe in.

Even an imperfect faith can be embraced by a perfect savior.

We see this with the woman, right?

She comes to Jesus almost with a superstitious understanding of what he could do for her. She doesn't understand his identity, his claims, his teaching, just that he can help.

Her faith was imperfect, but her faith was centered on the right person. She had a lot to learn, but no one

had to teach her who to trust in. Even though she had a quasi-superstitious, nearly magical faith it was in Jesus.

Imperfect faith in Christ is always enough.

The object of your faith is far more important than the amount of your faith. Who you believe in is more important than how much you believe.

The woman had imperfect faith and Jairus had a weak faith.

Though Jairus had every advantage and he could quote chapter and verse about who the promised Messiah is and what he is to do, his faith is so very weak.

But did you see that Jesus bolsters him up – don't be afraid – just believe. The opposite of faith is not doubt but fear. Everyone in this room has doubts. All of us have doubts that maraud against our souls and ravage our peace.

Doubts are to be expected. We must fight fear.

Do you see how Jesus helped Jairus – he says – don't be afraid, only believe. He is not saying believe in general – but believe in me.

Jesus will not let you down.

2. Jesus freely receives all who come to him.

Jairus and the woman were from opposite ends of the societal spectrum, but Jesus receives them both. The only thing that matters in the kingdom of God is faith in Christ.

Jesus will not reject you if you come to him. Whether you are:

- Whether you are male or female – you are welcomed by Jesus.
- Whether you are influential or unimportant – you are welcomed by Jesus.
- Whether you are religious or irreligious – you are welcomed by Jesus.
- Whether you know a lot of Jesus or nothing – you are welcomed by Jesus.
- Whether you come directly or approach from behind – you are welcomed by Jesus.
- Whether you feel shame or not – you are welcomed by Jesus.

And you need Jesus.

This trip that Mark has led us on with Jesus is remarkable.

A woman healed!

A girl raised!

And you might be thinking – I wish Jesus would do something that remarkable for me. There we go – for many of us that is the issue this morning.

Where is Jesus?

I've approached Jesus so many times asking for help and so many times, I've heard nothing. Silence.

Is that you?

Let's rewind our story and think about it from another angle – one more time.

Both the woman and the little girl were healed by our generous Savior. But both needed something more. They needed something only Jesus could offer.

The woman healed was not healed forever or insulated from ALL future suffering. She did not have the issue of blood, but she had other issues.

The little girl was called back from the dead but she would die again. She was not insulated from death forever. Maybe as an old woman, but she would die again.

Both parties that came to Jesus got far more than they expected or hoped. The woman wanted to be healed,

but Jesus forced her to identify herself. If not, she would have walked away thinking that her touch of his garment had healed her.

Jesus wants to interact with her, look her in the face and say – Your faith in me healed you.

Jairus came to Jesus hoping that he would heal his precious little girl. Instead, Jesus waited and called his little girl back from the dead.

They needed more from Jesus than they knew at the time. They needed to know him.

You always get more from Jesus than you think when you come to him. Maybe you come and you want something but he ends up giving you all of himself. What Jesus did for these two people he did not do for himself.

- Like the woman he would be considered unclean and rejected.
- Like the woman he would shed blood with no remedy.
- Like the little girl he would die, but there was no one to take his hand.
- He would be scorned and rejected by everyone that he loved.

There was no one to help him.

But there is someone to help us. He lives. Jesus died but lives again.

And that is what we needed Jesus to do for us – even though we didn't really know it. Today, while you may be struggling with loss, sickness and trouble of all sorts.

You are not struggling alone.

PRAY –

[14] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

