

## **“No Trouble”**

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First Presbyterian Church  
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**New Testament Lesson:** Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

**Old Testament Lesson:** Psalm 103:1-8

Preacher James Harnish of Tampa, Fla., was really taken by how things played out one year during an election of seven Methodist bishops that left a bunch of potential candidates defeated. One nominee, in particular, lost with incredible grace. He had been deeply convinced that God called him to stand for election, and his delegation was behind him 100%. So it was a very tough loss. During his withdrawal speech, he pointed to his granddaughter seated in the auditorium and pulled out a little slip of paper she had given him that morning. “Dear Granddaddy, even if they don’t pick you, I will still love you.”<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it’s more important to see how people lose than how they win.

In everything we read about Jesus and the Pharisees, it’s nearly always the religious leaders battling it out with Jesus. It’s one of the greatest battles in history – Jesus vs. the Pharisees – a life and death battle! Watching it unfold in the pages of the Bible, it’s clear there can be only one winner. Either Jesus is right and there’s more to life than meets the eye, or the Pharisees are right and everything we need to know can be found in the religious law of Israel.

Turns out, there’s more to life than meets the eye. While that’s an easy belief to hold, it’s an incredibly hard conviction to live by: the conviction that whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans, and all the freedom it gives us to not stress over life’s difficulties, not fear life’s turnarounds and redirections, and not run from life’s lessons and challenges. We need to be reminded and inspired to live life with such faith.

So let’s look at the story Mark brings to us today, the story of a religious leader named Jairus, a spiritual teacher named Jesus, and a little girl whose name we never learn. She’s referred to only as “little girl.” The little girl is the beloved daughter of Jairus, and to hear tell of it, she’s either critically ill, already dead, or only sleeping. Which one of these is true depends on who you believe. Jairus falls at the feet of Jesus and begs him, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death (critically ill). Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.”

It’s interesting that a leader of the synagogue, which later plots to kill Jesus, is now begging him to save his daughter’s life. Either Jesus is able to save her life and is, thus, a true prophet and healer sent by God, or he’s not, and the religious leaders are right to condemn him for blasphemy – for acting like God incarnate.

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Harnish, “Creation on Tiptoe,” Tampa, Fla. 21 July 1996.

You can't have it both ways. It matters to Jairus who Jesus is; it's a life-and-death question. And it matters to us who Jesus is! It is equally a life-and-death question for us.

When it comes to life-and-death questions, what is most important in life? Our health. You can't argue that; it's at least in the top two or three, along with things like our loved ones and our faith. Our health is a life-and-death matter.

There was a time, before modern science, when health problems – like uncontrollable bleeding – and physical limitations – like blindness – were considered the fault of the person suffering them. Then we figured out this isn't the case at all. How healthy we are and whether we live or die has to do with things like micro organisms, germs, genetics, and disease mutations. So it wasn't our fault at all.

But now we're back in the blame game. How long you live has to do with how well you take care of your health, through things like diet and exercise; eating right; getting enough sleep; managing your stress; staying away from alcohol, drugs and tobacco; having safe sex; and getting access to affordable insurance. Neglect too many of those things, and you've got only yourself to blame when illness strikes and death rears its ugly head.

That's what science teaches us. Science and reason teach us to fear illness and death. Faith, on the other hand, teaches us something quite different. We need not fear illness, poverty, injury, disability, or even death – not when we put our trust in God and maintain our faith in Jesus.

This is what Jesus teaches us. Jesus could have made it so we would never die. Jesus could have made it so we would never get sick. Jesus could have made it so we could never again be deprived of life's most basic necessities. And, in fact, Jesus did indeed do this for us and more! Jesus made it so we no longer need to fear any of this – any of life's difficulties or the pains of death.

Our trouble is, we don't always see things that way. Sometimes, we are like Jairus, convinced that the situation is pretty hopeless, even as we cry out to Jesus for help. And that's when Jesus comes alongside us, just like he did for Jairus, ready to exceed our wildest dreams, meet our most pressing needs. Jairus believes his daughter merely needs cured of an illness. Jesus shows that she actually needs a second chance at life. And that's what he gives to her. And – in witnessing that – we, too, are given a second chance at life, right now!

