

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost; June 30, 2024
+ Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43 +
"Bother Jesus"

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 he 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 people 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.

I did everything I was supposed to do with this boy. I had him baptized, even though my husband wasn't wild about it. I sang "Jesus Loves Me" to him when he was little, taught him to pray, told him bedtime stories about Noah and Moses and David. I took him to Sunday School and Catechism. I tried. God knows I tried. And look at this child. Out of control. My control, at least. Definitely out of Jesus' control. What good did it all do? And what am I supposed to do now? Keep doing the same things and expect different results? Why bother anymore?

I look around this church and it almost makes me want to cry. Fifty years ago this place was packed. The way it looked back in the day! Back then, people of all ages sat up straight in a shiny sanctuary surrounded by spotless grounds. The way it sounded back then! People singing their hearts out, so many voices joining to confess the Faith, to give the first and best offerings. And look at this place now. Falling down around our ears. Just a few gray heads left, and that stubborn man in the chancel keeps saying the same things: Word and sacrament, Word and sacrament, Word and sacrament. The Spirit will work through the gospel in Word and sacrament to produce faith in his time. How's that working out for us? Why bother anymore?

I remember what she said to me at the funeral. My dear daughter. I love her so much, and she made me feel better. "Dad," she said, "you'll see her again at Jesus' side. We know she's in glory. And we'll be here for you, dad. I'll call every night. Anything you need, you know me and Kyle will be on the road. And you've got a lot of friends, here, dad, and a family at this church. It'll be alright, dad. Our Savior will never leave you." She was right about everything. But she doesn't totally understand. She doesn't know what it's like

to have to be alone so late in life, to have to say goodbye, even when you know you'll see her again. It's so hard. Why can't I just go and be with her now? Why bother with this anymore?

Those stories and true in a sense; here's one that's true in every sense. There is man named Jairus. He is a real man who lives in history. I point this out only because his faith is so spectacular that we might assign the story to the fiction section. But it's real! He has an amazing faith in Jesus. Jairus is a real human being with a faith in Jesus so strong that it takes him away from the side of his dying daughter, a daughter so close to death that professional mourners have already gathered in Jairus' home. He goes to Jesus in person, even though he could just as easily send a messenger! Imagine this faith so strong that it goes to Jesus in person when it is apparently already too late, and he will likely miss that chance to say one last goodbye to his girl!

Jairus bothers Jesus. And does he ever! **When [Jairus] 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."** Some accuse Jairus' faith of weakness for thinking Jesus needs to be there in person and physically place hands on his daughter to heal her. What an ugly accusation! Why not assume the best of him? He has heard of the Messiah's power to heal, and heard that Jesus' normal method is to meet people in person and touch them to heal him. He is only bothering Jesus to do what he knows Jesus can do: come and touch, heal and save.

Jesus goes with him. Already we see that when Jesus is bothered, he pays it off. But what happens next! In your bulletin there is an ellipse. As if what comes next is not so important. It is! Because now Jesus displays love and power without limit. There is woman suffering from chronic bleeding that has robbed her not only of her health, but also her money and her hope. She also bothers Jesus. But she tries to do it without bothering. She simply presses in with the rest of the crowd and touches his robe, and immediately she is healed. But clearly, even though she didn't want to bother him, she did! Jesus asks, "Who did that?" His disciples say, "How could we know?" Jesus asks again, and the healed woman comes forward to hear Jesus say, **"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your suffering."** She too has great faith, faith that believes the power and love of Jesus will help, even without eye contact and touching. She is right to believe, right to bother him, and receives his rescue.

So now Jairus knows Jesus' love even goes that far, and so does his power. Imagine how eager he is to get Jesus into his house and heal his daughter! And if he doesn't need to look her in the eye, and touch her, maybe he could even heal her from here! Maybe his love and power are even that big...**While [Jesus] was still speaking, people from the synagogue ruler's house arrived, saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore?"** And there it is. It is worth it to bother Jesus while a girl is still breathing. It is worth it to bother him to heal chronic bleeding. His love and power are enough to heal, even without sight and touch. But death is something else. Death is too much, even for Jesus. Even his power and love cannot do anything for that.

But when Jesus heard the report, he told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid. Only believe." Have no fear. Believe. This is Jesus' response to voices that say not to bother with him. This is our Savior's answer to any thought that his power and love have any limit, that they do not outstretch even death itself. Jesus speaks to drive out fear and to strengthen faith.

When Jesus enters the house, he works again to drive out unbelief and foster faith. He does it with his words to the mourners: **"Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but**

sleeping.” Don’t be afraid. I have control over physical death. In me it is only sleep. Believe it. But they don’t. And Jesus responds by sending them out. Out, unbelief! Out, fear! Jesus is for calm, confident faith that his power and love have no limits.

