

What Does Faith in Jesus Do?

Mark 5:21-43

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The closest I ever came to experiencing a little poverty happened in my 20's. I had graduated from University with a business degree. But the economy in Calgary was down and I could find no position for new graduates. So I had a carpet cleaning job that I'd done part-time through university. The owner at first had enough hours for me to keep going through the fall. But come December, they decided that they could no longer afford to pay me.

So I went on unemployment insurance and began to look for other jobs. I couldn't really find anything. I became dependent on that bi-weekly check that came from the government. But my financial reserves began to deplete until this one week where I was out of money before I got my EI check. Now I was too proud to let my parents or even my roommates know that I was out of money.

So I decided I would live without any money for a whole week. I didn't take my car out to drive because it was basically out of gas. I walked everywhere because I hadn't bought a bus pass. I even walked to our church which took 45 minutes one way in January in -25.

On top of that, I couldn't buy any new groceries that week. So I ate only canned foods that we had in our cupboard and anything else my roommates might offer. Finally, my check came and I got going again. Eventually, I found a summer job and by God's mercy, haven't been that close since. But during those days it was a strange feeling being out of resources. Everywhere I looked were things I could not buy. And there was that pride factor of not wanting others to know I was in need.

Even though it was a few days with no money, I wasn't totally without resources. I had people I could have called on to help me. But I was too proud. And I knew that the check was coming. So my situation was really not that desperate. Some of you have been though much worse. You've had to live without any check coming or the one that's coming won't cover all your regular expenses. Maybe you have had to choose either food or heat. Some face other situations where all options have been exhausted – the doctors say “there's nothing more we can do.” The counselor says “we've tried everything.” Or we have no control about a decision to be made that affects us. There's times we just don't know what to do or where to turn for solutions. When that happens – what do you do?

I want to introduce you to two people today who were out of options. One faced a life and death situation in their family. Another had come to the end of their resources in an attempt to address a health issue. But then they both met

Jesus. We are going to see what happened through their encounter with Him. Then we'll look at how we might apply this when we come to the end of our options. I pray that if you're in an "out of options" situation today, you will leave encouraged.

Mark 5:21-43 (ESV) (Page 708)

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.

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. 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. 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."

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." 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. 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.

If you've been with us for a little while, you have heard me talk about a unique feature of Mark's writing. He will sandwich stories around each other. So back on June 2, we saw the story of Jesus mother and brothers coming to do an intervention in His life. That story sandwiches the account of the scribe from Jerusalem. He accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil. Both stories combine to warn us not to get in the way of the advance of God's kingdom; by attributing the Holy Spirit's ministry to the devil or by putting family concerns above the priorities of the kingdom.

Well here in Mark 5, we see another example of this sandwich technique. Mark starts with the account of Jairus and his very ill daughter. Then he talks about this woman with persistent bleeding. Then he finishes the story of Jairus and his daughter. But this sandwich is a little different than the previous one. In chapter 3, Mark seems to bring together two accounts that happened at different times. But here, it seems the middle story actually did occur in the middle of the sandwich story. So let's keep that picture in mind as we meet these two people who were out of options.

5: verses 21-24 – The man with the 12 year old daughter – Part 1

Mark tells us Jesus and the disciples again cross the Sea of Galilee away from the Gentile region of the Gerasenes back to the Jewish side of Galilee. A crowd again awaits him beside the sea. A ruler of the synagogue named Jairus approaches Jesus. These rulers were probably higher up in the community. They administered the synagogue, maintained the facility and organized worship services. They may have been of the Pharisee sect or they could have been a layman who simply had that role. So Jairus is somehow connected to the Jewish religious leadership. We have seen an increasing hostility from that group generally towards Jesus.

