

# Mark 5:35-43

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning again. I'm going to read the next part of Mark chapter 5. We left off earlier at verse 34. I'll read verses 35 down to verse 43. But before I do that, let me lead us in prayer as we open God's Word together.

Our Father God, we thank you that we've just been singing of the wonderful, the unwavering hope that we have in the risen Lord Jesus. And so we pray that as we turn to study your Word together, we pray that the power of the resurrection will be at work by your Holy Spirit to keep us unwavering indeed and steadfast in the hope we have in Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen. So Mark chapter 5 and picking up at verse 35.

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? Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, don't be afraid. Just believe. He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him.

And he put them all out. He took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went into where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, Talitha, come me, which means little girl, I say to you, get up. Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. At this, they were completely astonished. Jesus gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this and told them to give her something to eat.

Amen. And may God bless the reading and the teaching of his word. We were singing there about the unwavering nature of the hope that we have in Christ. And I wonder then this morning, how unwavering is your hope at the minute? As Christians, we know that we have that certain hope of the future won for us in Christ. And yet in the world around us, there is lots that can rob us of that hope, that can rob us of that peace and joy and security. There's, of course, much in the news at the minute to trouble us. There's much political posturing and uncertainty happening, both in Scotland and down in Westminster. There is war in Europe. There's economic uncertainty.

[ 2 : 3 9 ] And that's to say nothing of the individual things that we all have in our lives, which can cause us deep anxiety on top of those big picture things. So how unwavering do you feel in your hope this morning? Well, whatever the answer might be to that question, I hope that we're able to see that in Mark chapter 5, we do indeed have great cause for hope. You'll see that in Mark chapter 5, verse 21, we're picking up the story. This is forming part of a mini section within Mark's gospel, a section which begins at chapter 4, verse 35, and ends with the reading I've just given in 5:43, a section in which time and again, Jesus is presented with hopeless cases. They're familiar stories to many of us, I'm sure. Hopeless case number one, a furious storm at sea, which terrifies his disciples to the point that they think they'll be dying. Hopeless case number two, a man possessed by a legion of demons and living life amongst the tombs. That second case took place during Jesus' first journey into

Gentile territory outside of Israel, where we see that even there, God's kingdom can grow. Even there, Jesus can demonstrate himself to be the king sent from God with authority.

Our reading this morning started with the return of the king back to home turf, back to Israel. And there, once again, he's presented with another hopeless case, number three, this time from a member of the Jewish ruling elite. My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live. Jairus' circumstances are very different to the man with the legion of demons.

Yet he's every bit as desperate, every bit as hopeless as that other man. So spanning two chapters then, four completely hopeless situations. But the big thing I want us to see in Mark chapter 5, the main point is that when Jesus comes up against hopelessness, Jesus wins. If we take one thing away this morning, let it be that, that when Jesus comes up against hopelessness, Jesus wins. Mark's aim in this whole section is to demonstrate Jesus' identity. He is God's king with real authority. And then also to draw the reader to therefore respond to Jesus' king by having faith in him and following him. And so those are the two headings we're going to use to look at this passage together. Recognize the king and respond to the king. First of all then, recognize the king. And the first thing we need to recognize in Jesus our king from this passage is that he has authority over sickness. So we've met hopeless case number one in this story, Jairus and his daughter, and we'll return to them a wee bit later. But it's on the way to

Jairus' house that Jesus meets hopeless case number two in this part of the chapter. We read from verse 24, a large crowd followed and pressed around Jesus, and a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. 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. Easy enough to see the kind of suffering that this woman is undergoing. Commentators aren't entirely sure, but they reckon that the bleeding that she was suffering from was probably a menstrual hemorrhage of some sort. And so as well as the obvious discomfort and pain that would cause, we need to remember that in this society in particular, this was a really difficult condition to be living with. Her pain and discomfort are only compounded by the anguish of living in a society where such a discharge was seen as unclean.

[ 6 : 49 ] In her cultural context, as well as the physical suffering and distress, this woman will have been suffering from 12 years of being cut off from community and friendship and fellowship. I think all of us know what it's like to be unwell. Maybe some have had experience of chronic conditions which don't get any better, and that's really tough. It's really hard for any of us to go through something like that. Imagine how much harder it would be, though, if as well as the unending illness, the daily grind of living with pain, you also had to do that without the support of everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone wanting to stay as far away from you as they possibly can.

