

Throughout this past month, we have been covering some examples of Jesus's miracles and teachings. Today we turn our attention to the account of Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from death, as the Evangelist Mark records it in Chapter 5 of his Gospel:

MARK 5:21–24a, 35–43. (EHV)

When Jesus had again crossed over in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him near the sea. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and repeatedly pleaded with him, "My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live." Jesus went with him... While [Jesus] was still speaking, people from the synagogue ruler's house arrived, saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore?" But when Jesus heard this report, he told the synagogue ruler, "**Don't be afraid. Only believe.**" He did not allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. They went into the house of the synagogue ruler, and Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. When he entered, he said to them, "**Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.**" They laughed at him. But after he put everyone out, he took the father of the child, her mother, and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Grasping the hand of the child, he said to her, "**Talitha, koum!**" (When translated, that means, "**Little girl, I say to you, arise!**") Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) They were completely and utterly amazed. Then he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and he told them to give her something to eat.

One of Aesop's Fables, "The Grasshopper and the Ant," tells of a carefree grasshopper who came across an ant working hard to store up food for the winter. The ant recommended that the grasshopper do the same, but the grasshopper thought that was foolish, because winter was a long way off and there was plenty of food available at the moment. When winter came, though, and the grasshopper was dying of cold and starvation and saw the ants doing just fine, he realized that he should have listened to the ant, but it was too late now.

The idea of being too late is an idea that has been feared and has been used to teach others for as long as humans have existed. Even though we have a saying, "It's never too late," which is meant to give encouragement to those who hesitate and procrastinate, the fact is that for almost everything there *is* a point beyond which it is too late.

There were people in our Gospel account who thought that that point had come and gone for Jesus. He had his chance to save the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. But now she was dead; it was too late.

When Jesus first headed out to Jairus's house, it was not yet too late. Jairus's twelve-year-old daughter was near death, but she was not yet dead. There was still time. But in the verses I skipped over, a woman who had a twelve-year bleeding problem worked her way to Jesus in the thick crowd and touched the edge of his robe. Immediately her blood discharge stopped.

But Jesus wasn't going to let her remain anonymous like that. He stopped and asked the crowd who had touched his robe. While the disciples thought the question was ridiculous

because of how many people were pressing up against him in the crowd, Jesus kept looking around. When the woman realized she wasn't going to escape Jesus's attention, she came forward trembling and told him the whole story.

The whole story! How long did that take? Mark says she had suffered much under the care of many physicians and had spent all that she had. Yet instead of getting better, she grew worse, until she touched the fringe of Jesus's robe. While the woman went from one physician to the next in her story, you can just imagine what Jairus must have been thinking. "Teacher, my daughter is dying. The clock is ticking. Is this really that important? Do you really care about my daughter?" Think of when you're on a schedule with a connecting flight and your first flight gets delayed. You keep looking at your clock and staring at the company employees behind the desk, waiting for them to do something significant, to make an announcement that it's finally time to board. "Ugh, am I going to make it?" you think. That's what Jairus must have felt like a hundred times over. "Ugh, is Jesus going to make it? Is my daughter going to make it?"

Finally, the woman's story wraps up and Jesus tells her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your suffering." But before he can even finish telling her this, people from Jairus's house arrive to inform him that his daughter is now dead and so he shouldn't bother Jesus any more. It was too late now.

But when Jesus heard the report, he turned and looked at Jairus and told him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe." And then he continued on. Jesus was acting as if it were not too late. Could it be true?

By the time Jesus arrived at Jairus's house, the mourning rituals had already begun, with flute players and people weeping and wailing loudly. When Jesus told them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping," they quickly went from mourning to laughing. The child was dead. It was too late.

But Jesus sent them all out. Then he took Peter, James, and John, as well as Jairus and his wife and went in where the dead child was lying. He bent down and took hold of her limp and lifeless hand and addressed her as if he were merely waking her up from an afternoon nap: "*Talitha, koum!* Little girl, I say to you, get up!"

Jairus and his wife must have gasped as their little girl's eyes instantly opened and her lungs instantly began to heave again, and she immediately got out of the bed and began to walk around. Everyone was so astonished that Jesus had to remind them to give her something to eat.

It wasn't too late. Not for Jesus.

In fact, far from being late, Jesus was right on time. His timing was perfect for Jairus. Jesus tested and strengthened his faith, and he also taught Jairus about prayer, giving Jairus something better than he had asked for.

His timing was perfect for Jairus's wife. We can only imagine what she was thinking when her husband headed out to find Jesus when their daughter was so close to death. But Jesus's timing strengthens her faith and her marriage.

His timing was perfect for the woman with the bleeding problem. She not only had her faith in Jesus strengthened by experiencing Jesus's power over illness, even an illness that no other physician knew how to heal, but also grew in her ability to share her faith with others boldly.

His timing was perfect for Jairus's daughter. She had gasped her final painful breaths and closed her eyes in death. But the next thing she knew, she was opening them to the sound of Jesus's voice and the sight of his kind face, with her hand firmly enclosed in her Savior's. We can only imagine how bravely she faced death the second time around, and how that must have affected and strengthened those around her.

And Jesus's timing was perfect for Peter, James, and John, and thus also for us and all who hear this account today. Jesus showed them the death-defying and death-destroying power of his word and the effect of the ministry of his word. And those three told the other apostles about Jesus's power over death. Those apostles told others. Fast forward, and now we are hearing about it from Mark today.

As a result we, too, know that it's not too late for Jesus and that his timing is always perfect, even when, especially when, we're dealing with death. We not only have the story of Jairus's daughter; we also have the story of Jesus's own death and resurrection to confirm for certain that death is only a sleep for Jesus. In Jairus's daughter we have a picture of the help that we and all those who die will receive when we die believing in Jesus. We will close our eyes in death, just like we do when falling asleep. And the next thing we know, we will hear the sound of Jesus's voice: "*Koum!* It's time to wake up." And even though our bodies will have returned to dust and it will look like it's much too late for Jesus to say such a thing to us, we'll open our eyes, and one of Jesus's angels will be holding our hand, helping us up to Jesus in heaven on the Last Day.

Don't be afraid; only believe in Jesus. Believe that he has forgiveness and salvation and eternal life for you, even when death arrives. He is the Lord of life and death. He is our eternal Savior. Amen.