Only the calm and faithful follow Jesus into the girl’s room. And here again he speaks words of faith, for faith: **“Talitha, koum!”** And now they see the infinite reach of his love and power: **Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around.** This is why it is worth it to bother Jesus, no matter how lost the cause the appears. It is never too late, never too far for his love and power to deliver you. And see how thorough this love is: “The girl has been through a lot. Make sure to feed her.”

Everything Jesus says and does in this story feeds a calm faith that knows, “Jesus can do anything, anytime. And he has the power of God to do it. It is always the right time to go to him, to lean on him, to believe that he will help.” But maybe he says one thing that does not quite seem to line up: **Then he gave them strict order to let anyone know about this...** Why not? It is too early for Jesus to make waves that will reach all the way down to the religious bigwigs in Jerusalem. They will become aware of him in time, feel threatened by him in time, hate him in time, and kill him in time. But this is not the time. Not yet.

It will happen on the Father’s time, which has not yet arrived. But the time will come. The time will come for him to show not just his disciples and an ill woman and the family of Jairus, but to show the whole world his limitless love and power. He will go, when it’s the Father’s time, to say it with words: **“This is my body; this is my blood, for you.” “I lay down my life for my friends.” “It is finished.”** With these words Jesus speaks his love to us – love so high and deep and wide that it not only goes into crowds and homes to heal, but goes to the cross to heal the world of sin. These words tell us: **“Don’t be afraid. Only believe.”** Do not be afraid of the world’s fury; I have overcome the world. Do not fear your sin’s punishment; I have taken it for you. Do not fear the devil; I have crushed his head. Christ has told us by his words and actions: Don’t be afraid. Believe in me.

And, when the Father’s time is right, he will show us his power. It is power not only to raise a dead girl, but to raise himself. He rises on Easter to break death not for one girl for a few years, but for all believers for eternity.

Whenever unbelieving voices say, “Don’t bother,” whenever they scoff at Jesus’ power and love, whenever they want to restrict his love and power, Jesus speaks and Jesus acts. Every word, every action says, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.”

It is the voice of unbelief that tells the mother of the wandering son, the member of the struggling congregation, the old widower, to give up on Jesus’ power and love. It is easy to look at others and accuse them of this: those faithless messengers from Jairus’ home, those mocking mourners. But we all have that voice inside of us: Don’t bother with Jesus. It’s too much, even for him. This is beyond hope, even for him. Yes, it comes from others. But it comes from us, too. And when it does, it’s nothing but blasphemy. That Jesus’ love could ever falter! That there could be anything that is too much for his power to overcome!

No, listen to your Savior! Watch him! He says it all and does it all to drive that doubt and fear out of our souls and to nurture the still, strong faith that knows: It is always worth going to Jesus, no matter the situation. His love leads him to die for my life in heaven. His power rolls the stone away from his tomb and mine, too. I will not be afraid. I will believe. And my sturdy faith, strengthened in his words and deeds, will bother.

He loves it when we go to him. Bother from believers is beautiful to him. The woman who touches his cloak falls down in front of him when he calls her out. But he does not speak to her in anger. He only speaks more words to strengthen her. He loves the bother. He goes with Jairus when he bothers him. He wants to touch the girl's hand and he rejoices to say, ***"Talitha koum!"***

Not only does Jesus cherish our bothers, he helps us immediately. Luke carefully records the word **immediately** for both the healing and the resurrection. He helps always, immediately, and perfectly. Will it be the help the Christian has in mind? Will the son come to his senses and return to his Savior and a God-pleasing life? Will the congregation be packed and vibrant again? Will the widow find purpose and satisfaction in prayer and loving his neighbor, so that his grief relaxes?

Not if they don't bother Jesus. We do not have because we do not ask. Listen to what Jesus says to you! **"Take heart! Your sins are forgiven!" "I am the resurrection and the life." "This is my body; this is my blood, for you."** Watch what he does for you, how he dies and rises, how he loves you so much that he still comes to you under bread and wine to forgive you. And for Jesus' sake: bother him. His love and power for you are infinite.

They are so thorough, in fact, that even if he does not remove your trouble, he will still be helping you perfectly and immediately. He will give you the help that is best, even that help is to let your problem linger so that your eyes and ears stay fixed on his works and words of love. Whatever help he knows is best for you, you will have immediately.

Dear Jesus, take away our fear. Give us quiet, confident faith. Help us listen as you speak your love. Help us watch as you show us your power. And may we always bother you, whose help will be perfect. Amen.