That's the kind of situation this woman finds herself in. We can see how desperate and hopeless she must therefore feel. But what's more, as the text itself draws out, she's also been left totally penniless, having spent everything she has trying to find a cure. And we can imagine the progress there, can't we? 12 years of moving from one doctor to the next, from her GP to the specialists and finding that none of them can help her. And so spending more and more money on chasing these miracle cures from quacks and people selling snake oil and things that aren't going to work and thinking, well, maybe this time, maybe this one will make me better. Knowing in her logical mind that it probably won't work, but hoping against hope that this one, this cure, this investment of money will be the thing that works. And none of it, none of it ever does. In fact, as we read, she hasn't got better, she's only grown worse. We find in this woman a character in the gospel who has a problem that absolutely nobody can help her with. And that's what makes what comes next all the more dramatic. Verse 27, when she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought, if I just touch his clothes,

I will be healed. Immediately, her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. My only experience of chronic health conditions was a chronic stomach problem I had about 10 years ago. It plagued me for around 18 months and it was fairly minor. One of those conditions that's, it's minor enough that you sort of have to just get on with work, but also serious enough that you're just in constant gnawing pain and discomfort. And it was pretty grim. And so I was really, really relieved one day when I finally went to my doctor and got some blood tests done. And it turns out that what I had was a very minor thing, which was cleared up just by taking some antibiotics. And the first day I was on those tablets, I woke up feeling normal. And it was like I was a new man brought back from the dead. I hadn't realized how uncomfortable and painful life had been until it stopped. And that day I was walking on air, freed from my suffering. That's a really, really minor example of life with chronic pain. I'm sure that many of us know that pain, even worse than that. And so we can only imagine then how this woman must have been feeling when in an instant, immediately, she's made well, freed, completely freed from all her suffering.

Those years and years of chasing a cure that couldn't be found, and yet the very second she reaches out in faith and touches Jesus, it's all over in that instant. From hopeless, helpless, cut off from the community one second, to healed and restored the next. How wonderful that must have felt.

But strangely, the first recorded response to this miracle, it's not delight, it's not wonder, it's unexpected fear. Verse 30, at once Jesus realized the power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, who touched my clothes? You see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered, and yet you can ask, who touched me? But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet, and with trembling and fear, told him the whole truth. Just imagine what must be going through this woman's head. Why is she feeling freed? Well, as we've just said, she's become accustomed to a life of stigma and shame. She's become accustomed to a life of being almost literally avoided like the plague, of being told from every angle that she's unclean and unworthy. Here, she's just had an encounter where she's tried to very discreetly, without being seen, anonymously reach out and touch the garments of a man she knows to be, a holy man and a teacher. And now that very same holy man, she thought she'd got in the way with it, he is looking around in the crowd trying to find her. I think she's afraid because she's probably expecting Jesus to respond like everyone else in the last 12 years would have responded to her, don't touch me unclean woman, how dare you be gone? Something like that.

[12:33] That's why she's trembling with fear. And so it's so touching, it's so kind, and so reassuring for her that the first word she hears from Jesus' mouth is, daughter. I think we're meant to find that really moving.

The fact that Jesus' response to her is so kind, that he treats her with such dignity, with such generosity. Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

It's an astounding transformation. She's been outcast and derided, and yet here, not only is she healed, she's also accepted and valued. She's been ostracized and maligned. Jesus treats her with dignity and sends her off at peace and restored to fellowship with the community. Perhaps most fundamentally of all, she has been living for 12 years without hope, and she goes away with something even greater than just hope. A real and tangible end to her suffering. Remember, our main point, when Jesus comes up against hopelessness, Jesus wins. He has authority over sickness.

He also has authority over death, and that's what we look at now, the potential sting in this wonderful tale. While all this has been happening, Jairus' daughter has been on her sickbed, and so the devastating news comes through. Verse 35, 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?

I've always found this section to be a really deeply moving one, and all the more so since having a son of my own. It's utterly devastating news. Can any parent imagine anything worse than hearing those words? And so I think the messengers have got it right, haven't they, as they break the news to Jairus. Look, Jairus, this man can't help you anymore. Let's just let him get on with his day.

