

Mark 5:21-43 The Miracle on the Way to do a Miracle

Mark 5:21-43—The Miracle on the Way to do a Miracle

In the church today, many use the name of Jesus and come to His house and think they know Him. In Mark 5:21-43 we see a contrast between a pressing crowd of people who have come to Jesus for their selfish reasons, and a poor pathetic ceremonially unclean woman who has a pure heart and childlike faith. Jesus would ask what seemed like a ridiculous question, “Who touched Me?” since they were in a pressing crowd in which all were touching Him; but the woman alone was uniquely touching Him. Another surprise is that Jesus, being omniscient, didn’t seem to know who had touched Him in faith and been healed. Upon further review, we discover that Jesus had a habit of asking questions designed to elicit a public profession of faith. If you have sought after Jesus and found Him as the woman in verse 25 did, you also need to answer the same question that she did. Therefore, if you have “touched Him” and received peace, make your open confession of faith as she did.

The woman of verse 25 also needs to be contrasted to the important synagogue official, Jairus. This man Jairus is mainstream, a leader, respected, wealthy, religious, and he was there first before the woman. It was on the way to this man’s house to help him that Jesus would encounter the woman. The woman could not have been more different from Jairus, She was broke, outcast, destitute, unclean, and excommunicated from the synagogue. Nevertheless, they had something in common--both had an all important need that only Jesus could fill. They appear as different as night and day, but in their need for Jesus they are alike.

What Does it Feel Like to be Contaminated?

In the first century Israel that Jesus was born into, the civil, criminal, and ceremonial law of the land all came from the Mosaic Law. In Leviticus 15:25-27, Moses commanded that if a woman had a discharge of blood for an extended period of time she was to be quarantined, and anyone touching her would also be considered “unclean”. Today, we understand how contagious germs and disease can be, but the traditions of Israel developed this law into a type of uncleanness associated with sin. The woman was considered unclean ceremonially and religiously, and therefore shunned and isolated. She could not come into the Temple or the local synagogues, nor even be in the presence of “righteous people”. This excluded her from normal social relations, religious relations, and it made her unemployable. What would this feel like? Most of us have felt the sting of being rejected, shunned, and excluded, but this would be far worse. I remember in grade school certain kids were said to have “cooties”, and everyone would move away from them. What if it was for real and permanent like the woman in Mark 5:25?

In Mark 5:1-20, Jesus had travelled to the Gentile area of Decapolis on the east side of the Sea of Galilee where His disciples hoped to get some rest, but instead Jesus had restored a wild man that no one could tame, and then gotten right back in the boats to return to the west side of the lake. In Mark 5:21-43, He will heal a woman no physician can cure and restore to life a girl when all hope is gone.

The Interconnected Miracles

As soon as Jesus’ boat touched ashore, a great multitude of needy people gathered around Him. The author began the story of a specific important man that was in the crowd who had a particularly urgent need-- his daughter was dying. This important man “fell at Jesus’ feet” in all reverence and submission. Verse 23 explains the urgency of his request—his daughter and his belief that Jesus can save her. Jesus attempted to follow him to His house, but the crowd was pressing in on Him so as to impede His progress. As Jesus moved through the crowd, everyone was grabbing Him and touching Him. At that time a specific woman who is distinguished from the rest of the crowd came up behind Jesus and just touched His cloak hoping that His power would heal her. This woman was anonymous, and planned on keeping her presence a secret. She had been suffering terribly for 12 years from uterine bleeding. Various doctors had tried to treat her, but had only been able to fleece her of all her money. In fact she had gotten worse from their treatments. Even worse for her social position, the law of the land said any woman with that condition had to be declared ritually and socially unclean. Her supposed impurity was considered to be transmissible to anyone who had contact with her, therefore she was totally isolated as an outcast. Her only hope was to secretly seek out Jesus.

