The Right Kind of Fear

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Preacher: Joe Hall

[0:00] Well, please open up a Bible to Mark's Gospel, chapter 5, and we're reading this evening from! It's on page 840 of the blue Bible that should be in front of you. Mark chapter 5, page 840, and we'll read from verse 21 to the end of the chapter.

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live. And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.
And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years, and who had suffered much under many physicians and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse.
She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, If I touch even his garments, I will be made well. And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garments?
And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, Who touched me? And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.
[2:33] While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further? But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, Do you not fear, only believe. And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, Talitha Kumi, which means little girl, I say to you, arise. And immediately the girl got up and began walking, for she was 12 years of age, and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat. Amen. This is God's word. Please keep those pages open as we spend time considering them. And let's pray for God's help as we do that.

Father, we thank you again for Jesus. We thank you that he is the image of the invisible God. And as we look at him and see his actions and hear his words, we are seeing and hearing God himself, the Son of God, come down to earth. So we pray, Lord, you'd give us hearts to truly know you this evening. Open up our ears and soften our hearts that we might receive the truth about Jesus and respond to him with faith that saves. And we ask in his name. Amen. I wonder, what are you afraid of?
We all have fears, don't we, that we can pretty well manage. 99% of snakes that we meet are going to be behind glass. I'm pretty claustrophobic. But usually if there's a lift, there's a set of stairs.
But we also have other fears that we can't manage in quite the same way. Getting seriously ill, losing a job, fears about our children, not having children, growing old, loneliness, dying.
I wonder, what are you afraid of? Brendan preached a wonderful sermon for us last Sunday. One thing that he showed us was how big a role fear plays in this part of Mark's gospel. The disciples

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were afraid of the storm.
[5:46] Then they were even more afraid when Jesus calmed the storm. We met a frightening man possessed by demons. But when people saw that same man sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, they were yet more afraid. Tonight, we meet a woman who wasn't afraid to touch Jesus and be healed, but was afraid when he called her to come and speak to him.

And finally, a man who was afraid that it was too late for his little daughter and then was amazed when Jesus brought her back from the dead.
It's really important, I think, for us to acknowledge that all of their fears, all of those situations are rational fears. You know, if you've been caught out in bad weather on a hill walk or on a drive, it is frightening. Despite the fun that our culture makes of death and demons and devils, those things are real. Those things are real, spiritual evil, the harm it does to people. It's scary.
Incurable diseases are scary. The thought of a child dying is very scary. But Brendan also showed us, and again, we see tonight that Jesus stands over and above all those frightening things. Chaos, darkness, sickness, death, things that people have never been able to manage or control, are stopped in their tracks and brought to heel by nothing but his word.
And we can take it from the people who were there that to see him do that, overpower these uncontrollable forces, totally transformed their fear, but probably not in the way that we expect.
[7:42] Because seeing his authority didn't simply take away their fear of their circumstances, but swapped it for another greater fear, the fear of the Lord.

I wonder tonight, if you've seen something of Jesus' authority so far in Mark's gospel, do you have a healthy fear of him yet? The way that we should feel about someone so great that he can pause, stop, and rewind our worst nightmares and greatest fears simply by speaking.
And if you do fear him in that right way, where has that fear driven you? To push Jesus away, keep him at arm's length? Or to fall at his feet, trembling in awe of him?
The question, friends, isn't, are you afraid? We are all afraid of something. The question is, what or who are you afraid of? And is it the right kind of fear?
Two points then to help us to explore those questions tonight, beginning with what we see, Jesus' power over sickness and a woman's trembling trust. But before we can get there, Mark introduces us to a man who, in a sense, would need no introduction. Have a look there at verse 21.
[9:11] When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, my little daughter is at the point of death.

Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live. We're used to people coming to Jesus with impossible requests by now. People have brought sick and demon-possessed people, lepers, paralytics. The surprising thing about this request is who's making it. Jesus has visited lots of synagogues. He's interacted with plenty of religious leaders. How many of them have thrown themselves down at his feet and begged for his help? The synagogues are full of demons. The Pharisees want him dead. The scribes have called him the devil. Jairus, then, is not your average synagogue ruler. I suspect that alongside Jesus's compassion, that is why he takes a special interest in his little daughter here. Now, you can actually fact-check this at home. I think, I think this is the only time in Mark's gospel that we're told that Jesus makes a special trip for the purpose of healing somebody. Verse 24, he went with him. Usually, he heals those who are brought to him. Clearly, it was desperation that drove Jairus to seek Jesus out, but clearly, it was more than compassion that made Jesus. Jesus's miracles that made Jesus go with him. Jesus's miracles are always there to show us something. His healings are not only compassionate, they communicate. Jairus already seemingly accepts that Jesus can heal people, however sick they are. That's why he goes to find them, so that his daughter might be made well and live. So, Jesus wants Jairus, the synagogue ruler, to see and understand something more about him. What, I wonder?
Well, Mark leaves us to find out later, because the scene shifts, we're back on the road with Jesus, and a huge crowd bustling all around him, and the camera picks out a face in the crowd.
[11:42] But as it zooms in, it's not the face of Jairus, but instead an unnamed woman. Verse 25, who's she? She had had a discharge of blood for 12 years, and had suffered much under many physicians.

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She'd spent all she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse. She'd heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his garment. Because she said, if I touch even his garments, I'll be made well. Some of you know what it's like to go and see the doctor, and not get any answers. You get referred to another doctor, put on a waiting list for six months. When the appointment finally comes around, they do some tests, and tell you to wait for a letter that never comes. When you phone up to see what the results were, the receptionist tells you they all came back negative, and they don't have an answer. You go back to the doctor, get referred to another specialist, and put on another waiting list, and round and round and round it goes.
After a while, you're so frustrated, you just want to scream and tear your hair out. This woman had been going round like that for 12 years. Seemingly, she'd had treatment. She'd suffered under many doctors. They'd all charged her for their time, but none of them had cured her bleeding.
In fact, whether through the illness itself or because of the failed procedures, she grew steadily worse. Think about the impact of that on her life. The physical pain and the toll it would have taken on her body to be constantly bleeding. The psychological exhaustion of constantly running up against brick walls and dead ends over and over again. The strain on her finances, we're told that she'd spent all that she had. The Old Testament laws surrounding bleeding that put her permanently in the unclean category.
She could never go into the temple or the synagogue. People would have avoided going near her. Something I've never heard said, but is fairly obvious, is that she couldn't have had children for as long as she was bleeding. We're not told how old she was, but 12 years could well have taken a big chunk out of her window to conceive. However you look at it, it's a dire situation.
[14:13] Heres is a long-term, a chronic issue. Jairus' is a desperate and urgent acute issue, but they are equally desperate to see Jesus and equally certain that he can heal. And they are both right.

Because look what happens now in verse 29. The woman came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment, and immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. It is an unspeakable moment of joy. 12 years, 12 years of suffering resolved immediately with a simple touch. But if that's all Jesus was interested in, then I guess that would be the end of the scene, and we would fast forward to Jairus' house. He felt power go out of himself, but he didn't say, oh, that's nice, another person helped. Though he stopped dead in his tracks, verse 30, Jesus, perceiving in himself power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, who touched my garments? Friends, Jesus' miracles are nothing less than compassionate, but they are so much more. They are there to communicate. He wants to find who's been healed so that he can attach the message to the miracle. The disciples are pretty flustered by this. You've got an appointment with a dying child, Jesus, remember that? What do you mean? Who touched me? See the crowd all around you? We know about crowds. They push and shove. Why the hold up? But Jesus knows that this was a different kind of touch. It was a touch of genuine faith that not only healed, but saved. So, verse 33, the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. Now, does that not really surprise us?
What surprises us about that? Well, think of the courage it would have taken her to push through the crowd to Jesus, a woman who perhaps had been on her own for a long time, used to being unclean, who other people would have seen as unclean, with a painful and a messy bleeding issue. Yet we're told she wasn't afraid to do it. Quite the opposite, in fact. She's confident if she manages to touch Jesus' clothes, she'll get better. This is a strong woman with real guts. But after she's healed, now that she comes before Jesus, now he's asked for her personally, and she comes to tell him what she did, she came in fear and trembling.
If we've tracked the Mark's gospel up to this point, we know that Jesus isn't a scary person. He's infinitely approachable, gentle, kind. He touches the unclean. He eats with sinners.
Whereas this woman, she doesn't think that he's going to be cross with her. She's heard the reports. She trembles with fear because she is coming face to face with the one who has just healed her sickness that no doctor could cure, seemingly without even meaning to.
[17:50] Such power, such power, such power that she only needed to brush his clothes with her hand and immediately be made better.

