

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a bad day when you think you should have just stayed in bed? I recently received a funny email entitled: "You know you're going to have a bad day" when: (1) you wake up face down on the pavement; (2) you look to see the birds outside your window and all you see are buzzards; (3) You wake up to discover your waterbed broke and then you remember you don't own a waterbed; (4) Your horn accidentally goes off and remains stuck while you are sitting at a traffic light behind a group of Hell's Angels; (5) You come home and find an investigative reporter from Channel 7 in your front yard! We've all had bad days.

This text today is about a man who experienced about as much stress and trouble as one man can handle. His name was Jairus and he had a 12-year-old daughter who was dying—then he received word she died. Of all the stress-producing events in life, the death of spouse is most stressful but the death of a child runs a close second.

What do you do when you experience trouble and calamity, when you come to the "end of your rope?" When I was just a teenage preacher, I heard an older pastor say, "When you reach the end of your rope, just tie a knot into it and hang on." I remember thinking, "Wow! That's great advice." And for years I shared that little tidbit of wisdom with suffering people. However, I have come to realize such a statement is incomplete at best and reflects human wisdom instead of God's truth. It's probably dangerous advice to dispense. Jairus would have felt no better if someone had told him, "Hey, man, just tie a knot in the end of your rope and hang on."

A book by Stephen Brown entitled *When Your Rope Breaks* got me to thinking about the danger of such advice. Worldly wisdom says "tie a knot when you reach the end of your rope;" Brown's book addresses the question "what do you do when your rope breaks?" Jairus, like some of you, was past the despair of being at the end of his rope—your problem is that you are a frayed rope (afraid, too). Can you hang on to your knot? Some of you are saying, "I'm a frayed knot." Or "I'm afraid not," whichever you prefer.

There is a familiar saying that expresses, "Where there's life—there's hope!" This morning, I want to preach on this subject: Where There's Death—There's Hope. We can read about it in Luke 8:40-56:

Now when Jesus returned a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. (down to verse 49)
While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."
Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."
When they arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."
They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. [Matthew and Mark tell us Jesus threw all the mourners out of the house. I don't know what that means, but I would have loved

to have seen it!] But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told her to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. [Or else, Jesus would have been overcome by people bringing corpses to Him!]

Let’s learn three simple but powerful lessons:

I. JESUS IS THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU ARE DESPERATE

One common thread running through these miracles in Luke 9 was that everyone was at the Point of Total Desperation. I made up a new word. They were all “POTD.” Do you need God’s power? Do you want to see a miracle in your life? Then you’ve got to be “POTD” as well.

What do you do when you get to the end of your rope? What do you do when your rope breaks?

WHEN YOU REACH THE P.O.T.D.:

1. Actively seek Jesus

Instead of remaining by his dying daughter, Jairus headed out to seek Jesus. He didn’t just sit passively and hope Jesus might stumble into his home. Over and over again we are told to seek the Lord while He may be found and to seek the Lord with your whole heart.

Another bit of worldly wisdom is that ubiquitous statement: God helps those who help themselves. No, God helps the helpless that admit they *can’t* help themselves and beg for His help. Jairus couldn’t help himself, and he couldn’t help his daughter; that’s why He did the very best thing—He sought the help of Jesus.

I once read a story about a new employee in a textile mill. His job was running a loom. His supervisor said, “Now if the threads get tangled, stop the loom and call me, I’ll come fix it.” The new employee was fairly self-confident about his ability to fix any problem. Soon his threads got tangled. Instead of calling the supervisor, he tried to untangle the threads himself and soon he had a worse mess. The supervisor walked by and reprimanded the new employee. The new worker was stung and defended himself by saying, “but I was doing the *best* I could to untangle them!” The supervisor said, “No you weren’t. The *best* thing you could do was to call me.” How many times do we try to fix our messes? And we try to do the *best* we can and the whole time God is saying, “Call upon me and I will answer you and show you things that you did not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3) Are you still trying to work out your problem yourself? You can help yourself to death—literally. Are you trying to tie a bigger knot or repair your rope while your hanging from it? Seek Jesus. Actively. Next, you must:

2. Humbly kneel before Him

Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue. That meant he was probably one of the wealthiest, most influential men in the community. He was a V.I.P.—but he was also a V.N.P. (very needy person) so that was why he became a V.H.P. (very humble person). In front of this huge crowd, he fell to

his face at the feet of Jesus and begged for Jesus to help him. That took humility. He was willing to risk losing his dignity and respectability because He had a need and He believed Jesus could meet that need.