[ 14 : 50 ] Why not come back to your family? Why not come back to your wife and your household? They may even have been wondering to themselves quietly, why on earth has he wasted these last precious moments when his father, he could have been holding his daughter's hand, chasing a miracle cure from this quack faith healer? Well, that would make what Jesus says next all the more shocking, I think. Jesus could have expressed condolences. He could have said, Jairus, your daughter will live on in our hearts and our minds forever. Instead, he says something which actually on the face of it is deeply insensitive, maybe even cruel. Verse 36, overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, don't be afraid, just believe. Then a bit later, verse 38, when they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him. Everyone knows that Jairus' daughter is dead. In that society, they knew what death was every bit as much as we do. They're well into the formal mourning customs by now, all the weeping and wailing. That's what they did when somebody died. And so when they hear this man suggesting that she's just asleep, their response is bang on. One of scornful, outraged, laughing in derision. Why on earth is this man saying that? Haven't Jairus and his family suffered enough?

If you or I appeared in a house of mourning and said, don't worry, they're just sleeping, we'd be asked to leave very quickly and rightly so. Wonderfully though, Jesus is not like you and I, because Jesus is the king with authority. Remember, once again, when Jesus comes up against hopelessness, Jesus wins. Here, when he comes up against even death itself, Jesus still wins.

We read on, after he had 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, Talitha kum, which means little girl, I say to you, get up. Immediately, the girl stood up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. At this, they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this and told them to give her something to eat. See that word again immediately. This is how much authority Jesus has. Jesus is the one who, when he speaks, the wind and the waves listen. When he speaks, the demons tremble and obey. When he commands someone to get up, not even death can hold them back. All this because, once again, Jesus is the king with authority.

I mentioned some of those other hopeless cases earlier where Jesus chooses authority over nature by calming a storm at sea, over evil spirits and demons by driving out the legion from the possessed man. But really, when you think about it, this last miracle in this little mini section is really just a more obvious sign of what's going on in all of them.

That when the storm at sea comes, Jesus' disciples say, don't you care about us that we're dying? The man with the legion is living among the tombs. It's as if he's dead. The bleeding woman is devoid of hope and cut off from the world around her. It's as if she's dead. All these stories are pointing towards Jesus' ultimate authority over the ultimate effect of our sin and rejection of God, death itself.

[ 18 : 57 ] And so as we recognize our king in this passage this morning, I hope we see that we have much to take heart in as we gaze at him together. Yes, Jesus is a compassionate king, reaching out to suffering and hopeless people and treating them with kindness and compassion. Yes, Jesus is the glorious king, bringing hope to situations where all hope seems lost. But most fundamentally of all, Jesus is the conquering king, the king with authority over even death. I think that's a truth that we talk about so much in the Christian life, that it's helpful to pause for just a moment and say, isn't that actually pretty amazing? That Jesus has conquered death. That to follow Jesus isn't to join a religious club or to follow a set of rules or to adopt a set of nice moral principles. No, to follow Jesus is to know and to walk with the king who triumphs over even the most dreadful despair and hopelessness. To follow Jesus is to know the one who who stares death straight in the face and unlike anyone else who's ever lived, makes death itself blink.

That is brilliant news for all of us this morning. Mark chapter 5 is a vivid reminder for us that a world without death. It's not a world without death. It's not a pipe dream. It's not an illusion. It's a person. And it's really wonderful to recognize that. That person is our king, Jesus. But once again, we're being drawn to do more than just recognize our king. Seeing Jesus is the king means that we need to decide how we'll respond to him. That's our second heading this morning. Respond to the king. Another thing we see throughout these stories is that there are two reactions to Jesus, fear or faith. If you read through from Mark 4.35, you see fear and faith or belief coming up a lot. And we see them a lot in our stories this morning. As we've seen, there's fear and faith in both Jairus and in the bleeding woman. There's fear in the woman's trembling response to Jesus, fear of reprisal or rebuke, fear of being seen and having to give an account to a holy God. Of course, we see fear in Jairus too, rightly fearful over his daughter and fearful of the ultimate end of sin, death itself.

And in that sense, I suppose fear is right in this passage. What other response, after all, could be more appropriate in the face of death or in the face of a holy and just God than to be fearful?

I'm sure that in a congregation of this size, if we were to go around this morning listing all the things that are causing us anxiety, making us fearful, we'd be here for quite a while.

And so for any or all of us who are feeling fearful this morning, let me draw us all to gaze once again at our King. The revolutionary message of the Christian faith is in some ways captured neatly by the words of the Christmas angels, do not be afraid. As Jesus puts it in this passage, do not fear.

