

Faith Matters

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 February 2020

Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[0 : 00] Mark chapter 5, reading from verse 21. So Jesus went with him.

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.

At once, Jesus realized that power had gone out of him. He turned round 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 trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering.

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader.

[1 : 54] 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 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. 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. 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 twelve 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.

Amen. And may God bless to our hearts this reading from his word. Let me pray and ask for God's help as we look at these verses together. We thank you, our God, for your word to us that points us to your Son, Jesus Christ.

[3 : 17] We pray that as we think about him now, that you would help us to grasp more of who he is and why he came. That we would respond to him in the right way.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, a small aeroplane took off from Glasgow Airport, and it had five people on board.

It had a pilot and four students from Glasgow University. The university had selected some of its students to go on a field trip to France to meet with some of the students in French universities. And so there was a student from the Accounting Society. There was a student from the Physics Society. There was a student from the Mountaineering Club. And there was a student from the Christian Union.

And so on the plane, the accounting student sat with his iPad and worked out how he could make some money. And then the physics student sat with his briefcase open, reading some science journals.

[4 : 18] The Mountaineering student sat with his rucksack, and he looked over his maps of where he was going to climb when he was over there. And then the Christian sat there reading his Bible. But then the small aeroplane lost all power to its engines.

And so the pilot said, I've got some bad news. This plane is going to crash. And I've got some very bad news. There are five of us and only four parachutes. And then he said to the pilot, he said, it's my plane, and I'm the pilot, so I'm taking one of these parachutes.

And he put it on. He jumped out. Then the accounting student jumped up and he said, I've got a valuable contribution to make to our society. Brexit and all that.

I'm needed for the sake of the economy. So then he strapped on a parachute and jumped out of the plane. Then the physics student stood up and said, I've got one of the greatest scientific minds in the university.

I've got a great scientific contribution to make to our society. Climate change and all that. I can be good. I need to live. And so he jumped out.

[5 : 25] And then a Christian union member sat there sweating, looking at the 19-year-old student, who had a big smile on his face. And the Christian student was thinking, I know what I ought to do here.

I want to offer this parachute to my colleague. But the 19-year-old student, seeing the panic on the Christian's face, said to him, don't worry, mate. There are still two parachutes left.

That physics student just jumped out with my rucksack. That's a parable, by the way. That's not a true story, so don't worry. But it illustrates, doesn't it, how people can put their faith in something that will ultimately do them no good whatsoever.

You can put your faith in something you think is useful and will do you good, and yet it will ultimately fail you. And so in our Bible, what we see is that no matter how sincere someone's faith is, it's not that you have faith that is the issue, but it is the object of your faith.

It's what you put your faith in that really matters. And that's what we see here. It's not just having faith that matters, but it is what you put your faith in. And Mark here in his gospel is emphasising that your faith must be in Jesus Christ.

[6 : 40] Because it's clear from these two inter-Roman stories that our faith has got to be in Jesus. So Mark is building up the evidence to urge us to put our faith in Jesus Christ.

Because we're in this section of Mark's gospel, if you've been following us, where we've got these amazing displays of the power of Jesus. So, there was back in chapter 4, verse 35, Jesus' power over nature.

Remember, he calmed the storm. Then, last week we looked at Mark chapter 5, Jesus' power over demons, as he delivered the demon-possessed man. And then here we see Jesus' power over disease, as he heals a sick woman.

And Jesus' power over death, as he raises a dead girl to life. And so the big idea of this passage that we're looking at today is that Jesus' power demands that we put our faith in him.

He's the object of our faith. Jesus' power demands that we put our faith in him. And we'll see that this involves giving up trusting in ourselves, and trusting our own resources, or what we have, and instead placing our trust in Jesus as the only one who can meet a people's needs.

[7 : 57] And so, we're going to look at this passage under three headings. First of all, we see the desperation of faith. Second, the test of faith. And third, the object of faith. The desperation of faith. The test of faith.

And then the object of faith. So first, the desperation of faith. Two people here who are absolutely desperate. They're hopeless. They're in need. And they've got nowhere else to turn.

But their stories are woven together. So Jairus and the sick woman are these desperate individuals, and they reach out to Jesus for help. So first of all, there's Jairus.

His daughter was dying. He was a synagogue ruler, so a very important man. A man devoted to God. Socially prominent. Morally respectable. And wealthy.

He was a man with authority. And yet, what does he do? He falls down at Jesus' feet. And there's the woman. The opposite end of the social spectrum from Jairus.

[8 : 54] She is poor, and she is suffering. And she'd been ill for 12 years, and things were getting worse. And so these two people could not be any more different.

