

Fear of Shame, Disease, and Death Mark 5:21-43

Over the past two Sundays, we've looked at how Jesus addressed the issue of fear. The disciples feared the storm- and Jesus conquered it. As a result, they feared Him instead, in a healthy way- realizing that He was so much more than what they had assumed Him to be. The Gerasenes people- they feared a powerful man that was being controlled by demons. Jesus conquered the demons, and as a result, the Gerasenes people feared Him, but *not* in a healthy way- they feared Him as in they were scared of Jesus's power- scared of what else they might lose other than pigs if they were to allow Him to stay and continue His work.

And this morning, we're continuing in Mark chapter 5 where we left off last Sunday. We're going to see that Jesus is not done yet addressing this issue of fear. Today's passage raises the bar even higher, stressing even further the power of Jesus over any fear that we as humans encounter in this life. Let's walk through this passage, verse by verse.

Mark 5:21 Ok, so Jesus and His disciples have returned from the country of the Gerasenes, the land that lies across the lake from Capernaum. I assume that they slept the night on the beach, or perhaps they returned even that same night and slept back in Capernaum- either way, this is probably the following day after the storm and the encounter with the Gerasenes man, and the crowd hasn't diminished.

Mark 5:22-23 So Jairus is a synagogue official, some sort of elder that is involved in administration there at the local synagogue gathering place. Because of his position, he is known by most of the town. He's a prominent member of the community. We also know that many of his colleagues are opposed to Jesus's claims as Messiah. And typically one would "fall to the feet" of someone with greater status than they themselves held- as in falling before a King, or laying down prostrate in the presence of God. So for Jairus to humble himself in this manner, in plain view of all the crowd, He was showing extreme reverence, honor, and recognition of Jesus, or at the very least- perhaps complete desperation. And He gets straight to the point, "Jesus I've seen you heal, I know you can, will you please come and heal my daughter?"

Mark 5:24 So Jairus starts leading the way, and Jesus, the disciples, and a large crowd as well are all following. And on their way, this is what happened...

Mark 5:25-28 For twelve years, this woman had experienced some sort of abnormal uterine bleeding. None of the doctors could help, this was a problem in her life that she just could not get past. She had spent all her money, and I'm sure endured all kinds of strange experimental treatments, and now all her money is gone, yet her condition is even worse. This woman lived in a Jewish community, a community governed by the old covenant moral, social, and ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. In Leviticus 15 we see that in that time, a woman with a discharge of blood was considered ceremonially "unclean". She couldn't participate in the gatherings at the synagogue, she had to isolate herself as to not transfer her uncleanness to anyone else. No one was to touch her, no one was even able to sit in the same place in which she sat- if anyone accidentally touched her or touched something she sat on- then they would be unclean and have to wash their clothes, bathe, and remain unclean until evening. (**Leviticus 15:25-31**) This wasn't a health condition that she could keep secret. Everyone knew, and thus avoided contact with her. She was an outcast from society. By this time, after 12 years, she had probably just about given up all hope of being healed, all hope of getting married and having kids, all hope of being loved and accepted by her own community.

Now with this background in mind, you can imagine her there in Capernaum, the little village town next to the lake, there sitting by herself in isolation as all this commotion around Jesus is taking place. She sees the crowd surrounding Jesus, and all of a sudden the thought hits her- "maybe if I

just secretly touch the edge of his cloak I could get healed!” I imagine her thinking, “I’ve seen Him touch people and heal them, I’ve seen people come to Him asking for healing and He does it, but I can’t do that, my problem is way too embarrassing to talk about in front of Him and the crowd. But, I heard about what happened last night- He spoke and the storm stopped, and evil spirits fear even His mere presence- a man was cleansed from demonic power! Power like that surely radiates into His clothing? After all, the power of my uncleanness radiates into my clothing- and beyond! It radiates into seats and beds where I sit or lay down, and even radiates beyond those things, transferring onto other people that touch what I touch. So Jesus’s spiritual condition, must be transferable to others in the same way.” Can you see her thought process? “God authored the spiritual condition of transferable *uncleanliness*, and God appears to be authoring Jesus’ spiritual condition of transferable *cleanliness, healing, and power*- so I’ll just go touch His robe, and His cleanliness and power will transfer to me, I’ll be healed, re-instated into the community, get a husband, have kids, live a normal life- all while avoiding possible rejection or embarrassment in front of Jesus and the crowd.”

