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Mark 5:21-43 Jesus Raises a Dead Girl, Heals a Woman

**Discussion:** In your church tradition, who organises the services, the rota of speakers, hymns, those invited to lead prayers or readings? Do they also oversee the building?

Mark 5	Matthew 9	Luke 8
<p><b>Jesus Raises a Dead Girl &amp; Heals a Sick Woman</b></p> <p><b>21</b> When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.</p>	<p><b>Jesus Raises a Dead Girl &amp; Heals a Sick Woman</b></p>	<p><b>Jesus Raises a Dead Girl &amp; Heals a Sick Woman</b></p> <p><b>40</b> Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.</p>
<p><b>22</b> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <b>23</b> He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." <b>24</b> So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.</p>	<p><b>18</b> While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." <b>19</b> Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.</p>	<p><b>41</b> Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house <b>42</b> because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.</p>
<p><b>25</b> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <b>26</b> 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. <b>27</b> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <b>28</b> because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."</p>	<p><b>20</b> Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.</p> <p><b>21</b> She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."</p>	<p><b>43</b> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.</p>
<p><b>29</b> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.</p>		<p><b>44</b> She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.</p>
<p><b>30</b> At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" <b>31</b> "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched</p>		<p><b>45</b> "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." <b>46</b> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."</p>

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<p>me?"". <b>32</b> But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.</p>		
<p><b>33</b> Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <b>34</b> He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."</p>	<p><b>22</b> Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment.</p>	<p><b>47</b> Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. <b>48</b> Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."</p>
<p><b>35</b> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" <b>36</b> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."</p>		<p><b>49</b> While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." <b>50</b> Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."</p>
<p><b>37</b> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <b>38</b> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <b>39</b> He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." <b>40</b> But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <b>41</b> He took her by the hand and said to her, "<i>Talitha koum!</i>" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). <b>42</b> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <b>43</b> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.</p>	<p><b>23</b> When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, <b>24</b> he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.</p> <p><b>25</b> After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up.</p> <p><b>26</b> News of this spread through all that region.</p>	<p><b>51</b> When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. <b>52</b> Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." <b>53</b> They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.</p> <p><b>54</b> But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" <b>55</b> Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.</p> <p><b>56</b> Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.</p>

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This is another classic example of a *Mark Sandwich* where one story is placed within another, allowing Mark's readers to gain an even deeper understanding of Jesus' teaching than if the two stories had been recounted independently.

### Comparison

- Matthew offers only an abbreviated version of this story, and we need to look to Mark and Luke for the detail.
- Matthew also relocates this to a much earlier time in his Gospel. It is in fact the very first event he witnessed after being called to be a disciple. Luke and Mark, however, continue to follow a similar timeline of events.
- Matthew's account suggests that the girl has already died, rather than was dying. The Greek idiom used by Mark is similar to the English "she was on her last legs" or "breathing her last",<sup>25</sup> or perhaps "at death's door" or even "sinking fast".<sup>26</sup>

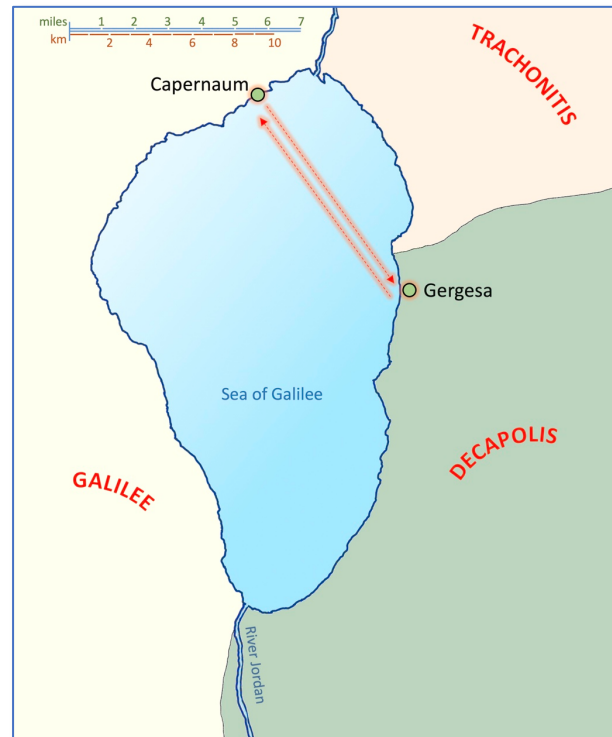


Figure 22: Sea of Galilee – return journey

### Context

- The trip to Decapolis and back appears to have been a short one. They experienced Jesus calming the storm on the way over, on what should have been a two-hour journey. Jesus had been met by Legion as he stepped from the boat. Following the exorcism and the destruction of the pigs, the townspeople arrived and asked Jesus to leave immediately, but the man remained behind, commissioned by Jesus to evangelise across Decapolis. Consequently, Jesus and the disciples might only have been gone from Capernaum for one day. The people were eagerly waiting at the shoreline to welcome them back, perhaps glad to see they had survived the violent storm.
- Jairus is named as "one of the synagogue leaders". Some synagogues, such as Capernaum, would have been large enough to have needed several leaders. This was a lay position, not a priestly one; note their role in relation to our opening discussion.<sup>27,28</sup>