Jairus goes to Jesus openly, hoping that Jesus can heal his dying daughter. Whereas the woman comes to Jesus secretly, hoping that Jesus can heal her of her bleeding.

But these 12 years of bleeding for the woman didn't just impact her life physically. It was also a social impact. Because for her, to bleed in this way would have meant that she was unclean.

And she was excluded socially from a number of different things. And so two very different people, but yet equally desperate, for help.

And so they go to Jesus. And so they both have a level of faith as they approach Jesus Christ. I wonder if you can imagine how they felt. A father with his 12-year-old girl dying.

[10 : 00] And then a woman who'd suffered for 12 years, and things were getting worse. But maybe you don't need to imagine how they felt. Perhaps you can identify either with Jairus or with

the woman.

Either because you've been in such a desperate situation yourself, or perhaps you're facing the kind of situation that they're facing just now. Because life is great, isn't it, when everything is going well? It's brilliant. When our health is good, when our family is stable, when our work is rewarding, when our relationships are fulfilling, and when our income is secure, life is great. That's when we can trust in ourselves, and we can trust in our own resources.

Because we're fine. We're self-sufficient, and we're satisfying. But life isn't always like that, is it? Sometimes we can't trust in ourselves and our own resources.

Sometimes when everything is going smoothly, and we think we've got life sorted, all of a sudden, our world can be turned upside down. Our world can collapse in upon us, and all that we were hoping and trusting in, and building our life on, can just be taken away.

[11:14] What we're putting our trust in either fails us, or it turns out to be completely useless. And so we might hear bad news about our health. There might be difficulties in our family.

We might lose our job unexpectedly. There might be a relationship breakup. Our future might be uncertain. And we can end up desperate, like Jairus, and begging for help.

Or perhaps we're desperate, not because something has happened, like his dying daughter, but because nothing has happened, like the woman. Her life was just getting worse, and worse, and worse.

Well, these interwoven stories show us how Jesus is the only one who has the power to meet life's deepest needs.

And so no matter what our circumstances, and no matter how desperate that we might feel, we should go to Jesus, just like Jairus did, and just like the woman did.

[12:15] Because they remind us, don't they, of putting our faith in ourselves or our circumstances. And that's a dangerous thing. Trusting in anything else in life when it can just go is dangerous.

So our faith should be in Jesus. Not just so that he'll make our life better right now, or give us what we want when we want it, but because Jesus alone can meet our people's needs.

And because Jesus knows what's best for us, he'll do it in his time, and he'll do it in ways that we might not even expect. So in the desperation of their faith, neither Jairus or the woman liked, I think, the way that Jesus worked in them.

It wasn't what they expected, but it was what they needed. And so that's what we see next. So first there's the desperation of faith, second, there's the test of faith. Did you see how the faith of both of these people was tested by Jesus?

Jesus began to make his way to Jairus' house to see to his dying daughter. But then there's this hold-up. Jesus has stopped, and he wants to find out who touched him. Just imagine Jairus as he sees Jesus stop when his daughter is just about to die.

[13:36] His blood pressure must have been rising, and his heart sinking. His daughter was literally at death's door, and Jesus is delayed, just to find out in a large crowd who touched his clothes.

And then Jesus is delayed even further because he enters into conversation with this woman who touched him. As Jairus thinking, come on, Jesus, what are you doing? Don't waste your time.

My daughter is dying. She needs to be seen right now. Hurry up, Jesus, or it will just be too late.

And yet Jesus here isn't hurried. He stops to speak to the woman.

And in doing so, he wasn't just testing her faith. He was also testing Jairus' faith. And so let's consider the woman first. Just try and picture what it was like for her.

How was she feeling at this point? Probably feeling fantastic. She touched Jesus' clothes, and her breathing had stopped. So she'd been healed. That's a good thing. But Jesus doesn't just want to leave her there.

[14:38] Her condition was embarrassing enough for her, and yet what Jesus does is striking, because he calls her to go public with what she's done. He didn't want her to be left with some kind of superstitious faith, as if she were to then believe that somehow touching his clothes was magic, and Jesus had magic power, and she could just run away and be healed.

But Jesus is testing her, because it wasn't her touch or his clothes that healed her. It was his power. And so Jesus is making sure that her faith is firmly in him, not in some kind of superstitious belief.

So Jesus doesn't just want to perform a miracle in her life. He wants to go deeper. So look at verse 30. And once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him, he turned round 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 trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. You see, Jesus is more concerned here than for just her physical healing. She wanted to touch and go, to get better, and then disappear and live her life.