So she sneaked up, waited for just the right timing, and as soon as there was a momentary hole in the crowd she quickly rushed in bending down, and swiped her hand against the edge of Jesus’s cloak.

Mark 5:29 It worked! Just like she thought it would! You can imagine as she straighten back up, the joy she felt, knowing that she had been healed. But her joy, in the matter of just a few seconds, quickly turned to intense fear.

Mark 5:30-32 The woman didn’t imagine this scenario playing out. The last thing she wanted was to be called out in front of the crowd. Jesus obviously knew what had happened; He knew what she did, and she knew what she did, but the disciples and everyone else were clueless. They were thinking, why would Jesus call out loudly “who touched me?”, when a huge crowd of people were pressing up against him as they were shuffling over to the home of Jairus?

This scene reminds me of a story I heard about Michael Jordan. As a game was about to begin, Michael and his teammates entered into the arena, and the fans were going crazy. Many were calling out his name as he walked onto the court- cheering for him- but suddenly he stopped, and was looking around very intently. A team mate asked him what was going on, and Michael replied, “someone’s calling out my name.” And the teammate chuckled, Michael, there’s thousands of people calling out your name right now. But Michael said, “no- someone I know is trying to get my attention. They know me, and I know them.” After looking around Michael eventually met eyes with a friend who had come to the game unexpectedly.

Unlike Michael, Jesus had divine knowledge, and knew exactly in that moment who the woman was and what she did. He didn’t ask “*Who touched My garments?*” in order to collect information- no, He asked the question to prompt the woman to speak up and give God the glory for what had happened. But in her mind, she saw herself possibly facing even greater embarrassment than if she had approached Jesus and had asked Him in front of all for His healing. Perhaps now Jesus would ridicule her and accuse her of stealing the healing. She was completely terrified of the shame that might be put on her!

Mark 5:33-34 The woman *did* have to face the embarrassment of sharing with Jesus her condition, and what she had sneakily done, but Jesus didn’t scold her. Her forced confession wasn’t an attempt by Jesus to expose her in *her shame*, but rather to expose her in *her faith*. Another pastor put it so eloquently, “He wanted her faith visible so that everyone who carries a secret shame — which is every one of us — might have hope.” She might have had misguided faith, but God

honored even that little bit of misguided faith. She began with believing the *garment* would make her clean, but after Jesus's words to her, she realized that it was her *faith in Him* that made her clean. This woman had the rare experience of seeing Jesus's work in the spiritual world manifest itself in the physical world. Jesus was showing that cleanliness, healing, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, peace, eternal life- are all gained not by the power of physical objects such as Jesus' robe. These things aren't achieved by doing certain religious acts, or by keeping certain laws; but the only way to cleanliness, healing, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness, peace, and eternal life is through faith in Him alone. And through the physical healing of this woman, the spiritual reality of His healing was mirrored in physical reality, and one more person was given the proof that everything He taught was true.

Now don't forget that Jairus is still with Jesus, anxious to get to his house so that His daughter would be given life. **Mark 5:35-36** The news of his daughter's death was surely a huge blow, and I'm sure so many painful fears instantly jumped into his mind. "Did I do something wrong, I should have come more quickly, God shouldn't have let her die, is this Jesus's fault, is this the healed woman's fault, does Jesus care?" We don't know exactly what was going through His mind, but Jesus did, and He says "*Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.*" For Jesus to have said that, Jairus *must* have been experiencing fear, and perhaps even a bit of unbelief.

