

RESTORES

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

Give me one good reason why everyone in the world is not a Christian. The various answers we might suggest will eventually come back to a common explanation of “failure to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and fulfilled God’s plan of salvation.” If we were to ask those who do not believe what it would take to change their way of thinking, they would likely say that they need proof that Jesus was the Messiah.

In our study of the account of the ministry life of Jesus recorded by Mark we find mounting evidence that provides “the proof” that authenticates Who Jesus is. This authentication is based on evidences seen and heard by multiple witnesses (one of the primary responsibilities of the disciples) who could attest to the validity of the reported miraculous events. The events presented by Mark’s gospel are not necessarily in the chronological order in which they happened but seem to follow an increasing degree of divine power over the ills and ailments that plague our human existence in a fallen world.

The authentication began with an announcement from Heaven declaring the identity of Jesus as God’s Son. Then the evidential proofs to back up that declaration followed. The second proof is one that we often overlook and that is the teaching of Jesus. It was said by those who heard Him that He taught as “one having authority” and not as the “teachers of the Law.” Another validating evidence was shown by Jesus’ authority and power to “drive out evil spirits.” Physical healing was demonstrated and ranged from curing a routine fever to healing a leper. In one of the healing situations Jesus gave personal testimony of His true identity by declaring that the sins of a paralytic man were forgiven and proof of that immediately followed in that the man was healed. People believed that forgiveness of sins was a prerogative of God and, without making an overt verbal claim to be God, Jesus demonstrated that He was (in fact) God. Coincidental to the healing of the paralytic man, Jesus gave proof that He knew what people were thinking.

Even those who were not favorably disposed toward Jesus gave testimony that “supernatural” things were happening and that Jesus was not just another teacher. These religious leaders attributed the “supernatural” power to the devil rather than to God. Added to that realization of strange and wonderful things happening was the testimony of Jesus’ physical family members who misinterpreted the authenticating miracles as evidence that Jesus was having mental problems.

Mark included specific inspired teaching parables that Jesus used to help people understand the nature of the Kingdom of God that He was declaring and to explain what was going in the resistance of some people to His ministry. These parables (of which we are familiar) included the parable of the sower and soils which was an explanation of the responses of various people to His ministry that was unfolding at that time. The parable of the seed gave insight into how God was and is at work in taking a planted seed (germ of an idea) related to His Kingdom that is received by faith and growing that to produce more seeds that cause the Kingdom to grow as these are sown. The parable of the mustard seed was to encourage His follower to see that a small beginning can have a far-reaching influence that may look completely different from the initial seed or idea. (See also, Zachariah 4:10.)

The message from Mark then turned from inspired teaching, healing, and driving out an evil spirit to show that Jesus had power over the forces of nature such as speaking to a storm at sea and calming the wind. Further proof of the authority and power of Jesus was given in the

account of healing of the Gadarene man with multiple unclean spirits that responded to the commands of Jesus. As we can see, there were growing or increasing demonstrations of the significance of the events in Jesus' ministry. We noted the increase in the complexity of healing from a fever to leprosy, there was healing of a withered hand to healing a person who was totally paralyzed, and then deliverance from one evil spirit to a "legion" of unclean spirits. And just for good measure, we often say that "everyone talks about the weather but no one can do anything about it," and Mark shows us that Jesus really can do something about the weather.

The final two accounts that Mark recorded in this series of authenticating proofs are found in chapter five and these are the well-known miracles of the woman who touched the hem of His robe and was healed and that was immediately followed by the restoration to life of the daughter of Jairus. The incident of the woman with the issue of blood showed that the power Jesus had was such that it was not even necessary for Him to speak to the problem or to deliberately reach out and touch a person for that power to be effective. It could be accessed simply by faith. The raising of the daughter of Jairus showed that the ultimate enemy of death was also subject to the Lord of Life.

Willing – 5:21-24

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. ²² One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet ²³ and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." ²⁴ And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him. Mark 5:21–24 (NASB95)

Apparently, Jesus had just returned from the area where the Gadarene demoniac had been saved and immediately people came to Him for various reasons. Many were curious, others were looking for evidence to criticize what Jesus was doing and others were looking for help. Some of these were desperate and bordering on hopelessness in their world. At least two of those in the crowd saw a ray of hope in Jesus.

What comes to mind when you hear the word hopeless? Some people might think of some dreaded disease such as AIDS or cancer, which strikes fear in most people. It could be bankruptcy or a loved one going to prison. Others may think of world situations such as starvation in some remote part of the world or the never-ending fighting in the Middle East.

We come face to face with many difficult circumstances every day and there may be a tendency to think that some of these difficulties are hopeless situations. However, the worst thing that we can do is to give up and abandon hope. In cases where we can only see "hopelessness" it is likely that we have failed to factor in what God can do. Jesus ran into many situations in His ministry that could have been classified as hopeless and yet He was able to bring triumph and victory out of such things.

When a parent has a sick child and that sickness will not respond to treatment, then there seems to be an overwhelming sense of helplessness because we can't do anything to help. When such a sickness progresses to the point that it appears that death is the only outcome, then hopelessness takes over. There are likely to be many other feelings such as anger and guilt that a parent feels in such a situation.

Jairus was a leader in his community and was likely to have been a person who could have afforded a physician and whatever medicines were available then and none of these could help his daughter's condition. Humanly speaking, this was a hopeless situation. But Jesus was in that area and Jairus had refused to abandon hope. He had heard about the miraculous healing Jesus was doing and this news gave him hope that some help could be found. Jairus realized that

unless Jesus could or would help that all hope was gone. It was a desperate situation. We see his desperation as he fell down before Jesus begging Him to come to his house.

