

**Message**  
**June 27-28, 2009**  
**Lamentations 3:22-33; Mark 5:21-43**  
**What drives us? Faith or Fear?**  
**Hillary T. West**

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus tells us early on, that the kingdom of God is here. “Time’s up!” Jesus says, “change your life and believe”. In today’s message lives are changed, and belief is strengthened through the mighty acts of God’s saving power, through miracles. The miracles of Jesus are God’s way of showing us kingdom living, God’s life for us. Miracles are God’s not ours, revealing to us how God wants things to be; how the kingdom is. We don’t always see this miracle of kingdom living. But, Jesus promises, especially in today’s story, that when we choose faith over fear, we’ll know the love and mercy of God’s kingdom.

Healing miracles, follow a three step formula. First, a problem is presented. Now, we all know this scenario. We’re suffering or we know someone who’s suffering. There’s a frightening illness, or a desperate condition. The situation is horrific; and usually impacting the community more than we realize. The second step to miracles of healing is the solution; often through touch; touching the ears, washing the eyes; taking the hand. The solution restores a fearful, lost life to wholeness and meaning. Finally, the third characteristic of a healing miracle is proof or confirmation of the healing. The healed get up and walk; prepare and eat a meal; they see, they speak, they rejoice.

So, this is the theological formula for miracles. And, we may think that if we go through all the steps that we can make miracles happen and all that is wrong will be made right. But, that’s just not how it works, is it? Life isn’t that orderly. Life’s messy and often unexplainable. And, miracles, they’re God’s doing, not ours. Our doing is to trust in how God works wonders in our lives. Our job is to have faith, Jesus says; about living with the belief that the abundant love of Jesus Christ has the power to rule and run our lives; about deciding that living with faith in Jesus Christ far exceeds the brokenness of living in fear.

Now, when we decide to live with faith, rather than fear, several things happen. One is, we can trust in Jesus showing up. He’s there for us. In fact, we’re the most important item on his agenda. So, part one of the miracle formula is presented and Jesus shows up. Today, Jesus is once again crossing the Sea of Galilee from the Gentile territory and landing on the west side, on Jewish soil. An official of the synagogue named Jairus comes to meet Jesus. Now, Jairus is a man of some stature, he’s the president of the synagogue. In other words, Jairus is the administrative head. He secures all the worship leaders, the altar guild, the ushers, the people in the technology booth. He gets the bulletins printed, oversees the flower guild. He trains and assigns the chalice bearers and readers. He assigns prayer partners, straightens the chairs, gets the floors swept and polished, makes certain the nursery is covered and children’s chapel is well led. He’s probably got his hand in the music ministry as well. Jairus has proven that he’s responsible, reliable, and dependable. He’s one of those guys you can count on to do

what is just and right. We need Jairus. He's highly regarded and respected by all. Jairus has let his fear lead him too long. His daughter is deathly ill and he's desperate for her to be healed. And, all of us know, that when our children are suffering, there's absolutely nothing we won't do to find relief for our child. So it is with Jairus. He chooses faith. Faith demands many things of us. Stepping over his pride, his dignity and his prejudices, he takes a bold leap, discards his fears, and his narrow mindedness against this mysterious healer, Jesus, who doesn't play by the rules of the synagogue. Falling at the feet of Jesus, Jairus pleads with him to save his most precious child.

Now, we don't know what Jesus was doing before Jairus shows up. But, considering the size of the crowd, my guess is he's heavily involved in preaching, teaching and healing. And yet, Jesus has time for Jairus. Jairus says, "come" and Jesus goes with him, just like that, no questions asked; no checking his schedule on his Blackberry; he just comes. A desperate, faithful soul bows down before him, begging for his mercy, and Jesus goes where he's needed. Along the way, they're interrupted. Don't be misled by interruptions. It's in the interruptions where Jesus shows up. The woman, has been hemorrhaging for 12 years. Doctors have failed to bring her relief. Medical expenses have left her bankrupt and to top it all off, she's getting worse; the diagnosis is bleak. Faith requires action. She takes the initiative and pushing through the crowd, like the dignified synagogue leader, casting aside all protocol, she falls at the feet of Jesus.

Part two of the miracle, a solution is a reach away. Jesus' healing power spills out onto the woman as she touches the tip of his robe. Jesus deflects the attention. Immediately, in the crowd, he realizes his power is drained and looks around to learn the identity of this faithful soul. We never know the name of the hemorrhaging woman, only that the miracle of Jesus in her life restores her to a changed life, made new, she now lives with hope and purpose. Now, for Jairus, the interruption must be unbearable. His daughter's at death's door. Yet, we don't hear a peep out of him. Waiting, Jairus witnesses Jesus' miraculous healing. Maybe just being in the presence of Jesus restores and renews, issuing patience and endurance.

And, the solution for Jairus and his daughter? His friends come to tell him, it's too late. Don't bother Jesus any more. His daughter has died.

What?! Wait a minute. Was he not faithful enough? Did he not pray enough? Did he ask for the wrong kind of healing?

