

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
June 30, 2024  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

*When Jesus had again crossed over in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him near the sea. <sup>22</sup>Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup>and repeatedly pleaded with him, “My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.”*

*<sup>24</sup>Jesus went with him.*

*<sup>35</sup>While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue ruler’s house arrived, saying, “Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore?”*

*<sup>36</sup>But when Jesus heard this report, he told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” <sup>37</sup>He did not allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup>They went into the house of the synagogue ruler, and Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup>When he entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.”*

*<sup>40</sup>They laughed at him. But after he put everyone out, he took the father of the child, her mother, and those who were with him and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup>Grasping the hand of the child, he said to her, “Talitha, koum!” (When translated, that means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!”) <sup>42</sup>Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) They were completely and utterly amazed. <sup>43</sup>Then he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and he told them to give her something to eat.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

The gospel lessons in the past weeks have taught us things that we would never have discovered on our own. Jesus taught us that the Sabbath is for God to give us rest, not for us to do something for God. Jesus taught us that his gospel is the seed that sprouts faith in the hearts of unbelievers and grows the kingdom of God. Last week we stood in awe with the disciples as Jesus saved them from the storm by speaking to the wind and the waves. In the account between the calming of the storm and our gospel reading today, Jesus rescued a man by driving out a legion of demons from him. His Word has power to create faith, heal the sick, drive out demons and today we marvel at Christ’s power over death itself. Jesus completely changes our view of death.

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Jesus used the city of Capernaum as a home base to conduct his ministry in Galilee. It was on the north end of this body of water. After driving out the legion of demons, he returns to Capernaum. Not surprisingly, a crowd gathers around him upon his return. Somewhat surprisingly, the synagogue ruler gathers around Jesus too. Jairus would have been an important man among the Jews. He was taking a risk by approaching Jesus publicly to ask for help. For the religious leaders were opposed to Jesus. Jairus could lose his place as the synagogue ruler if he is seen being friendly with Jesus. But Jairus doesn’t care what anyone else thinks.

He falls on the ground at the feet of Jesus. The crowds see him begging for help from Jesus. He is an important person in town. He doesn’t have to bow down, much less fall to the dust at the feet of very many people. But he is willing to do anything to help his little daughter. Jesus has healed people before. There is hope that Jesus will heal her. This loving father humbles himself

before Jesus and humiliates himself before the crowd by begging Jesus again and again and again in the dust, “My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.”

Jairus calls her “my little daughter.” Certainly, she is his smallest daughter and youngest daughter because Luke lets us know that she is his only daughter. But this term “my little daughter” is a term of endearment. She is his beloved daughter, his precious child. What hope must have filled his heart when Jesus begins to go with him!

You might have noticed that we skipped some verses in this reading. After Jesus begins to go with Jairus, a woman approaches Jesus, touches him and is healed of her illness. Jesus stops to talk with her. We can picture Jairus trying very hard to be patient, but time is running out for his daughter. When will Jesus finish with this woman and get to my little daughter who is dying? Too late, it seems.

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Jairus and his household had hope as long as his little daughter was alive. Those who brought the shocking message of her death had lost all hope. It is understandable. Jesus had done some amazing things, healing the sick, calming a storm, but this is death. Nothing can be done about death. It is better to simply accept it and move on. These men were being practical and realistic. “Why bother the Teacher anymore?”

They believed the problem was now too big for Jesus to handle so why bother him anymore. I’m sure you’ve had someone start a conversation with you, “I’m sorry to bother you…” It might just be a polite way to ask for help, but it is not a bother to be asked for help. As a pastor, I am not bothered when you call me, text me, email me. I may or may not be able to help or give you an answer, but I am not bothered by the request. Jesus is never bothered by our requests. No problem is too big or too small to bring to Jesus and he shows it now by not even allowing Jairus to respond to the report of his little daughter’s death. Christ immediately says to him, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.”

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Jesus had asked the little girl’s father to not be afraid and only believe. He asked Jairus to trust him above all that his ears had heard from his servants. It seems that Jairus was trusting Jesus so far or he was in shock so that he did not respond. But when Jesus directly tells the crowd of mourners at the house, “The child is not dead but sleeping,” they respond with the laughter of unbelief.

That is not the kind of thing you say when standing in line at a visitation. “Oh, she’s not really dead.” The people in line with you are going to give you some strange looks. Of course, she is dead. We’re in line to walk up to the casket, view the lifeless body and try to say something comforting to the family. And what kind of comfort can be given to a grieving family member like Jairus standing by the lifeless body of a loved one? Believers and unbelievers can offer condolences and share stories about the good life of the person who has died. But believers, we have more to say when a believer has died. We can say that this child is not dead but sleeping because of what Jesus does next.

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*with him and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup>Grasping the hand of the child, he said to her, "Talitha, koum!" (When translated, that means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!") <sup>42</sup>Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) They were completely and utterly amazed. <sup>43</sup>Then he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and he told them to give her something to eat.*

The little daughter who was so precious to her father, Jairus, is even more precious to Jesus. He calls her from her sleep of death with the beautiful "talitha" which means "little girl." Oh, how Jesus loved her. He took his precious child by the hand and raised her to life again. Later, Christ would demonstrate that this promise of resurrection to eternal life is not just for the little daughter of Jairus but for all who believe in him. For Christ himself will die to pay for all sins, to remove that which separated us from our God. Christ will sleep in the tomb and on the third day, he will rise to life again.

Because Christ's words raised the daughter of Jairus and he raised himself from death, we have plenty to say at the funeral of a believer. We can tell a grieving parent that Jesus loved their baptized child of God even more than they do. We can tell them that their precious child is with Christ now. We can tell a grieving spouse that their cherished husband or wife is alive with Christ in heaven now. We can tell someone mourning the death of their best friend that Christ has risen and overcome death itself. And though it will not likely happen on the same day as someone dies, Jesus will return to the earth. On that day he will raise all the dead. How wonderful it will be when Jesus takes our hand and wakes our sleeping body up, "Precious child of God, arise!" And we will arise to live body and soul with our Savior forever.

I'm not really looking forward to death itself, but I am certainly looking forward to the day Jesus wakes me up.

Amen.