

# *“One Last Chance”*

**Mark 5:21-43**

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From the Pulpit

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# “One Last Chance”

Mark 5:21-43

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Prayer for Illumination: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our Salvation. Amen.

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Life Happens in the interruptions.

- You're teaching class online when your cat decides to cough up a hairball on the carpet beside you.
- You're leading a committee meeting when your spouse walks past in their underwear not knowing that you are on ZOOM.
- Your child starts to ask where babies come from at the checkout line at the grocery store.

Life happens in the interruptions

OR:

- The emergency phone call in the middle of the night
- The safe word your teen texts you because she feels unsafe at a party.
- The routine appointment that leads to the three words you don't want to hear, “you have cancer.”

Life happens in the interruptions.

When we encounter Jesus in our text this morning, he is still on the move. You could say Jesus has his share of interruptions. Even the disciples interrupt Jesus when they get scared out at sea. For the past few Sundays the gospel writer of Mark shares stories of Jesus' ministry; important stories about who Jesus is, who is a part of his family and who comes to Jesus for healing.

Jesus and the disciples have returned from their journey across the sea of Galilee to a foreign land. Now back in Jewish territory, Jesus is met with crowds rushing to see him again.

Immediately he is encountered by one of the Synagogue Leaders, Jairus, whom everyone knows. Jairus is out of time. His daughter is deathly ill and he needs Jesus.

Jairus is desperate. He comes to Jesus for help. He's a leader; he's been trained to be competent, to get things done; to keep it all together. But his little daughter is sick; really sick, deathly sick. He is a leader of those who are skeptical of Jesus and his healing, but when his back is against the wall, when he is anxious about his own daughter's well being---he needs Jesus, despite what others may think or believe.

Jairus runs to Jesus. Jairus finds Jesus and throws himself at his feet. Jairus begs Jesus to come, heal his daughter. Parental love leaves him utterly vulnerable. "Jesus, come now! I'll escort you personally, hurry! Let's get ahead of this crowd." They set out together toward the house. Every step takes them closer to the little girl. Jairus' mind races, "I've found him just in time – my daughter has a chance. He'll touch her soon. She has a chance." Jairus and Jesus stride with purpose, side by side. Disciples scramble to keep up.

Suddenly Jesus stops. He turns around in the crowd. There are so many people pressing in on Jesus, it's hard for him to see what happens next.

A woman comes up behind Jesus in the crowd and touches his cloak. Jesus stops and turns. He asks, "Who touched my clothes?"

Life happens in the interruptions.

This woman has been suffering for a long time. She has been hemorrhaging for twelve years.

She has been to every medical facility, to every physician. She waited days in line at the clinic. Probably turned away time after time.

She's endured so much. She's spent all she had paying the bills that unsuccessful treatment left her. She was no better; rather, she grew worse. But she heard about Jesus.

She is desperate.

She interrupts Jesus, catching him by surprise.

Her illness, her struggles.... her courage.

If she can just get close enough, on the ground, pressed in from the crowd to get close enough to Jesus — if she can reach far enough in, she might be able to reach Jesus.

This feels like One Last Chance. In an act of utter desperation, she thinks, "If I just touch his cloak, I could be made well."

In this story, an utter act of desperation is an act of faith.

This time, finally — It results in her healing.<sup>1</sup>

Life happens in the interruptions.

Interruptions are the very nature of ministry.

Jesus stops. Life interrupted, not because he felt the tug upon his cloak, rather, he felt the power go out of him.

She comes forward, trembling, sharing the whole truth about her life and her condition and her desire to be made whole.

Jesus brings this unnamed woman into his family, calling her “Daughter,” proclaiming that her faith had made her well. She is healed.

Meanwhile, you can imagine Jairus is getting anxious. Wondering what stopped Jesus in his tracks. What is delaying their journey to his sick daughter? Jairus becomes desperate, too; impatient that the Great Healer is distracted by someone who has no recognition, no standing in the community. Jairus’ daughter — still critical, on the verge of death, awaits Jesus’ arrival.

Jesus continues on to Jairus’ house, only taking a few with him. There, so many were weeping and wailing. He says she is just sleeping and those around him laugh at him. He puts everyone but the child’s family outside and gathers the small group close. He takes the twelve year old girl by the hand and says “little girl, get up!” And she is healed. She gets up and begins to walk around.

Jesus extends life into places where it looks like life has gone out.

Where in your life have you felt like you had one last chance – for your own healing. For your own wholeness. When have you felt

that one last chance is all you had to find life again? And you were courageous enough to reach for it.

These two stories intertwine. These stories are about life – all parts of it. These are stories of being utterly transformed. This speaks to the power within Jesus. And here, desperation is named Faith.

Jesus ministry is marked by connections created as he encounters and accepts people whose lives are hemorrhaging:

- blood or guilt;
- self righteousness or blindness;
- paralysis or greed.

Sometimes he touches them; sometimes they touch him first. Sometimes the touch is with the hand; other times the touch is through words. However the touch occurs, a connection is made.<sup>2</sup>

In Mark, the connection does not require words of faith to be spoken, or acts of repentance to occur.

Courage is the only sign of faith — well in this case, Courage with a side of desperation. But Courage is enough.

When we have courage to face the realities in our life, when we have the courage to seek not only medical healing but also our spiritual healing – often the result is a closer connection with Jesus Christ and to God, and well — the church.

Church, the body of Christ, comes into being through connections we make. Through the relationships we nurture. By receiving the grace that once was denied. The church, at its best, is a place where we welcome:

the marginalized,  
the unnamed,  
the broken and dingey,  
the frustrated and desperate.

It is a place where we can stand in and support those who are courageous. Church can be a place to grow and be nurtured, to be received for the hurt we carry and the healing we are so desperate for. A community like this can be a place that offers life in a new way. Where acceptance is received and in this story — where hemorrhaging is healed.

Jesus extends life into places where it looks like life has gone out.

Jesus has the capacity to receive both stories: Jairus' fear and the woman's yearning. God holds our stories and gives them time. There's no impressing God or being first in line for God's favor. Jesus has enough grace and power, attention and love for all. God loves each of us as if we are the only one.

Consider whose stories are already bound up with yours. Consider how they join to create a tale more complete than the one you could tell alone. Maybe there is a story you need to receive or a story you need to tell on your road to wholeness. This is the place, this is the time. Jesus invites us to live. Jesus, the giver of life, the one raised from death to life, invites us to live.

Thanks be to God for one last chance and the sacred power at work when our own stories intertwine with one another. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon brainwave, Working Preacher Podcast, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Feasting on the Gospels, Mark 5:24b-34, WJKPress, 2014, p 158ff. With gratitude for Art Ross' reflection on this text to help frame the message this morning