Text: Mark 5:21-43

**Text**

Mark has an interesting way of constructing some of the stories he tells. It tends to get called the Markan sandwich. He starts one story. “A ruler of the Synagogue, Jairus by name…implored Jesus earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death. Come.’” But then he interrupts it with a second one. “And there was a woman who had a discharge of blood…”. And Mark lets that 2nd story play out while the clock it ticking on the first. And in this case that ticking clock in the reader’s head is meaningful. “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” But that doesn’t end the story.

The layering of the story creates some tension making it more interesting. It also makes it easier to memorize. The Gospel of Mark is reported to be Mark’s copying down of Peter’s witness. After getting kicked off of team Paul after the first missionary journey, Mark ends up with Peter all the way to Rome. You can imagine Peter tells the story a bunch of times, and Mark works out the best way to remember it all. But what the sandwich really invites us to do is compare and contrast the two stories. How are they alike and how are they different? Does the inner story shed any light on the outer story? Does the outer story help us understand what is going on inside?

And the first thing I want to say is that both stories are about desperation. A father of a 12 year old daughter who is dying. And it is not just any father, but a ruler of the synagogue. This is guy who is competent and accomplished. He is used to being able to take care of things. You don’t get a great crowd following you or to be the ruler of a synagogue – the equivalent of judge or mayor – without reason. And he can do nothing. Jairus, the proud man, is reduced to asking the itinerant miracle worker for a miracle. “Lay **your** hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” That “may” is an interesting addition. You could translate it “might”. It’s a verb form that indicates some squishiness. Although Jesus doesn’t call Jairus out on this, like he would call out another father who brought his boy who would plead “I believe, help my unbelief.”

But I think there is an intentional comparison between the inner and the outer story that we are meant to ponder. In the outer story, there are constant questions. “She may live.” “Don’t bother the teacher anymore.” “The people weeping and wailing…laughed at him.” Maybe even just bringing Peter, James and John. The inner story is one of absurd absolute faith. “She had heard reports about Jesus and…if I just touch even his garments, I will be made well.” The outer story is populated by people who had probably seen and were in the know about what Jesus had been doing. Even the temple priests from Jerusalem had sent people to witness what Jesus was doing. Surely a ruler of the local synagogue had gone to see, or at least sent members to check it out. Maybe even invite the miracle worker to his synagogue. It was Jesus’ custom to preach in the them after all. The inner story is just this lone woman. And all she had were reports. Yet she knew. The ruler knew enough to say “come and lay your hands on her.” Jesus’ common method. Or he was confident enough to ask for that. The woman believed the garment would be enough.

There are some other comparisons that are attractive to highlight. Both of these people at one time would have been rich. Jairus would still be, while the woman had spent it all on doctors. There is fact of the number 12. The girl was 12 years of age while the woman had been ill for 12 years. One had lived as long as the other was ill. We might make something of those.

But the greater comparison is what happens after the miracles. In the outer story everyone is “overcome with amazement.” In the inner story, “the woman knew what had happened to her, and came in fear and trembling.” The outer story is the reaction to one hell of a magic trick. It is the reaction of those who don’t know but would like to. The inner story is the reaction to meeting God.

**Christology**

The inner story in the story of the soul. Our souls know they are sick. We know we are bleeding. The life that is in the blood is draining from us. And everything that we have tried is meaningless. Money doesn’t stop it. Gurus and doctors don’t stop it. Self-help fails. For 12 years – a complete time – we have tried everything. And it has left us here – desperate.

And then we hear the gospel – the report of Jesus – the Word. And the soul knows that if it meets God everything can be made right. The Lord of Life, if the soul just touches his garment, we will be well. The problem with our desperate souls is that we might have heard the reports of God’s power, but we don’t know God himself. The power is there, but what is the price?

And when the soul doesn’t know God, has no idea of the price, fear and trembling is the correct response. If the hem of His garment can heal, it could also demand it all back. When the voice called out in the garden, they hid. But the purpose of the voice is not to damn us. The voice of God calls to us so that we might know him. “Who touched my garment?” was not to take back the power which had gone out, or to extract a price. It was so that the soul might know God. It is so that our fear and trembling might be replaced by assurance.

The God the soul comes to know is the one that call it “daughter.” The God the soul comes to know is the one that praises the faith that reached out in desperation. The God the soul comes to know is the one who says “go in peace.”

The price demanded is nothing, it is charged to grace. The God of all souls – Jesus – is the God that wishes they were all healed of the disease of sin. That we would have faith that all those sins were carried on the cross. That not even the garment is necessary, just the faith. That Jesus loves you. Stop fearing. This is a God who does not quench the smoldering wick, or bruise the slender reed. Christ is the strength and salvation of the desperate.

**Moral**

If the inner story in the story of the mature soul that has met God. What is the outer story of the young girl and the Father?

There are the doubts. “she may be made well.”

There are those who say it is over. This Christ is not for you. “Why trouble the teacher now?”

There are the scoffers. “They laughed at him.”

And there is the personal amazement that is not quite faith. Jesus says, “Do not fear, only believe.” But when confronted by the power of God, there is only the amazement. Is this really happening? It didn’t think it was possible.

If the inner story is the mature soul, the outer story is preparation. The situation of the little girl is actually worse. She’s dead. The only thing that can raise her is the Word of Jesus. That’s the soul without faith. And there are so many lies that the devil tells that soul. This God you are seeking isn’t powerful enough. You can’t be made well. You are beyond His power and grace. He isn’t for you. You believe in these fairy tales? Still?

The devil’s lies do not stop the power of God. Christ is risen, we shall arise. He will speak to every one of us the same thing, “I say to you, arise.” And as the old hymn puts it, “proofs I see sufficient of it, tis the true and faithful word.”

But the purpose of those that surround such a soul are to do what Jesus says. First, “do not fear, only believe.” Whatever the situation is, God is going to work it for the good of his people. And even in the world takes this flesh, we await the resurrection and life eternal. And second, “give her something to eat.”

The soul lives by every word that comes form the mouth of God. Christ has given us his body and blood – the manna for our time of wandering. If you have a maturing soul new to life. Give her something to eat.

**Eschatological**

We can go in peace. We have been fed. Christ has cured us of our deepest sin. And he will say to us arise. Go in peace, your faith has made you well.