

The Art of Waiting  
Sunday, November 12, 2017  
St. Giles' Presbyterian Church  
Mark 5: 21-43

Our passage this morning is taken from Mark chapter 5 verses 21-43. And in that passage we read about a healing story that is performed by Jesus. Jesus, we're told heals both a woman who had been sick for twelve years AND he heals a little girl that is about twelve years of age.

At first glance, we find that this passage is all about the ministry of healing that Jesus did during his time on Earth. And although this is true, Jesus DID perform two acts of healing, what we find when we read the gospel of Mark is that Jesus was also teaching his followers the Art of Waiting.

In the Art of Waiting, we'll find that God uses these moments to form his followers, helping them to grow deeper in their own faith and spiritual journey.

In the Art of Waiting, we'll find that God uses these moments to reveal to us who he truly is.

In the Art of Waiting, we'll find that God uses these moments to give us something MUCH MORE than we are asking for.

And in the Art of Waiting we'll find that God will give us MUCH MORE than what we are anticipating.

But before we begin, let's start off with a word of prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your scriptures and for the Gospel of Mark. We thank you for the good news as it is revealed in Christ Jesus. Holy Spirit, open up the pages of scriptures for us, that we too might come to know who Jesus is. Help us to grow in our Faith. We believe, help our unbelief, we pray in your name.

Amen.

### **1. Intro - a reminder of last week's lesson**

Last week as we gathered for worship, we talked about Mark chapter 4 and Jesus calming the storm. In that lesson, we touched on the unimaginable power of Jesus and how after experiencing it, Jesus asked the question - why are you so afraid?

In asking that question, we saw that the disciples, in their panic, went back to their "default mode" and had forgotten all the things they had already experienced as they were following Jesus. In asking the question "why are you so afraid?" we also saw that Jesus had an expectation of the disciples that they would be maturing in their faith.

It's this "maturing of faith" that I want to touch on as we take a look at this morning's passage from Mark chapter 5.

## **2. Story of the Royal College**

Have you ever had one of those times in your life when you were faced with a big decision, a crossroads in your life? A few years ago, that happened to Alli and I.

We were at a crossroad in our lives where we had to seek which way God was calling us in terms of both Alli's path as a doctor and my path in ministry.

At the time we had been married for two years. And we both knew that Alli's journey through her residency in Vancouver was coming to an end. We had to make a decision. Would God open the door for us so that we could stay in the Lower Mainland? Or would we have to leave? AND if we had to leave, where would we go? There were so many unanswered questions for us and thus we began to explore our options.

Eventually we decided that we would move to Australia. And so the plan was that I would resign from my position as the Director of Outreach and Discipleship at Coquitlam Presbyterian Church and that Alli would apply for a Fellowship position at Calvary Mater Hospital in New Castle, Australia.

All the paperwork was put into motion. And, on May 24, 2014, I called a meeting with the Personnel Committee at Coquitlam Presbyterian Church to tell them of our decision.

Now I remember that day clearly, because May 24 was also the day that Alli was flying to Ottawa to write her exams for the Royal College of Physicians. And I remember sitting in the car talking to her on the phone as she waited to board her flight.

While we were chatting, Alli had a moment of panic. She said, "I think we've made a BIG mistake! You should have resigned AFTER I've written my exam! What if I fail?

IF I fail, then that means we can't go to Australia.

And if we can't go to Australia, then that would mean we would have to stay in Vancouver!

And if we have to stay in Vancouver, then that would mean you wouldn't have a job! ....

And at that moment it felt like the "WHAT IF'S" had taken over the world.

I said to Alli. It'll be ok. Let's see how everything plays out. If God is in control, then whatever happens will happen. We'll WAIT and see.

We had no PLAN B. There were no other options. But we had to have faith that wherever God was going to take us, we would go and step out and faith, AND WAIT and SEE.

And SEE we did. In the next 3 months our world flipped upside down. A full time Radiation Oncology position opened up in Prince George. Alli applied and was hired. And the next thing we knew, we were no longer scheduled to go to Australia, but instead we ended up here.

And it may sound like a strange thing to say, but being in Prince George has been MUCH MORE than we ever asked for.

We have been BLESSED to be here.

We have been blessed to become a part of the community of Prince George.

And we have been blessed to become a part of the Church Family here at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church.