[16:03] But Jesus is prepared to have this awkward silence in the crowd to force the woman to come forward, to reveal herself, and to tell her story. Jesus wasn't just content that her body should be free from suffering, Jesus wanted her to have true faith, and he wanted to transform her life forever, not just in that moment.

And so it's no wonder that she's trembling with fear, and yet Jesus shows her this tender compassion, and he commends her for her faith. Verse 34. He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you.

Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. So she got far more than she expected from that encounter with Jesus.

She was hoping to get Jesus on her terms, and for Jesus to work in her way. And yet Jesus goes way beyond what she expects. Jesus gives her what she needed, even if it wasn't what she wanted. Because Jesus knew far better than her what was best for her life. And Jesus always does. And so he always does for you, and for me, just like he did for this woman.

[17:18] But in testing her faith, Jesus is also testing the faith of Jairus too. So let's look at him for a moment. Jairus is made to wait. Because Jesus wasn't going to be hurried.

And Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. Here's the woman, she had a chronic condition, whereas Jairus' daughter had an acute condition. And so to anyone in the crowd, especially to Jairus, the priority patient was the little girl, not the woman.

She required urgent attention. She was dying, whereas the woman could have waited a bit. If you've ever been to an accident, an emergency, it's a common occurrence in our family.

When you realise that when you go to the hospital, you've got to be prepared to wait for a long time because patients are seen in order of priority as to how serious their condition is.

For those with the most serious condition are seen first, and those with minor conditions have to wait three, four, five, six, seven hours all night or whenever until they're seen.

[18:19] And we all know that it would be malpractice, it would be negligent if those doctors on A&E; decided to treat the minor injuries first and just leave people in beds to die.

Nobody would be happy if that were to happen. And yet, that's exactly what Jesus does here, isn't it? He lets the girl die while the woman could have waited. Look at verse 35.

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader, your daughter is dead. He's dead. Why, brother, the teacher, anymore? And so here's the test for Jairus.

Jairus certainly had the faith to believe that Jesus would heal his daughter, but did Jairus have the faith to believe that Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead? And that's what Jesus was pushing him to.

That's the test that Jesus was giving him. So see what Jesus says, verse 36. Overhearing what he said, Jesus told him, don't be afraid, just believe.

[19:19] Jesus is saying to him, Jairus, you've got to trust me on this one. And it sounds like such an insensitive thing to say, doesn't it, to a grieving father? Unless, of course, Jesus does have the power to raise a dead girl to life.

And we've read the end of the story, so we know that he can do that. And indeed, he does do that. But what about Jairus at this point? For Jesus to tell him, don't be afraid, just believe, that is to test Jairus way beyond anything he was expecting.

Jesus was calling for intense faith from this man. He was being asked to believe that Jesus was stronger than death and to trust him implicitly.

And yet Jairus realises he has got no other option here. He's forced to trust in Jesus despite his helpless state. and that's what it means to have true faith in Jesus.

Just think, what would give Jairus true faith in Jesus? Would it be Jesus healing his dying daughter? Or would it be Jesus resurrecting his dying daughter? Which is the far greater act to give the faith?

[20 : 37] Jesus does it the right way. He allows his daughter to die so he can raise her to life again. And so the girl does die. Verse 38.

She's dead. Everybody else knows she's dead. Jesus says Verse 38. When he came to the home of the synagogue leader Jesus saw a promotion with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them Why all this promotion and the wailing the child is not dead but asleep. But they laughed at him. Everybody responded by laughing at Jesus. And yet Jairus is called to have faith in Jesus. He has got to suspend all conventional thinking that death is final.

And so Jesus is testing his faith because that's what he needed even if it wasn't what he wanted. Nobody wanted his girl to die but she did. So Jesus knew far better than Jairus what was best for him.

[21 : 38] Because Jesus always does. And so for you and for me he does know what is best for our lives. And so as we apply this we shouldn't be surprised if our faith in God is tested in the same way that Jairus' faith or the woman's faith was tested.

Because Jesus Christ will never be hurried. He's got his timescale and it isn't always our timescale. And Jesus will often do the unexpected. and he'll often do it with you and me. Why? Because Jesus wants us to trust him. Not ourselves not our circumstances but him.

And so desperation and delay for you or for me will be perfect working and perfect timing for Jesus. Jesus is far more powerful than we dare believe and he's far more loving than we dare hope. hope. So for Jesus to raise a dead girl to life again is no more difficult than for Jesus to cure her of her fever. Jairus was just after a fever cure but he gets her resurrection instead.

[22 : 54] And that's why we have got to trust Jesus implicitly no matter what our circumstances in life because if you go to Jesus for help Jesus may ask more of you than you're prepared to give and yet Jesus will give you infinitely more than you could ever imagine.