Picture the shock if someone walked into a hospital and did that today. She went ward to ward, bed to bed. People were healed.

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Doctors confounded. Nurses in a panic. Patients confused. Families overwhelmed. What does it all mean that somebody is here who can undo all the sickness just like that?
You wouldn't give that person, would you, a pally handshake and a pat on the back? You'd either want him arrested and interrogated or fall down before him in trembling and awe, lost for words, in tears.
Friends, this woman wasn't afraid before, but she is now because she has come to see Jesus truly. Who is this then that can cure the incurable disease?
[18:56] More than a healer, one to whom she owes not only her life, but her heart and soul. You know that because of what Jesus says in verse 34.

He said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well, or literally saved you. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.
Her body has been healed and her heart made whole through faith, simple trust in the Lord Jesus. And it's then she starts to fear a right and healthy fear of the Lord.
Wonder, friends, what are you afraid of? What are you afraid of? If we can't relate to this woman's response in any way, if it's totally lost on us, to be utterly in awe of Jesus, speechless, trembling in his presence, we probably don't yet have what that woman received that day.
If our faith completely lacks any kind of fear, it's probably not saving faith. If Jesus is nice to have on the shelf and pull him off when I feel like I need him, but he has no aura, no majesty or overwhelming presence in our lives, we've got the wrong Jesus.
[20:27] The one who stands above the storm, the darkness, the intractable problems of life, can only be God and Lord of it all. Indeed, as Mark would have us say, Christ and the Son of God.

Those things are rational fears, aren't they? You'd be right to fear a chronic disease like that woman had. Surely then the most rational fear of all is fear of the one who can command the things that we fear and have them obey him.
Tame Leviathan, pet behemoth, control the uncontrollable, and bring chaos to order. Let me say, if you're here tonight and you're feeling like the woman in another way, during her helpless years of suffering, looking for answers and not getting them, perhaps you're longing for relief, for healing from a physical and mental illness, let me say, the message to take from these verses isn't that you lack faith.
That's a lie that is often told in churches. What Jesus actually says is that her faith has saved her so that she can go in peace. Being healed of her disease is a wonderful thing, but that's not what her faith gained her that day.
It gained her salvation. It's not what Jesus said. It's not what Jesus said. Which means also that you don't have to wait for Jesus to heal you before you can trust him like this.
[22:03] He's proven who he is by the healings that he's done, recorded in scripture. If it was only the miracle that Jesus was interested in, we might never have heard of this particular healing.

It would have passed completely without comment. It's the message about him that Jesus wants us to hear through the miracle. That simple faith, trust in him truly saves.
He may heal us this side of eternity. It may not be until then, but he will save us and send us out in peace the moment we place our faith and trust in him.
Who then is this who need only speak and we need only trust and he saves us from all that we could not save ourselves from? Jesus Christ, the son of God.
But Mark hasn't finished yet. We still need those loose threads tied up. What about Jairus and his little daughter? Well, let's see in our second point, authority over death, more than amazement.
[23:20] See, while Jesus had been speaking with the woman, Jairus, remember, has been waiting to take Jesus to his dying daughter, which must have been agonizing as the minutes ticked away. And then while Jesus is still speaking, news arrives from the house that it's the worst.