Jesus, issues the imperative, "don't be afraid, have faith". The shortest sermon ever preached and the most powerful statement in the whole story: "don't be afraid, trust in me, keep on believing, miracles happen."

Dismissing the crowd, and taking his closest, James, John and Peter, he goes to Jairus' house. Everyone has gathered. Helping Hands has already arrived with the casseroles. People hover, whispering back and forth to one another, not quite certain what to do, but meaning well. And, they have no faith in Jesus' power in their lives. In fact, they're well into the mourning and grieving; so much so that they're gossiping and questioning Jesus' credibility. After all, the little girl is dead. Let's get on with it. What can he do? Jesus, dismissing the criticism, takes mom and dad, and his faithful three and go about his

mission. Placing the daughter's hand in his, he pulls her to him and gives the healing command, "Little girl, I tell you to get up!" At once the kingdom breaks through, the girl is up and walking, looking for something to eat. That's the miracle we all pray for isn't it? That the hopeless and impossible will come to life and wholeness; that all will be well; for Jairus and his daughter, that's exactly what happens. So, what about when it *doesn't* happen that way? Is it because we don't have enough faith? That's not what Jesus says. He's not saying "have *more* faith." He's saying, "it's ok, I'm with you, trust in me, believe in me. This is my miracle making, not yours. Trust in the generosity of my love for you, it will make you rich in everything."

So the funky formula for miracles continues. There's a third part to miracles. Remember, first the problem is presented, second is the solution and third, we want proof. So, Jesus gives us proof. The woman, empowered by Jesus' healing presence in her life, finds her voice and once again, falling at his feet, she speaks, confessing all. Jesus never dismisses or turns away. Instead, he is fully present to hear this courageous woman. We don't know what she says, except that she speaks truth. Maybe she's finally realizing that trusting in Jesus, surrendering is the only way to go. With his blessing, Jesus calls her, "daughter," and reclaims her, restoring her to the community, those who also live with faith in the healing abundance of Jesus' love. Made new, this faithful child of God, healed, is commanded to go, go out into the world free to be all that God intends her to be; and she goes with peace in her heart and soul that she is saved by Jesus Christ.

For Jairus' daughter, proof is in the making. We know little of Jairus' daughter, of her faith, even if she has faith. But, it must be enough for Jesus' healing power. The small group of witnesses are astonished amazed at this miracle making Jesus who brings us out of death into life; who breaths new hope, new life into us with this promise of transformed lives.

How do we want to live? In faith or fear? Fear alienates, angers and isolates. Faith bravely emboldens, building us as courageous warriors who believe in God's power to drive home his kingdom. Faith conquers shame. According to ancient Judaic Law, this hemorrhaging woman may well be unclean. She has had a flow of blood for an inordinate amount of time, 12 years. Considered impure, and unclean, society shuns her. In her seclusion, though, Jesus bleeds through. She's learned of his healing power. Maybe she's heard about his rebellious acts that conquer the "politics of purity" (Marcus Borg). He defies the law when he touches the leper, heals on the Sabbath, takes the bodily fluid of his spit to restore sight, fails to chastise his disciples when they eat with unwashed hands, dines with sinners, and drives out a legion of evil from the demoniac into a herd of pigs. And all this followed by a woman with a continuous flow of blood touching Jesus, who then, grabs the hand of a dead child, according to the law, rendering him unclean. Jesus, he conquers rules and regulations that alienate, and separate, restoring the forgotten, and giving hope to the desperate bringing healing and wholeness.

Jesus celebrates our faith. He rejoices in our trust in his power, here and now. When we reach out, he too reaches, making himself known, embracing our extended hand, holding

us up, filling us with his Spirit. He gives thanks that we come before him, falling at his feet, anxious to hear his words, “don’t be afraid, only, just have faith”.

Faith puts us in the presence of the holy. Living in the presence of the holy is about living in the abundance of God’s loving kingdom. This story of Jairus’ daughter and the woman reveals to us how God’s kingdom looks as it breaks through our reality. Kingdom living is not about us telling God how the kingdom should look. Instead kingdom living is about believing in God’s constant love for us; a love so great, so powerful and healing that it firmly comes in the midst of all our business. Our job is to live and grow kingdom lives, lives for God’s business, not ours.

So, faith or fear, how do we want to go? Choose faith. So, we choose faith because we really don’t have control. Life dictates too many hurts and pains and bumps that don’t make sense. Be bold. Choosing faith means we take the initiative. We read our Bible and say our prayers, every day so we can grow in our knowledge and love of Jesus. Choosing faith means we want to see Jesus’ hand extended in all that we do. So, we reach out, we care for others and look for ways to spend our time with other faithful people as faithful servants. We’ll be astonished at how Jesus shows up.

Choosing faith means we live miracle lives. Lives rich with the generosity of Jesus’ love. We don’t make miracles happen. Miracles are God’s job, not ours. Our job is to trust in how God’s saving power works in our lives. So, we keep praying for miracles and they come, in oh so many ways. Jesus doesn’t ask us for deeper faith. He simply says, have faith, believe in the boundless love and mercy I have for you. It knows no limits. Let’s do it. Be generous in our faith. We’ll be astonished.