Several years ago, I was speaking to a woman who claimed to have trusted Christ as her personal Savior, but when I spoke to her about being baptized, she said, “Oh, no, I can’t be baptized!” She said, “I couldn’t bear the thought of coming up out of that water and having everyone see me with wet hair.” I really thought she was joking but in a few moments, I saw she was serious. She didn’t want to risk compromising her “dignity” by being baptized. I even offered to let her wear a bathing cap, but she refused. I haven’t seen her for several years and I can only hope she has humbled herself and obeyed the Lord. She may be here today. If you are, why don’t you lay your dignity in the dust at the feet of Jesus and humble yourself before Him?

I said last week, sometimes the Lord enrolls us in the University of Affliction to teach us some valuable lessons. If you are at or nearing the P.O.T.D., pay close attention to the Master Teacher; there *will* be a test. The Psalmist writes: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, not NOW I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good.” (Psalm 119: 67-68.) Affliction and trouble can actually drive us to God. That verse is just one reason why our theme song is “God is good all the time.” I often tell people: Life is not fair, but God is Good.

Are you hurting? Are you at the end of your rope? Has your rope broken? Jesus IS there for you right now. He is only a prayer away. Jesus said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5) Instead of saying “Jesus is there,” you can say, “Jesus is here!” Don’t tie a knot in your rope—let go of your old rope and grab hold of the feet of Jesus. Here’s another lesson:

II. JESUS CARES FOR YOU WHEN YOU ARE DISAPPOINTED

When Jairus asked Jesus for help, Jesus was willing to follow Jairus back to his house. This reassures us that Jesus cares about human suffering. He doesn’t just care about it in general. He cares about your pain and your suffering—personally. As Jesus was on the way, the woman with the bleeding disorder slipped through the crowd and grabbed His cloak, interrupting Him. When they finally resumed their walk, Jairus got bad news: his daughter had died. It was his only child. Only those of you who have lost a child to death can come close to understanding the pain Jairus was feeling at that moment. He was suddenly plunged into disappointment and despair. He probably thought silently the woman in the crowd slowed Jesus down—now it was too late. Maybe he blamed himself for not searching for Jesus sooner; we all play the blame game. As long as there was life there was hope—but now it was too late. The servant expressed the attitude a lot of people have today: Why bother God about things that seem hopeless? We see you never bother God. And we learn again that God’s timing is always impeccable. He *never* says, “It’s too late.” God’s *delays* are not God’s *denials*. The same thing happened in John 11 when Mary and Martha sent word for Jesus to come quickly because their brother, Lazarus, was sick and dying. Jesus intentionally delayed four days. When He finally arrived in Bethany, Martha said, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” She was saying, “As long as there was life—there was hope. But now, you’re TOO LATE.” I’ll say it again: God’s delays are not God’s denials. Some of you are praying and trusting God for something and it seems as if He is in no hurry. Wait on the Lord; His timing is impeccable.

What a beautiful picture to see Jesus comforting Jairus as his heart is breaking. Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid, only believe.” You need to know today that Jesus cares when you are hurting. You aren’t bothering Him when you ask Him for help in a situation that seems humanly impossible. Are you struggling? Are you wondering if God cares? I love this promise from Psalms 121:1-4. The Psalmist asks and answers an important question: “Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” The Bible says we may “cast all our cares on Him, because He cares for us.” (I Peter 5:7) So, at the word of Jesus, Jairus kept on walking with Jesus into a situation that was beyond human hope. That’s a tremendous message to us today. Like Jairus you must:

1. Keep on walking with Jesus when you receive bad news

I have sat with families in the ER and had doctors come in and tell them someone they loved was dead. Peace officers still have the grim task of walking up to a stranger’s home and ringing the doorbell to deliver the message that there has been an accident—and their teenager was killed. It may come as a doctor’s diagnosis, or a phone call in the middle of the night from a family member in another state but bad news comes to us all. What are you going to do when you hear bad news like Jairus heard? Do the same thing he did: Trust Jesus and keep on walking with Him!