Isn't that what happens here? Jesus gives far more than they were expecting but far better than they could have dreamed of. So Jesus simple command to Jairus don't be afraid just believe still echoes for us today so we need to hear it.

So first the desperation of faith second the test of faith and third and finally the object of faith. The object of our faith must be Jesus just as it was for the woman and as it was for Jairus.

Jesus' power demanded that they put their faith in him. Just a touch and Jesus' power healed the sick woman just a word and Jesus' power raised the dead girl to life.

And so the focus here is on Jesus because he is meant to be the object of our faith and Jesus is also worthy of our faith. That's why Mark concludes this incident as he does.

[24 : 15] Just look at verse 41 and 42 he took her by the hand and said to her Talitha 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 simply takes her by the hand and lifts her right out of death.

A word and a touch from Jesus and death is defeated. Jesus is showing that death itself is like nothing but sleep for him.

Sleep is hard enough. If you've got teenagers waking them in the morning is a tough job. But Jesus does this with death so easily because his power is far greater than anyone expected at the time and it leaves everybody completely amazed.

And it's the kind of power that you could only expect from God himself. And this kind of power on display demands that people put their faith in Jesus Christ.

[25 : 22] So just a loving touch from Jesus dispels suffering and defeats death. And this is all a preview of what Jesus would do on the cross where the one who has the ultimate power was willing to lay aside that power in order that he might suffer and die.

So just look at verse 30 when it says that Jesus realized that power had gone out of him this is the first time this Greek word for power is used in the gospel of Mark.

It's the word dunamis which is where we get our word dynamite from. And yet on the cross Jesus gave up this power. Here Jesus touched death by taking this little girl by the hand which meant that Jesus became unclean by touching a dead body.

And yet on the cross Jesus didn't just touch death Jesus tasted death for us. He was prepared to become unclean of our sin so that we could be made clean.

He's the one who bore God's judgment against our sin so we could be forgiven. Jesus' death means our life because he died our death in order to save us from eternal death in hell.

[26 : 38] And Jesus rose to life again so that we might share in his eternal life. death. Jesus went into the tomb for us so that we could be raised out of it.

And so at the end of the time Jesus can take us by the hand like he took the little girl and say get up because his power over death is strong.

So faith in Jesus Christ means there is an answer to the grave. Jesus came to destroy death which is the greatest enemy of the human race.

It's what people try and hold off but can't. And yet one day in the future when Jesus comes and brings God's kingdom in all its fullness you wipe out death once and for all.

And so with this little girl and then with his own resurrection after the cross you've got the proof that Jesus must be the object of our faith. Because it's not about having faith as if that's a noble thing.

[27 : 41] like people saying I really like or I really admire your faith. What matters is the object of our faith. So just imagine as we close, just imagine you are falling off a high cliff, heartling to the ground and as you fall there's a branch sticking out of the edge of the cliff and that branch is your only hope and that branch is actually strong enough to hold your weight.

It can save you. So what do you do as you're falling? Well if you think the branch can save you but you don't actually reach out and grab the branch then you're dead.

But if you doubt whether the branch can hold you but you reach out to grab it anyway and you catch it then you're saved. Why? It's not enough to have faith but it's the object of your faith that actually saves you.

So strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch. And so this means that you shouldn't move through life waiting for all your doubts and all your fears to go before you put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Because in all our desperate and hopeless situations Jesus says don't be afraid just believe. That doesn't mean life will be what we expect or things will happen when we expect them.

[29 : 07] but because nothing, not even death itself, can separate us from his infinite power and love. And so when we hold on to Jesus Christ there is nothing to be afraid of.

And so the challenge for us is well have we placed our faith in Jesus Christ? Do we listen to his word? Do we let him take us by the hand and lead us through this life and through death and into the next?

Christ. Because when Jesus takes us by the hand he takes us at his pace and Jesus will never be hurried. But when he takes us he knows what is best for us and sometimes that may include testing along the way.

Not to shake us but to give us a greater faith in him. Because he loves us. He loves you. He loves me. And he knows what he's doing with our life. And so we must have our faith in him.

Let's trust him. Let me pray. Thank you God for the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who came, who lived, who died, who rose again and who one day will return.

[30 : 17] We thank you that he has defeated death. We thank you that his power means that we must put our faith in him. That is the most sensible thing that any one of us could ever do with our lives is to trust in Jesus.

not to doubt but to believe. And so help us to do that. Help us to know that your love and your guidance and your ways are best.

That even in our desperate need you come and meet us where we are to take us to where you want us to be. So help us not to trust in ourselves or our circumstances or anything else in this world but to trust in Jesus Christ.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.