



Things to Ponder

- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

Homily – Mark 5:21-43

Introduction: Nothing is Beyond Hope!

This weekend's Gospel from Mark reports two stories of healing. One story tells us about a father's great love for his dying daughter. The other story tells us about a desperate woman who risks much as she seeks healing from Jesus. In each story, the request for healing is itself a courageous act of faith. *When have you felt helpless, in despair, and desperate for a healing? Identify that experience.*

In the first story, Jairus is described as a synagogue leader – a man of considerable standing in the Jewish community. Distraught over his daughter's poor health, he approaches Jesus and asks him to heal her. As Jesus is leaving with Jairus, Mark oddly interrupts the narrative of this first story to tell a second story of a menstruating woman – then returns to the first story after the hemorrhaging woman is healed. This structure of interlocking stories is a device that Mark uses for a purpose in this Gospel: to provide a narrative reason for Jesus' delay in going to see the little girl; and to intertwine the stories – in both cases a woman (one old and suffering for 12 years; another young and only 12 years old) – both are brought back from the brink of death. Mark is obviously a skilled writer in making these connections. (New Collegeville Bible Commentary)

The story of the hemorrhaging woman is striking for it shows Jesus dealing openly and compassionately with a female condition that was taboo. For menstruating women were considered ritually unclean and excluded from Temple gatherings. Yet she somehow summons up her courage to touch Jesus' cloak and is immediately healed. And Jesus responds by acknowledging her as a model of faith and sends her away in peace. This woman has been transformed by Jesus from someone who was ostracized as "unclean" into a model of faith. In curing her, Jesus restores her both to herself and to her religious community. He brings her back to life!

At this point of the Gospel, we can only imagine Jairus's impatience with Jesus; his daughter is dying and Jesus hasn't helped him yet. As if to build a sense of urgency, messengers suddenly arrive and confirm Jairus's worst fear: his beloved daughter has died. Jesus curiously ignores their message and reassures Jairus. When they arrive at Jairus's home, Jesus enters the room of the dead girl, takes her by the hand, and instructs her to arise. "Little girl, I say to you arise!" Jairus's faith in Jesus has not been in vain. His daughter is

restored to life. *When have you experienced God's amazing power in your life?*

Mark shares this narrative of the little girl so as to share that this is a story of resurrection – one that anticipates Jesus' own. Mark uses the same word here for "rise" that he uses for Jesus' resurrection. And Mark also uses key words to describe the reaction of those who witnessed her coming back to life. What is translated here as "They were utterly astounded" echoes the experience of the women at Jesus' empty tomb! *When have you been astounded? Speechless? Name the experience.*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of Mark 5:21-43*.

What word or words caught your attention? What in this passage comforted/challenged you?

Further Reflections and Questions:

No situation in life is beyond hope for God. *Can I recall any event in my past life that at the time seemed so awful that I could not believe any good could come of it – but in which now, looking back, I can see the life-giving action of God?*

Two people with daring and initiative break through physical, social, and religious boundaries. They want to experience the power of Jesus' healing touch. Crossing the barriers and taboos of his day, Jesus talks to a woman and touches a corpse. *When have you crossed a barrier or taboo? Name it.*

Jairus had to wait for his daughter's healing. *The healing came at "God's time." What about us?*

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