But a situation arises in Jairus' life that strips away any hesitation he might have towards Jesus. His little daughter is at the point of death. Imagine your own children or grandchildren or some child you know in this state. You hear that Jesus, who has healed diseases in your community, is back in town. You're child or grandchild may have less than an hour to live. You're out of options. Desperate circumstances have a habit of stripping away our hesitations. We are more willing to try whatever might work especially when it involves our loved one's life. Jairus comes and begs Jesus to lay his hands on the little girl. Jesus agrees to go with Jairus. Suddenly, part 1 of the Jairus' story finishes.

Then Mark switches our focus to the other story. **5:25-34 – The “daughter” with the 12 year illness.** A great crowd crowds around Jesus. It must have been like West Edmonton Mall the weekend before Christmas or maybe like the Raptor's' championship ceremony. It maybe was hard for Jesus to move very fast. But a woman in the crowd tries to get close to Him. Mark tells us she had a discharge of blood for 12 years. So for over a decade, she has had this bleed that does not heal. So she's physically weak. But she was also ceremonially unclean according to the Jewish religious laws. This ongoing flow of blood prevents her from worshipping in the temple or even participating in normal community life. When she's out, she must make people aware she's unclean. Her uncleanness is transferable according to the law. Anyone who had contact with her by lying in her bed, sitting in her chair or touching her became unclean. They would be

required to bathe and wash their clothes. So her discharge of blood causes her to be discharged from society in general.

Maybe she watched Jesus from afar many times but could not get close to Him.

But not only did she have this problem with bleeding and exclusion from normal life. In verse 26, Mark tells us she suffered much under many physicians and had spent all she had yet had only gotten worse. So she is out of options. She has no money. The doctors can do no more. She is excluded from society. Yet she's heard about Jesus ability to heal. She takes advantage of the crushing crowds to get close to Him and touch His garment. But why just touch his clothes? Wouldn't she need to get his attention so He could heal her? Mark tells us in verse 28 she had such great faith in Jesus' ability to heal, that she reasoned she only needed to touch his garment.

In verse 29, she succeeds. She is immediately healed. The flow of blood dries up. For the first time in 12 years, she is physically whole again. Can you imagine what must have been going on in her heart at that moment? This was probably the best day of her life. She likely wanted to just fade back into the crowd and enjoy her new found health.

But Jesus stops. He senses that healing power has left him. So he turns to the crowd and asks "who touched me?" The disciples think this a ridiculous question because everyone close to him is touching him. But Jesus does not give up. He continues to search. The woman does not escape. She must face the one who has just healed her. So in verse 33, she comes to him in fear and trembling.

Why is she afraid? Some commentators think she was fearful and trembling because she was embarrassed. If the religious leaders knew that an unclean woman had been out and about in a crowd they might scold her. Or if people in the crowd knew this unclean woman was among them, they might get angry. But look at how Mark puts it. "Knowing what had happened to her, she came in fear and trembling and fell down before him." So it seems Mark connects her fear and trembling to an overwhelming sense of being in God's presence in the person of Jesus. She does not take lightly this incredible gift Jesus has given her. So she falls on her knees and tells the whole truth.

Then Jesus commends her and makes this statement in verse 34. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease." Now we have to unpack this a little bit to deal with some stuff we're uncomfortable with and to protect against misuse of this passage. First, let's deal with the healing itself. It seems kind of weird to us. If you just touch his cloak, you'll be healed. It's almost like a magic coat. But Jesus helps clarify this when he says "your

faith has made you well.” So it was not some magical power in Jesus’ robe. Through her faith flowed God’s healing power. God graciously responded to her faith in Jesus’ messianic authority and power to heal.

We also have to guard against a misuse of the statement “you’re faith has made you well.” No one has actually ever been healed by their own faith. Their own faith didn’t just turn around and go back into her body and heal her. It was through her faith that God healed her. But Jesus emphasizes the important role that her faith played in this. Keeping that perspective guards against some of those damaging statements Christians sometimes make to others who are sick that go like this. “If you just had more faith, you would be healed.” No, it’s tapping into the power of God that matters and leaving the decision to Him.