[ 22 : 51 ] We've just been thinking that death has lost its sting if we know the one who conquers death. So yes, encountering a holy God should make us fearful because we fall so far short of his majesty and his holiness in our sin. But Jesus conquers sin, the ultimate end of which is death.

So if you're feeling fearful this morning, don't let that fear drive you away. Instead, only believe. The second part of what Jesus says to Jairus, just believe. Because as well as seeing fear in both Jairus and the bleeding woman, we see faith. Faith which is commended and commanded by Jesus himself.

Jairus has faith enough to come and find Jesus. And so Jesus encourages him to not fear, but only to believe. To keep active in the faith which drew him out to meet Jesus at the boat in the first place.

Then similarly, we have the healed woman. A bit of a question for us to mull on. If the crowd was pressing round on Jesus at every side and loads of people rubbing up against him, why in this Bible is the heading, Jesus raises a dead girl and heals a sick woman, and not Jesus raises a dead girl and heals hundreds of people who happen to brush against his magic clothes? Well, the answer is faith.

The answer is, it's not magic clothes that makes the woman well. He makes that very clear to her. Your faith has healed you. So in Jesus' interactions with both of these characters, the reader is being driven to respond rightly to King Jesus. Do not fear, believe. Have faith in him.

[ 24 : 47 ] That's the application that we want to close on this morning. Have faith in Jesus. And so first of all, let me say, if you're here this morning as someone who's not yet a Christian, let me invite you to consider whether you could put your faith in this Jesus, the one who conquers death.

This might all be a bit new to you. This might be your first time checking these things out, and that might feel like too much too soon, and that's fine. Let me encourage you to please keep coming back to church. Keep speaking to the people who maybe brought you along about what that faith means for them and keep exploring this Jesus. But please do not let fear drive you away. If you find that you can put your faith in this Jesus, let me urge you to do so. And please come and speak to me or to Joe or someone from church about what that would actually mean this morning. But then for those of us who are already following Jesus, this passage is drawing us to be strengthened in our faith, to keep going in our faith and belief in him. Faith doesn't mean refusing to accept the facts and pretending that everything is fine. But it does mean walking with and clinging to the Lord Jesus, even in the very face of those things which make us fearful. I came across a really vivid example of this recently, a book I've been reading by an American church leader about how to face suffering in the Christian life. And he recounts the story of how his worst nightmare came true when he lost his three-year-old son very suddenly one night.

He describes the moment that his wife called him with the news. Here was the point of departure between God and me. Here was that moment when my faith would crumble. In my imagination of doom, here was when I would curse God, resign from ministry, and pursue a life of self-interest as a bitter, faithless man. But the Lord put a word in my mouth that surprised me.

When my wife delivered the tragic news, I said to her, Lauren, Christ is risen from the dead. God is good. This doesn't change that fact. God gave me faith and hope while I stood squarely in the middle of my worst.

I don't read that story because I think faith like that is easy. It's certainly not flippant. And it definitely doesn't make everything feel okay.

[ 27 : 22 ] But it is real. Faith in Jesus means real hope. Life-giving hope.

We still know a king who conquers. That's the glorious truth that sustains us. The glorious truth that gives us real and life-giving hope in our most profound moments of joy and in our times of deepest, darkest sadness and pain.

Even as we all feel the real pain of life in a fallen and broken world, we grieve as those who have hope.

In a king who will one day usher in his glorious kingdom forever. Hope that that is a place in which there will be no more crying, nor mourning, nor pain, because death itself is no more.

A certain hope that on that day every tear will be wiped away, and there will be no more sadness or mourning or pain. So as we draw to a close this morning, let's not go out merely recognizing our king in this story.

[ 29 : 00 ] Let's definitely do that. He's a majestic and glorious king. But let's also go out responding rightly to him. By rejoicing in him. Strengthened to walk with him in real faith.

Whatever we might find ourselves walking into as we leave this building and go off into the week. Let me lead us in prayer then as we close. Our Father, we thank you that though there is much to make us fearful and feeling devoid of hope in the world around us, yet we have such great cause for hope as we gaze together on our King Jesus.

And so we do long and pray that you would help us to rejoice in him. That you would help us to know with great confidence that he really is the king of authority over even death.

And so to go out rejoicing and cling to him in hope. Sustained in unwavering faith as we go into the rest of this day and the week ahead of us.

Draw us closer to him in faith we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.