

Group Study Outline

LAUNCHING

What kinds of situations scare you?
Which frightens you more: personal worries, or global worries? why?
Which frightens you more: what might happen, or what has happened? why?

QUESTIONS

READ Mark 5:21-43

These two interleaved stories match the two previous stories (4:35-41; 5:1-20).
What is the desperate situation in all four of the situations?
How do we know that each situation is really desperate?

5:24b-34

What is the woman looking for? (*several answers here*)
What does she get in 29?
If Jesus had not spoken to her what might have been the result (cf 6:56)?
Explore some of the reasons why Jesus might have chosen to speak to her.
(*eg think about previous social ostracism ... 'daughter' ... the importance of receiving Jesus' promise ... the effect on Jairus ... etc etc*)

5:21-24a, 35-43

Compare 23 and 35. What is implied about Jesus, illness and death?
Look at verse 36. What did Jairus 'fear'? what did Jairus 'believe'?
How can it be helpful for Jairus that Jesus delays until his daughter has died?
What does Jesus mean in verse 39 ... surely the girl was dead, wasn't she?
What does Jairus learn (that he wouldn't have learned if Jesus had gone all the way back to his home with him in 24)?

CONCLUSION / APPLICATION

What does the woman get from Jesus that is more than she expected?
What does Jairus get from Jesus that is more than he expected?

Do you believe that these things actually happened? Really?!
What would you feel like if you had been there to watch these events?
What evidence do we have here for what the people then thought about Jesus?
What should my response be to the Jesus who does this?
How do we get a bigger view of how awesome Jesus really is?

If this is what Jesus can do for long-term chronic illness, why doesn't he?
OR, more clearly: why doesn't Jesus raise dead Christians from death like this?

How do these stories help us when I'm faced with frightening situations?
How does this story help the person who has obvious needs that they are praying to God to solve (eg some intractable physical illness)?

Why is this story very, very good news for a broken world?

Mark 5:21-43



Mark at a glance

When we read Mark's Gospel, we are listening to Mark preaching the gospel: not merely telling us a story, he aims to persuade us about who Jesus is and what he came to do ... and challenges us to respond to Jesus accordingly.

Mark 1:1 sets up the whole book: 'the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' It is a story about some good news, and the news concerns Jesus ... who is the Christ (the anointed king promised in the OT) and the Son of God (another OT kingly title showing a unique relationship to God the Father).

This opening statement is reflected in the two halves of the book. The first half (1:1-8:29) begins with a declaration from the heavens about Jesus' identity (at his baptism) and ends with someone (Peter) realising that Jesus is the Christ. The second half (8:30-end) begins with a declaration from the heavens about Jesus' identity (at the transfiguration) and ends with someone (a Roman soldier) realising that Jesus is the Son of God.

In broad terms, the first half of the book concentrates on who Jesus is, with bold demonstrations of his awesome authority over everything. And then at 8:31, Jesus begins to teach that he must suffer and die, so the storyline focuses on Jesus' march towards his death, to give his life as a ransom for many.

Theme Sentence for 2:1-12

In hopeless situations, Jesus is powerful to save

How this passage fits in

5:21-43 is the last section in a unit of three stories (with 4:35-41 and 5:1-20). The common theme is **Jesus' supremacy over an impossible situation**.

4:35-41
nature

It's a bad storm if professional fishermen (cf 1:16-20) think their lives are in danger! And in the OT (eg Job 38; Ps 89:9; 104:7), the sea represents chaotic powers that only God can control. Jesus take days to go still). 'Who is this?' (41) is the obvious question.

5:1-20
Satan

Mark underlines the impossibility (cf 'no one' in 3-5; 'Legion' in 9). No-one watching pigs charging into the lake could doubt the destructive intent of demons, but also, see how unmistakable is Jesus' power: those demons really are gone!

5:24-34
illness

26 sets up a contrast between what the medics fail to do, and what 'immediately' happens by Jesus' 'power' (29).

5:21-43
death

The men's comment in 35, the mourners crying (38) and their laughter (40) show what everyone knows: when death comes, that really is the end. But for Jesus, death is no more permanent than sleep (39): he just tells the child to get up (41)!