Your daughter is dead. No need for Jesus anymore. What can he do? She's gone. Words that no parent ever wants to hear.
The hopelessness in the messenger's words must have echoed a hopelessness in Jairus' heart. As they say, nothing more can be done. Don't bother the teacher anymore. They were certain that Jesus could heal, but they are just as certain that Jesus cannot bring someone back from the dead.
Overhearing that, though, Jesus speaks to the ruler of the synagogue, Luke verse 36, do not fear, only believe. It's interesting, isn't it? Mark doesn't use his name or even call him the bereaved father, but the ruler of the synagogue.

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It doesn't quite seem relevant, does it, to the situation, but it is relevant to Mark and it's relevant to Jesus. He's telling the ruler of the synagogue, a Jewish religious leader, to trust him.
[24:43] You'd never, you'd never come out with this by a child's deathbed, would you? You'd never shake the hand of a bereaved dad at a funeral and say, don't fear, only believe.

It would be cruel if it wasn't Jesus saying it and he wasn't really the Messiah. And indeed, you could say if the ruler of the synagogue had been anyone else whose entire job wasn't to watch and to wait for the Messiah.
But Jesus being the Christ and the Son of God and Jesus being a synagogue ruler and Jesus wanting people like Jairus to recognize him as the one who'd come to save them, Jesus quite directly redirects his fears and tells him to keep trusting him.
It's quite obvious when Jesus arrives at the house that the girl really is dead. There are already mourners there weeping and wailing loudly. It's quite a common practice in some parts of the world to have a sort of semi-professional group of mourners that will turn up when someone dies exactly like this.
This is a culture that has institutionalized death. Death is a public, a familiar thing, a frequent thing, not like today where we barely, barely see it.
[26:09] It's behind closed doors. So when Jesus goes in and says, why are you doing this? The child isn't dead but sleeping. They're not angry or upset as we would be.

They laugh at him. To them, it wasn't a cruel thing to say. It was a stupid thing to say. They know what a dead body looks like. But Jesus is serious.
So he puts everyone outside except for Peter, James, and John, Jairus, and his wife. That's who the miracle is for. That's who he wants to witness, his authority, in order to arrive at his identity.
Now the way he does it is incredibly gentle. He takes the girl's hand and he uses a term of endearment to Leta, little girl.
Our boys get called darling at nursery. They come home and call each other darling. It's quite sweet. But it's something like that.
[27:18] Time to get up, darling. In fact, it's time for breakfast. Get her something to eat. And like that, so gently, so lovingly, so tenderly, he raises the girl from the dead.

Immediately, she got up and began walking. Again, see his compassion. It's not cold. It's not clinical. It's not just to make a point. And yet, if we don't get further than Jesus' bedside manner, we will have missed the point, which is that he has just raised a girl from the dead with a word.
Jesus says, arise, and she arose. Again, it's a jaw-dropping moment. The biggest day in this area, surely, for the last 12 years, at least.
Interesting, isn't it, that the woman had been unwell for 12 years and the girl is 12 years old? I don't know that there's any significance in that, other than that Mark wants us to spot the 12s whenever they appear.
Right? 12 apostles, 12 years, 12 baskets of bread later on. Jesus is working in 12s, you could say, because he's building a new kingdom, a new Israel, a new 12.
[28:34] No doubt, there were lots of people who weren't healed in those 12 years. Lots of children who died and weren't brought back to life. This little girl was so that her father, in particular, the synagogue ruler, the apostles, and by extension, us reading it now, could see what his word can do and therefore who he must be.

By his word, he can raise the dead to life. He must therefore be the promised Christ and the only son of God. But do they see that?
Do they get the message behind the miracle? Well, how do they react? Verse 42, immediately the girl got up and began walking for she was 12 years of age and they were immediately overcome with amazement.
Amazement. That Greek word for amazement is where we get our word ecstasy. If you're ecstatic, you're sort of bouncing off the walls, aren't you, with joyful surprise, amazement.
What you're not, though, is afraid. There are places where the two words get used together, amazed and afraid, very significantly, actually, in the very last line of Mark's gospel.
[29:59] So it's possible to be both, but here they are just amazed, purely ecstatic. Now, why wouldn't they be, we wonder? They've just seen a girl brought back to life.

Well, because they've just seen a girl brought back to life. I think if we're familiar with the gospels, we can kind of cartoonize it in our heads, can't we?