Amazingly, when she touched Jesus her bleeding stopped and she was healed. On the way to heal Jairus' daughter, Jesus had unknowingly healed this woman who planned on being anonymous, or did Jesus actually know? In verse 30 Jesus did know what had happened so He stopped to confront the woman, and elicit a public confession of faith. His disciples played the perfect foils (as usual) in v.31 when Jesus asked who had touched Him. They said "Thousands of people are touching you and yet you ask who touched me?" What they didn't understand was that only one woman with a pure heart and childlike faith had touched Him so that He had healed her. She perceived that there was power in just touching His cloak, but we find out that the power of God is directed to her knowingly by Jesus to glorify God and save her. In v.33-34, the woman in all awe and reverence, fell down before Him and confessed her faith in Jesus as well as explaining her illness, and how Jesus had healed her. Jesus then explained to the disciples how this healing had occurred—not through the power of the cloak, but as a result of her faith in Christ. Jesus' command to her revealed that at least two things had happened, "go in peace, and be healed of your affliction". She now had peace with God (her sins were forgiven), and she had been physically healed. She came secretly, anonymously, and feeling that her illness was caused by some sin (that was the teaching of her religion); but she left knowing that God knows her, approves of her, and had cleansed her. She left with the public spotlight on her confession of faith, and resultant new standing with God and man.

I Was Here First!

Imagine putting yourself in Jairus' place. His daughter was close to death, and every second counted. He had Jesus' attention first before this woman showed up, and delayed them. This important synagogue official had been left cooling his heels, and I can't help but wonder if he was finding it difficult to rejoice for the woman. He may have been thinking, "Doesn't Jesus know that my daughter's situation is more urgent, and doesn't He know who I am?" We find out as we read that Jesus did know and did care. In fact, the delay was all according to God's plan to heighten the drama and suspense of bringing the girl back from the dead. In verse 35, while the attention was directed to the woman who was healed, people came from Jairus' house to tell him that his daughter had died. The assumption was that death was final, nothing more could be done, and Jesus didn't need to go to the house.

"Don't be Afraid, Only Believe"

What is Christ's response to hopelessness? "Don't be afraid, just believe." The subliminal message in verse 35 was that Jesus was just a teacher, and death marks the limit of whatever he might have been able to do. This begs the question, how can faith endure in the face of death? Both the woman and Jairus would reveal that faith still trusts in the midst of hopelessness. Jesus' positive comments and their faith in leading Him on to the house will be contrasted with the laughing and scoffing of the "mourners" at the house. In first century Israel, it was customary for the synagogue to send professional mourners to the home of any important person upon a death in the family in order to put on a show of mourning and lamenting. They would wail and scream and tear their clothes, and make a great display of grieving for the departed soul. This was the scene at the house of Jairus when Jesus got there. When Jesus got there He questioned them about their behavior, "Why make a commotion? The child has not died, but is asleep." Jesus was the only one who knew that, since she had no pulse, but in His omniscience, He knew He was going to revive her, so to Him she was just "asleep". The professionals suspended their wailing activity in order to laugh at His preposterous statement. This further dramatized the contrast between faith and their doubt. When Jesus went into the child's room, He said to her, "Little girl, I say to you arise!" Immediately the girl rose and began to walk, and everyone was astounded. This was one of three times that Jesus raised dead people in His earthly ministry.

Recap

The author, Mark wrapped these two miracles together, and they interact even though the two people occupy opposite ends of the economic spectrum. Jairus was a man of importance, considered holy, head of the synagogue, and a man of means; but the woman was isolated, anonymous, broke, and banned from the synagogue. Nevertheless, when it comes to need, none of these people are different to Jesus—they are all needy. There is no barrier to receiving God's help if they will humble themselves and seek Jesus.

The woman in this story is a pictorial image of the Gospel:

1. v.25-26---The condition of the alienated sinner
2. v.27-29---The compassion of the Savior

3. v.30-34---The confession of faith

4. v.36--- The witness to others, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe."

Have you lost loved ones? Be comforted that one of these days Jesus will speak the same words "Little children, I say to you, arise!"

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