With Jesus in your life, no news is finally or ultimately bad. It may seem bad for a moment but remember two things: (1) God is good and (2) according to Romans 8:28, “in all things [good, bad, indifferent] God works for the good of those who love Him.

There is a Chinese fable about a man whose prized stallion ran away. His friends came to console him in his time of bad news. But the Chinese man was wise and said, “But how do you know whether this is good or bad?” Sure enough, the stallion soon returned—with six other wild horses. His friends said, “What good news!” But the Chinese man said, “But how do you know whether this is good or bad?” Sure enough, one of the wild horses threw the wise man’s son and he broke his leg. Upon hearing the bad news, the friends gathered again to console him. Again, the Chinese man asked, “But how do you know whether this is good or bad?” Sure enough, not long afterwards the Chinese army passed through the area taking all the able-bodied young men to be soldiers. The son with the broken leg was not able to fight, so he was left with his father ... and on and on it goes. What the world intends for evil, God often turns into something good. We shouldn’t lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and disappointment. When you receive your bad news, keep on walking with Jesus; keep on trusting Him.

2. Keep on walking with Jesus when your five senses tell you it’s hopeless

What a scene Jairus and Jesus walked into. The ancient burial customs of the Jews are well documented. In each community there were men and women who were the “professional mourners.” They played instruments and wailed. The Talmud says even the poorest man was entitled to at least two flute players. This was not beautiful, soothing music like we play at

funerals. It was loud, discordant music intended to reflect the agony of those who were grieving. Two flutes played notes so close together on the scale; it grated on one’s nerves—intentionally. There were loud drums and clanking symbols. When the Apostle Paul was talking about love in I Corinthians 13 he wrote, “If I don’t have love, I am like a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” This was a reference to instruments played at Jewish funerals; the richer the family, the more music and noise was generated. Since Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue, you can be sure there was a large burial band playing music to set your teeth on edge, women were wailing a high-pitched warble that was scary to hear. As Jairus approached his home his senses were bombarding him with one message: It’s hopeless. She’s dead. Where there’s life, there’s hope but she’s dead. His eyes saw the mourners wearing sackcloth. The burning incense and sweet spices used to wrap the corpse filled his nostrils. His ears were assaulted by the sound of the mournful, miserable music. He could feel the arms of the mourners reaching out to comfort him in his grief. Perhaps he could taste his own salty tears dripping down his cheeks. At that moment, I’m sure Jairus was ready to give up and say, “IT’S TOO LATE!” But remember, with Jesus, where there’s death, there’s hope!

The Bible says you will either walk by faith, or by sight. In other words, if you only listen to your five senses, you can miss out on what God has for you. Faith is believing the Word of God and receiving the promises of God even when your senses are telling you something totally different. What do you do when your rope breaks? Your senses tell you it is hopeless. Faith says, “even though everything seems bad, I am going to walk with Jesus and stand upon His word.” I love the words of that beautiful hymn that says, “Standing on the promises that cannot fail; when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail; by the living Word of God I shall prevail; standing on the promises of God.” (Words by R. Kelso Carter).

That leads us to the last lesson:

III. JESUS SHARES HOPE WHEN YOU FACE DEATH

That’s what this chapter is all about—HOPE. In Luke 9, we see Jesus provides hope if you’re in a storm, bothered by demons or disease and He offers hope in the face of death.

All of us are going to deal with death from two perspectives, the death of those we love and our personal death. The Bible teaches that

1. You can trust Him when you are grieving over the death of someone you love

Jairus was a grieving parent. Jesus told him not to be afraid but to believe. That’s the same message He gives to us today when someone we love has died. For a Christian, the death of a loved one doesn’t have to be a morbid, hopeless event. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul wrote, “Brothers I don’t want you to be ignorant about those who have fallen asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope.” I have observed the grief of those who are not Christians and the loved one they are laying in the ground gave no indication of being a Christian. One word can be used to describe their grief: HOPELESS. There really *is* a difference between the attitudes of Christians and unbelievers when it comes to grief.