As I reflect on this story, the “wait and see”, really has become part of our journey. And this morning, we'll discover for ourselves how Jesus teaches us this thing that we'll call “The Art of Waiting”.

### **3. Summary**

In Mark 5, we see that Jesus has continued on with his ministry with his disciples.

We're told that once again, Jesus and the disciples cross to the other side of the lake,

As they cross to other side, as Jesus and the disciples make it to the shore, a large crowd has gathered around them. No doubt, they were there to hear Jesus preach, but they were also there because they had heard that Jesus was the great doctor and could bring healing to those who were sick.

In our passage, Mark, our author, very skilfully tells this story by bringing not one but two people who were in need of healing.

The first person that we are introduced is Jairus. And Jairus comes to Jesus on behalf of his daughter. We're told that his little girl is about 12 years old and is sick. But she doesn't just have something common or simple like the flu. We're told that she is sick, even to the point of death.

And so we have Jairus her father, who is so concerned and so overwhelmed with worry that he begs Jesus to come to his home and bring healing to his little girl.

The second person that Mark introduces us to in this passage is an unnamed woman. And this woman, she too is sick. This sickness she has, she's been dealing with for 12 years. It's a chronic illness and we're told that she has exhausted every option available to her.

In her journey to find healing, she has gone to every doctor and has tried every remedy. And the passage actually says something here that gives us a better idea of this woman's condition. The scriptures say –

***“<sup>26</sup> She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.” Mark 5: 26***

Really, what the scriptures are saying is that the medical care that she was receiving was not only inadequate,

but really the care she was receiving from her doctors was basically, in our modern terms, malpractice.

She was not only NOT getting better, we're told that she was SUFFERING a great deal from the care she was getting.

Now Mark is masterful when he tells us this story because what he's doing is building a scenario for us that shows us two people, who are both ill AND are suffering under two different kinds of circumstance.

If Jairus' daughter and this woman both ended up at the Emergency Room today, who would have the higher priority to be seen?

We know that Jairus' daughter was suffering from an acute illness and the unnamed woman was suffering from a chronic illness.

And although both of these two people were sick, our worldview, our understanding of the times would say that of course, Jairus' daughter would take precedence. She would have the higher priority in any Emergency Room.

But that's not what happens in our passage this morning, is it?

We're told that Jairus has come to see Jesus AND beg that he to come to his home.

But as Jesus, Jairus, and the disciples begin to go to his home, we're told that Jesus stops the whole procession.

In that moment, we're told that the woman with her chronic illness,

she thinks to herself,



she believes,

that IF she could just touch Jesus' clothes,

the edge of his robes, then she would be healed. And so

she does. She sees an opportunity and she touches

Jesus' clothes and we're told that instantly POWER

leaves Jesus and she's completely healed.

When we read this sort of thing, once again we're confronted with the dilemma as we're making up our minds about Jesus.

Is this story fanciful? Is it a fairy tale?

OR, is it TRUTH?

Does Jesus have the POWER to heal this woman INSTANTLY, EVEN

without his knowledge? We're told that Jesus feels drained at that

moment and he stops everyone and everything around him to find out

who did this.

Now a couple of things to point out here.

- (1) As Christ followers, we HAVE to accept this passage as TRUTH that Jesus has this kind of POWER. Remember the passage that we read in Mark chapter 4, when Jesus calms the storm by saying just a few words? The winds and the waves were crashing over the boat and instantly the water becomes calm,

after Jesus says those simple words, “Quiet, be still!” Jesus has the power over ALL of creation. AND he has the power to heal sickness as well.

- (2) The second thing we need to point out is this. Why does Jesus stop everyone and demands to know who touched him? How do the disciples respond? They say –

***<sup>31</sup> “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ” – Mark 5: 31.***

For the disciples, hearing Jesus ask this question must have been one the stupidest things they had every heard! “Look at the number of people who are around you!” they say.

They ALL want to see you do something amazing! Of course people are touching you! How can you even ask this question? Who touched me? EVERYONE is touching you!

But Jesus does just this. He makes everyone stop. And the question then becomes, WHY? The answer to this question is this. He stops everyone in their tracks in order to find this woman. He cannot just let her leave, letting her believe that her healing was because of superstition.