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But again, think of the scene. I don't think there's a starker place on earth than standing by the side of a grave. It's the ultimate dead end.
It forces you to come face to face with the finality of death. We need to put this body in this hole and leave it there. What do we want to happen in that moment?
We want, don't we, for somebody to come and say, there's been a mistake on our loved one to climb back out of the grave and carry on living. But the grave just stares coldly back, doesn't it?
[31:03] It is a cold, hard no. picture then what would happen if somebody turned up at the graveside after a funeral. Everyone's in pieces.

The final goodbyes, the coffin is in the ground and he says, he's not dead, he's only sleeping. Time to get up.
And out of the grave comes the person you've just buried. What feelings would overcome ye? I guess a mix of things.
Shock, fear, confusion, disbelief, perhaps amazement, but surely more than amazement.
The interesting thing is that Jairus, like others before him, had thrown himself down at Jesus' feet when he knew he needed him. He wobbled a little bit when he heard the daughter was dead.
[32:04] Jesus tells him, keep believing. But now he's got his daughter back, that faith has softened, hasn't it, into amazement.

His child is in his arms, but he is not at the feet of Jesus. It's the opposite trajectory to the woman, isn't it? She boldly grasped after Jesus to be healed, then found herself trembling at his feet once she'd been well.
it suggests that there is something missing from Jairus' response. And Jesus agrees because we get the formula he uses when he doesn't want his message to get mangled, verse 43.
He strictly charged them, no one should know this. Words he didn't say when the woman was healed or the man set free from demons last week. The big difference is that those people did end up at the feet of Jesus because they had seen him rightly, whereas Jairus did not.
Maybe some of us here tonight are amazed at Jesus. That's no bad thing. Jesus is amazing. But friends, it's not a sufficient response.
[33:19] Think about the different responses Jesus told his followers to look out for in the parable of the sewer. Which one is this? It's not the hard path, is it?

There is something sprouting there, but it definitely hasn't borne fruit yet in trembling faith and worship. It could be the rocky soil where something springs up quickly but shrivels as soon as it gets tough.
More likely, it's the weedy soil where a kind of faith grows that gets tangled up and suffocated by other cares and concerns.
In this case, a little daughter's health. Jesus, I need you to sort this thing out for me and then I'll be okay. You know, doubt we should be amazed when Jesus comes to our help so graciously and so kindly, but friends, we should be so much more than that.
We haven't realized yet that the one who has authority over sickness and death deserves our complete trust and allegiance, our trembling fear and worship.
[34:30] Then we've missed the message behind these miracles. We started with a question, what are you afraid of? In this chapter of Mark, these couple of chapters we've met, haven't we?

Chaos, darkness, evil, sickness, loneliness, death. Friends, the Lord Jesus Christ stands over it all. He is over and above the storms that we face. He stands over and above everything that we fear. Seeing that should cause us to have a right and a healthy fear of him over and above everything else as the one who's supremely in control and whose word has ultimate authority over all things that exist.
When we place our trust fully in him, he puts all of our other rational fears back into their proper place under his lordship for he is lord of all.
Would you rest your faith in him then tonight, whether for the first time, or for the thousandth time and know his salvation, the peace with which he sends us out, and his immense power and authority as we bow down before him at his feet with holy fear and trembling.
[36:07] Let's pray that that would be us tonight. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we worship you as lord of all.

Lord, we bow ourselves before you in awe for you truly are over and above this world with all of its fears and terrors, all of the unpredictability and uncertainty, Lord, all that causes us anxiety.

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Lord, we want to put those things under you and give over to you, Lord, all that prays upon our hearts. Lord Jesus, you are supremely authoritative.
You are the Christ, our King, and the Son of God. Lord, and we pray, Lord, that in each one of our hearts that you would be lifted up and enthroned, that we would not imagine that you are powerless to save, your arm too short, but Lord, whatever it is, whatever it is, that we would come to you and know that you are not only able, but willing and powerful to save us.
Grant us, we pray, that saving faith that transforms our fears and causes us to bow down at your feet alone. Amen.

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