[NS]

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Commentary

- 21 Crossing over the lake means that we are back in the area of ch 1-4 (though possibly not yet back 'at home' in Capernaum until 6:1 cf 2:1).
- 22-23 Jairus is socially prominent, respectable and probably wealthy, so he must be desperate to fall at the feet of a Galilean carpenter. What he's saying is that his daughter is going to die unless Jesus comes to his aid.
- 24-27 If this illness is beyond the best medical attention that money could buy, we're being told what a serious situation this is. You could say the woman has suffered not just from the illness but also from the 'cures'! A literal translation (cf www.biblegateway.com) shows how a long sentence is constructed to build suspense as her hand is outstretched.
- 28 'Touch' is a significant theme in these stories (cf 30, 31 and the little girl in 42). This matters because bodily discharges and contact with a dead body are two of chief sources of impurity in Jewish law; touching such an untouchable is how ritual uncleanness could be contracted. Being unclean meant that you were not only a social but also a theological outcast only cleansed by a sacrifice of atonement. But here rather than Jesus catching their contamination, they 'catch' from Jesus the restoration into a relationship with God that they needed.
- 30 Why does Jesus delay? The woman already knows she is healed (29) and yet Jesus wants to waste time finding out who touched him (- like asking 'who touched me?' in a rugby scrum!). It seems that what Jesus is doing is spending time with the woman not *instead of* attending to Jairus and his daughter but *for the sake of* Jairus and his daughter. Jairus already had faith that Jesus can heal his daughter, but he now faces the question 'can he raise the dead?'.
- 32-34 Another reason for Jesus' delay is that he wants to speak to the woman. Possibly this is because she would otherwise be left with something more like superstition than faith. Possibly, he wants her to cling not just to a feeling inside (29) but also to the far surer promise of Jesus himself. And possibly because he wants to turn her into a disciple – she's now a 'daughter', singled out and identified with the Galilean who saved her.
- 35 Feel the impact of these words, drained of all hope: a dangerously ill girl is one thing (23) ... but death means that she is now beyond help.
- 36 should really go with 33-34 as the centrepiece of Mark's story-telling. The woman is afraid after Jesus' intervention: she fears Jesus and this is a sign of faith (34). Jairus is afraid before Jesus' intervention: he fears death and this is the opposite of faith (36). So what Jesus means here is something like 'you already have faith, so don't now lapse back into fear' (rather than that he was already fearing and must begin to

believe). Greater grounds for trust in Jesus will now be given to Jairus as he's shown that he's in the presence of the Lord over even death.

- 37 The inner threesome of Peter, James and John are the only ones who see the sequence of all four miracles in this section (4:35-5:43). They alone are being the full catalogue of Jesus' awesome power ... but though this very passage, we too can share in their private viewing!
- 38-40 Professional mourners know a dead body when they see one, and they know how ridiculous it is for anyone claim anything different! Jesus is not claiming that the little girl is not actually deceased. His point is that for this omnipotent Lord, death is no more permanent than sleep: he can wake the dead, just like you'd wake up a child to get her to go to school. Isn't it far, far better for Jairus (and us!) to know that Jesus is not just able to heal, but that he is powerful to raise us from death?
- Throughout these stories, there are hints that these are pictures of what we mean when we talk more broadly about God's salvation:
- the woman's disease is a *scourge* (29, 34); *free* is a salvation word;
 - the word for 'heal' is the normal word for *save* (23, 28, 34);
 - Jairus wants his daughter to *live* (23);
 - and Jesus does indeed *raise up* (42).
- We have the impression that raising from the dead is common in the Bible, but it's not! It is always extraordinary! The only two raisings from the dead in the OT were in answer to the prayers of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:32-35). But Jesus here is saying not that she's in a coma but that he can raise her from death, as if from sleep, which then does, without even a prayer. This is surely God himself!
- 42 shows that the recovery is instantaneous and there is no need for longer term rehabilitation (just as in 4:39-41 wind and wave are calmed).

Application

- we should fear the Lord who is powerful to save
- we should fear Him more than we fear our hopeless situation
- we therefore need a big view of who Jesus is, so let's keep praying that what we read in these gospel accounts will convince us ...

Let Jesus be the one who daunts you!
Let Jesus' might and power be what overwhelms you!
Let the glory of Jesus be what scares you
... so there won't be room for other anxieties