Remember how the passage is phrased when the woman is hiding in the crowd, looking at Jesus. She thinks to herself -

***“If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”*** – Mark 5: 28

Scholars believe that for the woman, her faith was mixed with a measure of superstition. In her day, there was a superstition that was going around that a person’s power was transmitted by their clothing.

And for the woman, it made perfect sense to try and come to Jesus from behind. Her default mode was that she wanted to be healed by any means necessary.

And because she believed that Jesus’ power was transmitted through his clothing, all she had to do was touch him and she would be healed. According to Mark, her faith was rewarded, even though it was mixed in with this superstition and we’re told that IMMEDIATELY her bleeding, her illness, was healed.

For Jesus, Mark records for us that Jesus realizes that POWER had left him. And that’s why he puts a hold on the proceedings. He stops and he pauses and he asks the question – WHO touched me?

When we read this passage and we see that Jesus INTENTIONALLY stops to ask this question, THIS is where the controversy begins.

On the one hand we have a little girl who is acutely ill and we know that she is at death's doorstep.

On the other hand, we have a woman who has superstitious beliefs and has just been healed.

Wouldn't it be logical for Jesus to let the woman go and hurry on to the house of Jairus? The woman has already been healed! She had a chronic illness that she had already dealt with for 12 years. Why stop now? Why try and find out who has "stolen" his power?

For Jesus, doing all of this was intentional. Jesus wanted to teach everyone involved the Art of Waiting.

For the unnamed woman, being healed and receiving a new lease on life, her default mode, her first instinct was to run away. But Jesus wouldn't let her do it. He wanted to make sure that it was clear that it wasn't superstition that had cured her.

He wanted her to know that it was in fact his power through her faith that had healed her. Jesus took the time to assure her that her faith made her part of the Kingdom of Heaven. And because of that, she was not only a person who was made whole physically, but she was also made whole again spiritually.

In her rush to be healed and to leave, she would have missed this whole exchange. But Jesus doesn't let that happen and so he stops and he makes sure that the unnamed woman tells him the whole truth.

For the unnamed woman, this would have been very difficult to do. Think about it. We're told she has had this illness for 12 years. Scholars believe that this chronic bleeding illness was some sort of haemorrhage and this kind of bleeding would have made the woman ceremonially unclean.

For her to come forward and tell the whole truth, would have taken tremendous courage. The woman would have realized that she was ceremonially unclean. And if she had touched Jesus, even just his clothes, it would have made Jesus, unclean as well.

But how does Jesus respond in verse 34? He says,

***“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” - Mark 5: 34***

In this one sentence, we see the love, mercy, grace and compassion of Jesus. He wanted to make sure that she KNEW that she was part of the Kingdom of God. And so he calls her daughter.

How amazing is that? This woman, who for twelve years nobody wanted to associate with because she was ceremonially unclean, she was now being called a daughter. She was one of God’s children. She had been healed. She has been made whole. She was welcomed into the family.

### **Jairus**

But what about Jairus? For Jairus to be a part of this conversation must have been so difficult.

We’re told that he is a synagogue leader and in his grief, he falls to Jesus’ feet and begs him to come to his house. And Jesus agrees and they go. And all of a sudden now Jesus has stopped and is now talking to this woman.

If you were Jairus how would you feel?

Would you feel impatient?

Would you have a sense of urgency?

Everything that Jesus is doing is counterintuitive to the situation at hand.

Time is of the essence. But Jesus doesn't seem to care.

And while all of this is happening with the unnamed woman, we're told that it's too late. Some people who were just at his home have come. And they tell Jairus those words that no parent should ever hear. They say,

***"Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" - Mark 5:35***

Those words must have felt so final to Jairus. Death is final.

But what does Jesus say to him? He says to Jairus -

***"Don't be afraid, just believe." - Mark 5:36***

What Jesus is saying to Jairus is this. I understand your sense of timing. And yes, you are in a hurry because your understanding of this whole thing is

that we are in a life and death situation. Don't be afraid. Trust Me. I will show you something.

It's in this moment, Jesus is teaching Jairus the Art of Waiting.

What he is saying is WAIT and SEE. I will reveal to you who I truly am.

And so they go and when they arrive at the house of Jairus, they see that people have already started and have come to mourn.

Now what we have to understand in those days is that when a person dies, the culture at the time was to hire professional mourners. And so when they arrive at the house, these people are already there.