But just to wrap up this part of the story, think about how Jesus stopping brought greater blessing to this woman. We might have wished Jesus just left her alone. But she and we would have missed the great blessing that her testimony provided. She was able to publicly proclaim that she was no longer unclean because of the power of God. Then she gets affirmation of this truth from Jesus. So He has restored her to the community by calling her out in this moment. And God gets glorified through her lips.

But then we come to part 2 of the Jairus’ story. **5:35-43 – The man with the 12 year old daughter – Part 2.** Can you imagine what he was going through during this interaction with the woman? He succeeded in getting Jesus going towards his house where His daughter was dying. Then the crowds slow Jesus down. Then he stops and asks who touched him. There’s this search. The woman speaks and Jesus responds. Though probably sympathetic to the woman, the seconds tick away for Jairus’ daughter.

Then Jairus’ worst fears are confirmed. A messenger arrives while Jesus is still speaking to inform Jairus that “you’re daughter has died. Don’t trouble the teacher anymore.”

Yet Jesus overhears this.

He immediately goes over to encourage Jairus. “Do not fear. Only believe.” Jairus has exercised some faith by asking for Jesus’ help when his daughter was dying. But now Jesus commands him to exercise more faith now that his daughter is dead. They head to the house. Jesus only allows Peter, James and John to come with them. A commotion of people has already gathered to weep and wail loudly. But Jesus rebukes them saying, “she’s not dead but asleep.”

They mock him as if Jesus is confused. But since he knew what he was going to do, it would be like she was only sleeping. For she would only be dead for maybe half an hour to an hour.

Jesus clears the house and takes the girl's father and mother along with the 3 disciples into where she lay. According to Jewish law, touching a dead person made you unclean. But Jesus has just reversed the flow of uncleanness with the woman who had bled. Now he is going to do the same thing to this dead little girl. So he takes her hand, touching a dead person. Mark gives us Jesus' words in Aramaic – the common language of the people. "Talitha cumi" which means, "little girl, I say to you arise." Now why did Mark give us this phrase in Aramaic? There's probably a couple reasons. For one, we know Jesus didn't use some magical formula or words. This was simply a command to a dead person. Second, remember Peter was in the room, who we believe was Mark's primary source of this Gospel. This event likely impacted Peter so deeply that he remembered the very words Jesus used to raise this little girl.

Then verse 42 – And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was 12) and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And then after instructing them to tell no one (though everyone would soon see it), Jesus told them to give her something to eat. What does that reveal? This was no spirit that they saw. The actual girl lived again in her body and needed food. Now I don't know about you, but I had goosebumps when I was preparing this message and imagining this moment for these parents. Wow! Incredible! Amazing! Only God could defeat this great enemy of death.

Yet what is Mark's point? Well he's certainly interested in the faith of these two people. He quotes Jesus twice regarding faith. "Daughter, your faith has made you well." To Jairus, Jesus says "Do not fear, only believe (or have faith).

So what is faith?

- **It is recognizing that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves and expresses our full dependence on God's saving power.**
- **A trusting, dependent love and obedience that is the only fitting expression of our helplessness, and the only fitting acknowledgment of God's power.**

The two "out of options" people trusted Jesus in the midst of a hopeless situation. **So what does faith in Jesus do? It connects to God's resurrection power.**

These people had no hope; they were out of options; they had no other means or resources. They cried out to Christ in their desperation for His help. He heard their cry. He acted on it. He healed the woman. He then raised the little girl from death to life.