The level of desperation was so deep that Jairus approached Jesus for help even though he was undoubtedly aware that those in the Jewish religious hierarchy of which he was associated had claimed that Jesus was empowered by the devil. There was a real possibility that those in high positions in the religious community would remove Jairus from his leadership role in the local synagogue.

In the midst of this desperate situation in which Jairus thought that time was critical something happened to delay the healing touch of Jesus needed by his twelve-year-old daughter whom he had enjoyed as part of his life. The delay was caused by a much older woman who had endured suffering for this same twelve-year period of time in her life. Another contrast was that Jairus was a person of material means or wealth and the woman had nothing left after having spent everything for medical procedures that had failed to cure her problem. Jairus was direct and demonstrated his faith by coming boldly to Jesus and demonstrated his humility by falling down before Jesus pleading for Him to come and touch his daughter. The nameless woman was indirect and demonstrated her faith by cautiously working her way through the crowd so she could come close enough to reach out and in her humility to secretly touch the edge of his robe.

While both these cases showed different approaches, we see three points of commonality. Both took initiative, both had faith, and both showed humility.

This interruption was a test of faith for Jairus, but it was mainly a test of his character. We can barely imagine the anxiety that this delay must have produced in Jairus' heart. A lesser person may have thought this delay was caused by someone who was not an important person in the community and that since she had her condition for twelve years that she could have at least waited until Jesus had touched his daughter to heal her. There was no indication that Jairus made any protest because of the delay.

Undeterred – 5:35-40

³⁵ While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?” ³⁶ But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.” ³⁷ And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹ And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” ⁴⁰ They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was. Mark 5:35-40 (NASB95)

Sometimes the very things we fear the most are exactly what God allows to come into our lives so that His power and greatness can have the maximum impact. When that happens, this becomes a critical time in our faith walk because we may tell ourselves or someone else will tell us that “reaching out to God and putting our trust in Him did not work.” Do such thoughts cause us to grow closer to God or to weaken our faith in Him?

Instead of listening to what we may be telling ourselves or listening to the “word of the world of unbelief” which can quench our faith, we need to hear the voice that says “Fear not, only believe” so that our hope and faith are rekindled. There is a danger of latching onto preconceived ideas of how everything is going to happen and then interpreting the unfolding events that actually do happen in the context of those preconceived ideas. This, of course, leads to erroneous thinking and even bad doctrine that can cause us to miss the greater blessings that God intended to give us from the start. Jairus, instead, simply relied on the words of Jesus to hold on to the faith he had before the situation became what would seem to be totally hopeless.

In that moment, Jairus' faith grew from believing that Jesus could heal his daughter to believing that Jesus could restore life to his daughter. It is such trying times and circumstances that give opportunities for our faith to grow and become stronger.

As Jesus arrived at the home, He encountered skeptics that would not believe beyond their own experience. Experience would tell us that death is final and that mourning our loss is the only option we have. The presence of the professional mourners was seen as proof that the daughter was dead beyond any doubt. This sure conviction of the people at the home explains their ridicule of the words of Jesus that the young girl was just asleep rather than dead.

The difference in the terms used by the people and the words used by Jesus gives us some insight into how death is viewed by God compared to how we, in our humanity, view it. This new view of death would become the norm for those who were followers of Christ after the Resurrection. Apart from Christ, we tend to focus on the physical aspects of life and Jesus was showing us by the words He used and by what He taught that we need to refocus on the spiritual realities and set our priorities there and the physical things will be taken care of. He stated this at another time in the familiar quote "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

Notice that before proceeding Jesus separated Himself from those that were skeptics. Skeptics are a distraction and can cause us to be "double minded" about what the Lord tells us. We might wonder how skepticism impacts the effectiveness of church ministries today.

After winnowing the witnesses to the parents of the child and to His three closest disciples, Jesus proceeded to answer the prayer of faith of Jairus which was to touch his daughter so she would be well and live.

Able – 5:41-43

⁴¹ Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). ⁴² Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. ⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that something should be given her to eat. Mark 5:41-43 (NASB95)

Having separated those that would not believe from those that would, he then did the impossible from the standpoint of human efforts. He called the dead back to life. We can see that Jesus did not have a prescribed method he always used when people were healed or delivered. Sometimes He laid his hands on the person, at other times he simply spoke to the situation, and in this case he did both. In the case of the woman who touched His robe, He did neither.

As we mentioned earlier, these miracles related by Mark authenticated that Jesus is the Messiah and, in addition to the witness of the three disciples, there were two additional witnesses in the mother and father of the girl who had been restored to life. One additional witness was the child herself who had experienced coming back to life. Her very life was a witness to the saving (healing, restoring, delivering) power of Jesus. We could make the argument that such should be true of our lives. The fact that Jesus admonished them to not tell others what had happened is likely related to "timing concerns" regarding when the full revelation of Himself to the Jews needed to happen. Jesus was already drawing huge crowds and the additional publicity was not needed that early in His earthly ministry.

We can note the similarity of this restoration to life with that of Lazarus of Bethany which happened much later in His ministry. In both cases there was a delay in Jesus responding to the requests to heal and then the greater work than healing that followed. In both instances, Jesus calmly gave the astonished witnesses some practical advice. In the case of Lazarus, the

advice it was to cut off the grave clothes and set him free and in the case of the young girl, the practical advice was to give her something to eat to nourish her.

We could argue that when we experience new life in Christ we need to realize that we have been set free from the cords that bind us and that we need nourishment for the new life that is in us.

If Jesus can restore and bring hope to such hopeless situations as we see here, then He can certainly handle the problems that we face day in and day out. Trust Him!