The scriptures tell us that Jesus is greeted with a loud commotion at the house. People are crying and wailing. And Jesus tells them to stop because the little girl – she's not dead but she's asleep!

And what was their reaction?

Their crying and wailing instantly turns to laughter! If these people truly loved and cared for this child, laughter would be the last thing that would



have been on their minds. But they are professionals who have been hired to cry. And so their reaction turns to laughing.

They know the difference between a sleeping child and someone who is dead.

But this is no laughing matter, especially for Jairus.

He's trying to believe.

He's trying to believe in Jesus.

He's trying to believe that Jesus is telling the truth that his beloved little girl, his daughter was merely asleep.

And so Jesus kicks everyone out. And the only people he allows into the girls' room are her parents and his disciples. And he sits beside her and says,

***“Talitha Koum”***

– which we're told means “little girl, I say to you get up”!

Now when we read this translation in English, we lose some of the conversation that's there. The word “Talitha” has been translated into

English as “little girl”. And when we hear “little girl”, the translation becomes very sterile. The word “Talitha” is a term of endearment, so it would translate to more like a word like “honey”.

When I think of Alyx, Alli and I call her, “Lex” or “Lexi”. Think of your own families. You might have a term of endearment or a nickname for each member.

And so Jesus is really saying something like this - “Honey! Get up!” Imagine if it were a weekend. It’s Saturday morning and your kids are still asleep. It’s time for them to get up and you say, “Ok honey! It’s time to get up!”

Instead of seeing that this little girl has died, Jesus really does see her as sleeping. Like any other lazy Saturday morning, Jesus is saying to this little girl – ok it’s time to get up! In this passage we see the relationship that Jesus has with this little girl and with Jairus’ family.

Remember how this passage begins? Jairus comes to Jesus, distraught and he falls to his feet begging him to come to his house. Jairus comes to Jesus with a request for healing. On his way to the house, Jesus stops and he makes Jairus wait, and at his darkest moment, Jairus finds out his beloved little girl is dead.

But that's not the end of the story. In the Art of Waiting, Jesus gives Jairus something much more than what he was asking for. When Jesus arrives, Jesus doesn't heal the little girl, but instead he performs a miracle of resurrection.

### **Conclusion**

In growing in our relationship with Christ, the Art of Waiting is part of this process. A lot of times we want to see things happen immediately. Think about how the world works today. We are so used to picking up the phone and calling people, even if they are half way around the world.

I look at my phone and I have an app and I can order pizza, standing here as we speak.

We have high speed Internet. And the list goes on and on.

Very rarely do we like to wait. Yet, when we read this passage, this is exactly the lesson that Jesus is trying to teach us. Jesus is teaching us that in the Art of Waiting, he will show you much more than you can ever imagine.

In the case of the unnamed woman, we see that she needed to wait before she hurriedly rushes off, seemingly like a thief in the night. She is confronted and confesses what she has done. And instead of just being healed

physically, she is restored and is called “daughter”. Her identity is no longer of an unclean woman, but she is welcomed into the family of God.

In the case of Jairus, he needed to wait to. He must have been so impatient waiting for Jesus to finish his conversation with the woman. But Jesus teaches him the Art of Waiting. And instead of receiving just “A” healing for his daughter, Jairus and his family experience what resurrection is like, here on Earth. In that experience, there’s an intimacy between Jesus and the little girl. She is called “Talitha”, she is called honey. As people of the resurrection, we too are called “Talitha”.

I love how Ellis sums it all up. He says this:

***“Like its younger brother, sickness, death is an enemy. But it must yield to the powers of the messianic kingdom present in Jesus. In the presence of Christ, death becomes a ‘sleeping’”. – E. Earl Ellis, the Gospel of Luke.***

And friends, this is GOOD NEWS.

This is the God that we follow. God’s timing is not OUR timing. Yet, God, through Christ, teaches us that through the cross, death, that seems so final, must also yield.

Jesus has the POWER to calm the storm.

He has the POWER over all creation.

In this passage we see that Jesus has the POWER, even over sickness .

In this we find that Jesus is the author of Life and the author of Life has the POWER even over death.

In the resurrection, Christ has the POWER to wake us up, and so doing WE are part of his Family in the Kingdom of God.

Amen.