### Key Points

- A synagogue leader falling at the feet of Jesus would have been striking for onlookers to witness. Jairus was confident Jesus could heal his daughter by laying his hands on her, a common practice at the time.<sup>29</sup> It also implied “being delivered” and “salvation”.<sup>30</sup>
- They set off for Jairus’ house, a large crowd accompanying them that was so large they were pressing in on Jesus, almost crushing him.<sup>31</sup>
- The *filler* in this Markan sandwich starts in verse 25. A woman reached out and touched Jesus’ cloak in the hope of being healed. Given the host of people pressing in and jostling Jesus, the disciples were astounded that Jesus halted the procession because of the touch of a single person.<sup>32</sup> How could he have noticed the touch of one individual?<sup>33</sup>
- While Jairus would have been a person of status, wealth and influence, and an honoured member of the Capernaum community, the woman had a bleeding condition (like a continuous period) that for those in the ancient world rendered her perpetually “ceremonially unclean” and unable to worship.<sup>34</sup> Women were excluded from the synagogue during their menstruation.<sup>35,36</sup> We can speculate her condition would have produced anaemia but it had also worsened over those twelve years; the Greek word emphasises the degree of physical suffering and pain she endured, but this would have been accompanied by shame.<sup>37</sup> She would have been shunned by society.<sup>38</sup> And now “to add insult to injury”, she also had no money left.<sup>39</sup> Jesus was her last hope.
- Her lowly social status was thus entirely the opposite of Jairus, and by touching Jesus she risked rendering him ceremonially unclean (**Lev. 15:26-26**). But the opposite happened and *she instead* became clean. Her suffering was over.
- Meanwhile, Jairus was desperate to get Jesus to his daughter “in time”, before she died, but this important man is left standing there while Jesus focused on the woman.
- The Greek makes it clear (**v32**) that Jesus was referring to a *woman* in the crowd. Consequently, it is possible that Jesus knew who it was that had touched him and was seeking her out for *her* sake, not his.<sup>40</sup> In that touch, a deeper transaction had occurred and Jesus could not let her recede into the crowd, still perhaps entertaining ideas of superstition or magic.<sup>41</sup> This touch had come from someone with an expectation of salvation, of deliverance and Jesus needed to help complete her journey into faith.<sup>42</sup>

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- Her action having been discovered, she confessed and fell at the feet of Jesus just as Jairus had done. She was probably worried that Jesus could expose the fact that she had touched him while unclean and that she would be further shamed from then on. However, despite probable embarrassment she decided to tell everything, perhaps sensing that Jesus already knew. Her decision to “go public” resulted in a personal encounter with Jesus, demonstrating a move from fear to trust and faith in him.<sup>43</sup>
- Jesus’ response was to call her “daughter” and commend her faith. She went on her way in peace, affirmed and restored, healed by her faith rather than the touch itself.
- The *sandwich* permits Mark’s readers to see how Jesus treated Jairus and the woman as having equal value, regardless of their relative status, cleanliness, or position in society.
- We can only imagine the despair felt by Jairus when people from his house then arrived to announce that his daughter had died. If only Jesus had hurried and ignored the woman his daughter would not have died; the delay had cost his daughter her life.<sup>44</sup>
- It is interesting to note that the daughter was 12 years old, while the healed woman had suffered the issue of blood for 12 years. At this point, it appeared that Jesus has saved one “daughter” while the other has died.<sup>45</sup>
- The onlookers did not expect anyone being *raised from the dead*; they had only known Jesus to heal in the past, and now it was too late. Those bringing the sad news suggested that the teacher should not be bothered by them any further. But Jesus told Jairus to “keep believing” and “not be afraid” (v36).<sup>46</sup> The woman of lowly status became the model of faith for Jairus to emulate.<sup>47</sup>
- Again the *sandwich* structure permits Mark’s readers to see the faith of the woman (for which she was commended) being compared alongside that of the leader of the synagogue; is his faith as strong as that of the lowly woman? Jesus was asking Jairus to dig deeper; could he still believe, even as he stood in the presence of death?<sup>48</sup>

### Going Deeper: Mourning in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine

Professional mourners formed a professional guild and would orchestrate the process of mourning alongside friends of the family.<sup>49</sup> Even the poorest of families had at least two flute players in attendance.<sup>50</sup> There would be “much” weeping and wailing and also clapping to add to the commotion at a funeral.

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- The mourners laughed at the assertion the child was only asleep. Their disdain caused Jesus to exclude these *outsiders*; the scoffers were sent outside.<sup>51</sup>
- Only Peter, James and John were permitted to go into the house with the child's mother and father to witness what would occur (and in Mark's account, the crowd and other disciples were not even permitted to follow to the house itself). This is the first inference by Mark of an *inner circle*, the three disciples closest to him.<sup>52</sup>
- Jesus simply took the child by the hand and invited her to "get up". There were no special words or magic formula here; it was quite a matter of fact. She was resuscitated back to earthly life (and, of course, to a subsequent death at some future date). However, we see here a foreshadowing of the power over death which would be the basis of the Christian faith, of our eventual resurrection.<sup>53</sup>
- The Aramaic words he used to gently address her means "little lamb" or "youth". A translation that potentially captures both ideas in English is the word "kid". Once again, we have an example of the word "immediately" being used by Mark, which demonstrated that she was fully healed at that moment; Jesus told them to give her something to eat.<sup>54</sup> Now we see that both the woman and the child had been fully restored.
- Even though everyone in Capernaum would hear about this miracle with the little girl, Jesus again commanded those who witnessed the events inside the room not to tell anyone else. He wanted only the "insiders" to witness what had happened in the room, which now clearly included the girl's parents and the girl herself becoming followers of Jesus.<sup>55</sup>
- Jesus has been shown to have power over disease, demons, nature, and now even death itself.<sup>56</sup>

**Discussion:** Have you ever considered what the Resurrection life will be like?