This reveals to us a Jesus who cares deeply and hears the cries of people out of options. He does not show preference between rich and poor; male or female; high social standing or lower standing. He responds to the cries of people in desperate need. So if you are in a situation today where you are out of options or at the end of your resources; or the doctors are out of answers; or you don't know what to do – come to Jesus and put your trust on Him. Ask for His help; His intervention; His wisdom; His door opening; His healing; His direction; His saving; His strength; His peace. We're going to deal with the problem that some aren't healed who ask in faith in just a moment. But I don't want us to address the objection without further pondering how faith addresses God's resurrection power. Let us not drift into a worldview where we practically live like atheists. We sing songs of praise on Sunday. But then the rest of the week we go about life based on our own resources, abilities, knowledge and accomplishments. We think and live as if we don't need God really for anything. But we need to live by faith every day. We need to tap into God's power all the time to respond to life in a way that Jesus would. We need to cry out to God to grow the fruit of the Holy Spirit in us. Everyone is at the end of their resources when it comes to that. We need God's power to love our enemies. We need God's wisdom to guide and raise our kids. We need to trust God by faith to apply His Word to our lives in life changing ways.

So if you think that you can just go through your week without faith in God and His power, you're living like an atheist. Trusting God will become more and more foreign to you. Instead, you will trust yourself and your resources and your knowledge. Then you'll come to a situation where you truly are at the end of your resources. You might be so far away from God that you give in to despair or you curse Him for allowing this to happen and abandon the faith. 2 Timothy 3:5; "having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power [...]"

But when we cultivate this daily dependence upon the Lord and walk by faith, when out of options situations arise, we won't give in to despair. We won't curse God and turn away. We will know that despite our resource exhaustion, we have a God who never runs out of resources. We have a God who cares intimately and deeply about everything we're going through. We can gain strength to walk through difficult days knowing we're not alone or abandoned. Jesus is with us and right there beside us.

So don't settle for a faithless existence during the week. Don't wait until you come to the obvious end of your resources or situation before putting all your faith on Jesus. Ask Him to lead you in a daily walk and conversation about faith.

But then there's the other side of this. It is great that this woman' received healing and Jairus' daughter was resurrected. But that's more the exception than the norm. Sometimes our requests to Jesus are not granted. So how do we go forward with that? Well here's a pathway to cope when God says no to our requests. Don't worry about writing all this down. It will be posted on our website in a few days under sermons and you can reread or listen to this again. But just listen today and let the Holy Spirit speak to you about this.

1 – Remember, Evil, sickness, and the death of little children continue to exist in our world. Not every touch heals, and those with faith sometimes still hear the dreaded word from the doctor, "Your little girl is dead." This passage does not offer any explanation for why a loving God allows evil to continue to exist or why some bad stuff happens.

2 – And yet, we live in an already arrived but not yet complete kingdom of God. Mark begins with Jesus saying in 1:15 – "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand." There will be times when we get to taste and enjoy the realities of the fullness of God's kingdom; a person receives forgiveness; someone is healed; someone is rescued from death's door; baptisms. But other times, we walk in not yet fulfilled or complete part of God's reign.

3 – Still, God is on the side of those who suffer and are stricken by grief. A miracle does not occur in every disastrous situation, but it does not lessen God's power to save. Throughout Scripture we are presented with a God who walks closely with His people through their trials, sufferings and grief.

4 – And God is always at His work on behalf of His people for good. In John 5:17 – Jesus said – "My Father is working until now, and I am working." Romans 8:28 – "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good."

5 – When Jesus returns, we will enjoy the fullness of God's kingdom apart from death, crying and pain. Revelation 21:3-4 – Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

So – when facing an “out of options” situation, continually plug in to Jesus’ resurrection power by faith. He will either grant your request or He will see you through whatever is going to happen. But we must also continually plug in to Christ’s resurrection power in situations where we think we’re not out of options. Plugging in to Christ needs to move from being our last resort to our first response when trouble comes.

If you have never put your faith in Jesus, I want you to know that God has your best in mind. He wants to forgive you; He has made a way for your sins to be paid for; He desires a deep love relationship with you where you can constantly depend on Him. And He loves saving people. So will you come to Him in faith today to receive Jesus into your life? Will you put the whole trust of your life and eternity onto Him? Through that faith, God will pour His Gospel into your life.

But now I want to invite all of us to bring before God a situation in our lives that is beyond us where we don’t know what to do! We are nearing or have already arrived at the “out of options” stage. Now bring those situations to Christ and ask for His help.