

## **Mark 5:21-42 Jairus' daughter and the woman with constant bleeding.**

[All Age only]

In our reading this morning, there are 2 stories, and both of them contain a lot of hidden fears. Things that people were worried about meeting or doing, because it made them different, or 'unclean' in the eyes of Jewish law, so that other people wouldn't go near them. Touching, or being touched by someone who was bleeding, would leave you ritually unclean for a day (unless you went to the synagogue sooner). Touching a dead person, left you ritually unclean for a week! The things talked about in this morning's stories, were situations people feared, probably more than most others.

What are we frightened/scared of?

Fear of spiders - certainly the bigger ones - me!

Fear of butterflies, moths, dragonflies and other larger flying insects - my MIL and her sister! Makes things tricky in our family.

Fear of snakes - because some bite and can kill you, many of us are scared of anything that even looks like a snake, even a harmless slow-worm which is a legless lizard!

Fear of being stung - we're very wary of nettles, things that sting like hornet, and sometimes with very good reason; anaphylaxis can kill us!

[Fear of drowning, related to one of the songs just sung, but sometimes it's not just drowning in water, it's a fear of drowning in other people's expectations, or too much work.]

Fear of cancer - it killed my mother, it might kill me - and there are many other diseases we're frightened of.

Fear of an inability to have children, which would have been something the woman in one of today's stories would have had to grapple with.

Fear of dying, or of the death of a child, which features in our other story this morning.

These are all real fears, though some might seem more significant than others. We shouldn't belittle anyone because of their fears, even if some of them seem a bit daft to us.

What did the man called Jairus do, when he feared his daughter was dying? Went to Jesus.

What did the woman do who feared remaining childless and shut out of her community for the rest of her life? Went to Jesus.

What is the difference between how these two people approach Jesus?

One does it openly, and the other by subterfuge.

One is willing to speak out once healed, the other almost gives up when he thinks all hope is lost.

In both cases, the power that exists in and through Jesus heals. Instantly. Because of their faith, their willingness to believe, against logic and common sense, let alone the rules and regulations of the time about becoming 'unclean', these two women are healed.

Both Jairus' daughter, and the woman are given a new life, literally. The woman who would have been ostracised from the synagogue for 12 years, and quite possibly been either divorced or remained unmarried because of her condition. She is not only healed physically, but will be able to re-enter family life, and practice openly her worship of God. Jairus' daughter is obviously alive rather than dead; of marriageable age she now has a future open to her, including the probability of marriage, which would give a new life not just to her, but to her family as well in their culture where faith and religious practice is passed down through the female line.

So are we willing to consider our fears this morning?

What we are frightened of most?

Do we believe that Jesus can heal those things if we allow his compassion, grace and love to touch them?

Does it matter if we bring our fears and concerns to Jesus in the privacy of our own lives?

Those are all the sorts of questions that are best considered in the peace and quiet of our own heads. We may not want to admit we're scared of dying, or are concerned for our own well-being because of the illnesses or grief that other members of our family have suffered, but that doesn't mean we can't take those worries to Jesus, and let him touch them.

But, neither do we have to feel alone in our fears. We should no longer live in a society where people feel they can't talk about or admit to the things that are wrong

with them, or the things they fear. We now know the impact that not talking about things has on our mental health, whether or not our mental health is part of those fears in the first place. Perhaps that is part of the reason why Jesus encourages the woman to speak up about touching him; it was more healing for her, and hopefully more helpful to others, to speak openly about what it was that had caused her to behave as she did. Society then, and now, shouldn't sweep 'embarrassing issues' into hiding - it only makes the fear of them increase.

However, Jesus gives Jairus strict orders to keep quiet about the fact that Jesus' had brought his daughter back to life. Traditionally we are taught that this is because Mark in his Gospel, sees Jesus trying to keep his Kingdom-of-God movement hidden from the view of the authorities until his earthly ministry reaches it's fulfilment on the cross, and nothing spoke more of what God was doing in him than bringing a dead child to life. After all it would be Jesus' resurrection that would offer the hope of eternal life that is part of God's new kingdom, and through the power of the Holy

Yet I can't help thinking that there's more to Jesus' requesting Jairus' silence than that - after all, much of what he said and did works on more than one level of understanding. Could it be that Jesus was trying to protect Jairus', if not from the tongues that would wag about the synagogue leader's obvious faith in this new preacher man, then from his own pride in what had happened within his family, which might work to undermine the faith in Jesus that had already nearly stumbled once?!

When we come to Jesus this morning, let us be honest, with ourselves and him, and bring our fears with us too, acknowledging them clearly before him, if not in front of each other. If we're afraid to believe in Jesus, knowing that these stories must be true because of the little very real details in them, and the fact that making them up could have got you killed, will hopefully allow you to feel Jesus' touch you. If we have faith in Jesus but are willing to admit we still fear things, we can know his touch through the healing that he offers us for those fears, through the strength to overcome them, or the ability to live life to the full despite them. If we think that talking about our fears might help us, or someone else, if you talk to me after the service, we can help make that happen, so that Jesus can touch us by that means too.

Let us walk with Jairus and the woman in the crowd this morning. Jesus' welcomes us when we come and speak to him, touch him, and are honest with him about what frightens us most. He's here, and he's listening, and he wants us leave our fears behind.

[There are some pieces of paper in your pews with some pens and pencils. Please use them to write, or draw, something of what you fear. Then screw that piece of paper up into a ball. An extra basket will go round at the same time as the offering is taken. This will enable you to offer your fears to Jesus, asking him to touch us and heal them, so that we can experience new life.]