Mark 5:37 Peter, James and John were some of the disciples Jesus felt closest too. And it was probably a small house with not much room for more people, and perhaps it took the rest of the disciples to help manage and keep the crowd from pouring into this small house to follow Jesus.

Mark 5:38-40 Obviously Mark wants to make sure the reader has no doubt that the girl is really dead; he is clear to point out that the people know she is really dead. He notes that the people find it completely absurd for Jesus to say she is just sleeping. And perhaps the moment Jesus said "asleep" in verse 39, perhaps in that moment her heart and lungs began functioning again, and she moved from death into just merely sleeping. Or perhaps Jesus was just playing on words and was expressing to them the brevity of her death, it being likened to a short nap.

Mark 5:41 I love that Mark wanted to quote Jesus exactly. The language Jesus often functioned in was Aramaic, the common language of the land that the Jews had picked up during their exile in Babylon. So, Mark wrote down the words untranslated, as they came out from Jesus's mouth, in the Aramaic language.

Mark 5:42-43 You may ask, why did Jesus tell them to be quiet about this? I mean, how could they anyway, what were they going to say when everyone realized that the girl who was dead was now alive? Why would Jesus allow the public testimony of the woman healed from her bleeding, but then forbid the public testimony of the girl raised back to life? I don't know. We can speculate. Perhaps the woman healed of bleeding really believed in Him, not just in *His healing*, but in *Him as the Messiah*- and if so- that was a message that Jesus wanted to spread. He wanted the people to know and to share the good news of God's mercy and forgiveness through His Messiah. In contrast, Jairus the synagogue official perhaps only believed in Jesus's *healing* authority, and not in His *spiritual* authority as God's Messiah. If that were the case, with that slant, the news of Jesus giving life to his daughter would only cause more people to seek Jesus as the miracle worker instead of seeking Jesus as the forgiver of sins and the Eternal King, the one who's greater work was restoring the broken relationship between God and man.

Here in this passage, Jesus healed 2 women. One 12 years old, the other older- who had suffered for 12 years. One an insider- the daughter of a prestigious man, the other an outsider- an outcast from society. One dealing with death, the other with disease; one miracle private the other

public. One touched *by* Jesus, the other attempting *to* touch Jesus. The point is, no matter what the situation, no matter what your social status is, no matter what you are fearing- Jesus is the answer! Here we have this beautiful record written by Mark, a glimpse into the life of Jesus, where perhaps in less than 24 hours, he proved His authority and power over the forces of nature, over the spirits of evil, over shame, disease, and death. What else is there to fear?

The disciple's fear of the storm- he wanted them to transform their fear into faith in Him. *"Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)* The peoples' fear of demons and those controlled by demons- He wanted them to transform their fear into faith in Him. *"Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." (Mark 5:19)* The woman's fear of exposing her shame and exposing her sneaky healing- He wanted her to transform her fear into faith in Him. *"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." (Mark 5:34)* The synagogue leader's fear that his worse nightmare had come true and that his daughter had passed away- Jesus wanted him to transform his fear into faith in Him. *"Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." (Mark 5:36)* Stop fearing, stop panicking, place your faith, hope, and trust in Jesus. Go and report the great things God has done for you. Stop trembling- realize that you can enter peace because your faith in Him makes you well.

Do not be afraid any longer, only believe- replace your fear with faith. Not faith that everything will work out exactly how you want it all to work out, but faith that Jesus sees and knows you AND your situation. The One who can calm the storm sees you and cares for you. The One who cast out demons, wants you to be spiritually protected and freed. The One who can heal the most impossible of diseases wants you to know the day of complete healing and restoration is coming. The One who can give new life, the One who turns death into sleep from which we can awake, is the same One calling out to you, *"Do not be afraid any longer, only believe."*