

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Mark 5:22-24, 35b-43

"Don't Be Afraid; Just Believe"

It is great to be back. We had a wonderful time down in South Florida with family, visiting with my son for Father's Day, and for my birthday on Sunday. Every seven years it is the same day, and I got double gifts. Just being with them was gift enough. Family is beyond words.

In today's Holy Gospel reading - Jesus had returned to the western side of the lake – His home base - having been on the eastern side – the Gentile side. Jesus was back on the "Jewish" side of the lake – and is met by one of the leaders of a local synagogue. This man named Jairus comes to Jesus and begs Him to come with him. He is falling at Jesus' feet, pleading. In verse 23 he says, *"My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."* The very compassionate Jesus, went with him. Jairus wants his daughter to live – and so he humbles himself – begging Jesus to come with him. Imagine the faith of this Jewish leader, getting on his knees and saying without a shadow of a doubt in his heart, in his mind, and in his voice, "if you lay hands on her – she will be healed and live." It took a lot of courage for him to do this, possibly right in front of his congregants, and go before Jesus, begging Him to come and save his daughter.

While Jesus was on His way to see this little girl, a woman who has a serious bleeding issue for 12 years, came to Jesus. You might be saying that that story is not in today's Holy Gospel. Well in today's Gospel reading there is a comma in between certain verses. That means that in our Lectionary it was someone's choice to just stay with the account of Jairus and his daughter. That is ok – but I will share with you some of the high points of what happened with this woman, She was considered 'unclean' and she knew that if she touched Jesus she would make Him unclean as well, according to the Law of Moses. When she does touch Jesus – He immediately feels the power go out of Him – and He asks, *"who touched my clothes?"* (Mark 5:30) Jesus healed her, but I have got to tell you that this is a sermon for another day.

When Jesus left this woman, He headed toward Jairus' house, then, *"some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. 'Your daughter is dead,' they said."* Can you imagine getting closer to home and having someone come and tell you 'your daughter is dead?' Jesus has up to this point in His life exhibited miraculous power over demons, over sickness, physical disabilities, the forces of nature, and now He is about to take death 'head on.' Jesus is about to give Jairus a hint that all will be well, because of his great faith in coming to Jesus in the first place. *"Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 'Don't be afraid; just believe.' He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James."* (Mark 5:36-37) Jesus and His inner circle of those three apostles (who went many places with Him, including to the Mount of Transfiguration) went to the home of Jairus and when they got there they found despair, but Jesus was totally confident and in control – knowing exactly what was ahead for the girl and her family. *"He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.'"* (Mark 5:39) You would think that they might find hope in Jesus' words – after all, it was Jairus who came to Jesus, believing that all He had to do was touch her and she would live. All of the family and people present laughed at Jesus. Can

you imagine the emotion and tension that must have been in that room? *“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.”* (Mark 5:40)

Last week Deacon Bob preached about Jesus' mastering nature – as He calmed the storm. Well, Jesus is Master of everything and would now be taking on the greatest physical roadblock known to all humanity – death. It would be one of three times in the Gospel readings that Jesus would bring someone back from the dead – Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow from Nain, and of course His friend, Lazarus. Three people – a very spiritual number – three days in the tomb, three persons – the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, leading to the greatest restoration of life of all – Jesus' own Resurrection from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion.

Verse 41 says, *“He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”)”* Can you just imagine the expressions on the faces of her mom and dad, and the three apostles who were there in that room? The next verse, verse 42 says, *“Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). And they were completely astonished.”* Well, I must say, that is putting it mildly - to say the least! The Gospel says that Jesus told them not to tell anyone and then to get her something to eat! Just think, not being able to tell anyone what had just happened? The girl would have to go out into the room where the people were wringing their hands and mourning – they must have been shocked! To prove that she was really alive, Jesus wanted her to have something to eat – a sure sign that a teenager is alive! After Jesus rose from the dead - He ate with the Apostles to prove to them, besides the evidence of His hands, feet, and side, that He was alive. When He was with those disciples on the Road to Emmaus – Jesus sat and ate with them and when He broke the bread they realized it was indeed Jesus. Eating was a sure sign of life.

Jesus had conquered the forces of nature, sickness, demons, physical disabilities and now death – He would completely conquer death, as well as sin on the cross at Calvary – but He had much more teaching to do before His arrest, torture, the mockery of a trial, and murder. One of the Apostles who was present that day at the home of Jairus was also present as an eyewitness of the other miracles. As a matter of fact, in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John – John wrote *“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:30-31) The key word here is believing. It makes me think of Jesus's words to the Pharisee Nicodemus, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16) The difference between life and death – all comes down to believing in Jesus Christ! Jesus knows how difficult it is in this life, after all, He walked in our shoes for 33 years and knew that by believing in Him the door to death is closed, the door to sin can be forgiven, simply by believing.

Jesus did not perform miracles to prove His identity – but to reward people's faith. He told the woman with the bleeding issue that *“your faith has made you well.”* She struggled just to touch

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the hem of His garment, and when she did Jesus felt the power go out from Him. He said, who touched my clothes? He knew – but He wanted her to say. Jesus said. Woman, “*your faith has made you well.*” He also healed people to compassionately see that their needs were met. The man with the withered hand, the man with leprosy, the man who was blind, my goodness – the list goes on.

How many people in this church today have been prayed for by me, and by others, and felt a sense of peace and a sense of healing? There are many here today, that have experienced that - myself included. That is how much Jesus loves us! Remember the words that Jesus said to Jairus? “*Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."* (Mark 5:36) Those are very important words for all of us today and in any circumstances; words of faith and truth – from the author of faith and truth – “*Don't be afraid; just believe.*” (Mark 5:36)