What Jesus gives us is new eyes, so that we can see and respond to things based on our faith convictions, not on our worldly fears.

Looking through the eyes of Jesus, everything changes, nothing is as it once seemed. Turns out, ours is not a worldly problem so much as a perception problem.

Jairus had trouble with his perception. Not only did he underestimate the severity of his daughter's condition, but he underestimated Jesus' power to do

something about it. He didn't go far enough in his hope of what Jesus could do, overcome the fear of death. So Jesus shows him what he's capable of. When people came from the house of Jairus saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further," Jesus says, "Do not fear, only believe." To fear or to believe: therein lies the trouble.

The crowd had trouble with their morality. They were interested in getting Jesus back on track as they saw things, rather than in trusting Jesus to bring the full power of God to the situation. And then there are the mourners.

When Jesus comes to the house, he says to those who are mourning the little girl's death, "'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him." The mourners were facing spiritual troubles. They were very troubled by the death of the little girl, raising a great commotion, not knowing that in Christ, death is not the last word.

Jesus is so certain of this that death does not even look like death to him. Jesus looked upon the girl who everyone else saw as dead and, "he took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum,' which means, 'Little girl, get up!' Here, Jesus reaches out to the little girl and speaks to her as if she were still alive, because in his eye, she is. In Christ, we are more alive than ever before.

In Christ, all these troubles of perception, morality and spirituality are no trouble, no trouble at all. Jesus has and does overcome any trouble we may face, if only we have eyes to see things more clearly, to see things more faithfully, to see things more like Jesus. Just think of what life would be like if we saw things through the eyes of Jesus.

Through the eyes of Jesus, death is not the end, but rather a new beginning in the fullness of God. And if death is not the end, than what is there to fear in life. Nothing! Nothing, that is, accept missing out on what true faith gives us. Having true faith means not stressing over life's difficulties. Having true faith means not fearing life's turnarounds and redirections. Having true faith means not running from life's lessons and challenges. Having true faith means relying on **God to see you through.**

"Dear Granddaddy, even if they don't pick you, I will still love you." Imagine that God has written something similar to you. Something like: "Dear child of God, Even when you lose, get left out, suffer illness or injury, yell at someone, get yelled at, have a fight, go broke, lose a loved one, lay on your death bed, or whatever has happened to you, or whatever you have done, I do and will still love you." Signed, God. When Jesus says, "Do not fear, only believe," that's what he is saying.

If we carry that message with us, there's nothing in life that can get us down, not even death. Jesus has conquered the grave, and in that, conquered all of life, from beginning to end and everything before and everything after.

So let us remember, when faced by any of life's troubles, these simple words, "Dear child of God, I do and will still love you, come what may." – signed God.

To help us remember God's all-power, undying, ever-triumphant love, I have printed for you on a wallet-size card the "Dear child of God" message from today's sermon. The ushers have one for each of you when you leave. Take the card with you, keep it nearby, and when troubles strikes, pull it out and look at it, remembering the words of Jesus when he said, "Do not fear, only believe." Amen.

## **Pastoral Prayer**

Dear and most precious God, you hear us when we pray, you know our needs before we speak them, you come to our aid when we are in need.

We thank you, Lord, for being there for us, and for loving us more than anything.

We ask you to come to those in need of you now, those who are in need of healing, those who have been brought low, those facing an uncertain future. Tend to our needs, O God, whether in body, mind, or soul.

We give you thanks, Lord, for the promise of new life, and particularly for the new life in Jamesyn Renee.

May she be a joy to her mother, Gaylene, and may Gaylene and all the family be blessed in their nurture of this child.

And for each of us, Lord, grant that your promise of new beginnings and new opportunities, of freshness and starting over are more than a wish, but a reality, lived out each day in the joy of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

For it is in him that you showed us the love you have for us, love as a parent for his or her child.

We pray all this in the name of your son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who showed his undying love for us on the cross, but not before giving us the words we now pray together, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we forgive  
our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,  
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.**