My dad died of renal cancer in 1981. Two weeks later, his mother, my grandmother died after a lengthy illness. I preached both the funerals in Panama City, Florida. My grandmother didn’t know my dad had died because she was in a coma. At her funeral, I saw some of the same family members I had seen two weeks earlier at my dad’s funeral. Some of us were standing around my grandmother’s casket laughing about how surprised she would be to see “brother” (since my dad was the only boy, that’s what all his family called him) already in heaven waiting for her. One of my aunts is a rather dour, joyless lady whose face seems to be in a perpetual frown but my other aunts love the Lord and they are a lot of fun. At my grandmother’s funeral, Aunt Clea complained to us about how we shouldn’t be laughing and carrying on the way we were—we should be sad. I tried to accept her rebuke but I couldn’t help but laugh when her other sisters tore into her and told her they were happy because their mother was in heaven and she wasn’t suffering anymore. We kept on laughing and enjoying ourselves while Aunt Clea sat in the corner and grieved in her own way.

Sometimes people read these two miracles about the healing of the sick woman and the resuscitation of a dead child, and they wonder why God hasn’t done that for them. I appreciate Ray Stedman’s insight when he wrote:

“Why did Jesus heal the woman and raise the child? He did so to give a new view of sickness and death, one different from the world’s view. Believing this present life is all there is, the world wants it all now, but the Christian can stand at the crib of a dying child and ask God to heal him. Then, believing that God can heal him, if the child dies we still believe that our God DID heal him totally by bringing him into the eternal presence of the Lord. This life isn’t all there is.” (Ray Stedman in *The Servant Who Rules*)

A pastor friend of mine had a three-year-old daughter die several years ago. He told me that although it still hurts, God gave him one word that made a difference in his grief. It was the word “through.” He said, “One day I was reading the 23rd Psalm and I read these words, ‘even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.’ I looked at that word ‘through’ and realized that I had gotten stuck in the valley. God was there to walk with me as I passed *through* the valley.” Are you stuck there? My friend, Jesus gives us hope when someone we love has died. He says, “Don’t be afraid. Trust Me.”

For a Christian, death is the ultimate healing. That’s why

2. You can trust Him when it’s your time to die

The Bible says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) In our flesh, we all have a tendency to fear death; that’s natural. Comedian Woody Allen once said, “It’s not that I’m afraid of dying, I just don’t want to be there when it happens!” Only Jesus can remove the fear of death. Once you truly realize what’s on the other side of death for a Christian, you don’t have to be afraid. I have given my wife funeral instructions if I should die before Jesus returns. I don’t want the casket open, for people to comment, “Oh, he looks so good.” I will look dead. Besides, that’s not me there anyway—it’s just the body I lived in for a few decades. I believe like the old preacher whose last name was Peas. He had this epitaph put on his tombstone:

The body of Peas lies beneath this sod;
But Peas ain’t here—this is just the pod;
Peas shelled out and went to God!

But my wife knows I want a sign with Philippians 1:21 on my casket, “For to me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain.” I believe that with all my heart.

As you face death, Jesus says the same thing to you He said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” There was a wonderful lady in our church named Janell Reazin. She was very active in our music ministry. Although she battled cancer for years, she had one of the most beautiful smiles and the most positive attitudes of anyone I’ve ever known. At her funeral last year, we played a tape of her singing a song she recorded to be played at her funeral. The words to the beautiful song said:

Our prayers have been answered, I finally arrived;
The healing that has been delayed, has now been realized.
No one is in a hurry here, there’s no schedule to keep.
We’re all enjoying Jesus, just sitting at His feet.
If you could see me now, I’m walking streets of gold.
If you could see me now, I’m standing tall and bold.
If you could see me now, you’d know I’ve seen His face.
If you could see me now, you’d know the pain has been erased.
You wouldn’t want me ever to leave this place.
If you could only see me now.

CONCLUSION

It was a dark and stormy night. A man walking along a seaside cliff accidentally stepped over the edge and was falling down toward the rocks. He frantically grabbed for anything that would help break his fall, and his hands latched onto a root. It was pitch dark and he couldn’t see a thing. He could hear the waves crashing on the rocks hundreds of feet below, however. When his grip grew weary, he cried out, “God help me!” God said, “Let go.” He refused. He just hung on tighter. His arms and shoulders began to cramp and he realized he couldn’t hold on much longer. “Please, God, help me!” he cried. God said again, “Let go.” Finally, not because God had said it but because he could no longer hold on, his grip slipped. And he fell—two feet down to a wide pathway that had been there all along. What do you do when you get to the end of your life, your rope? Tie a knot and hang on? No, let go of the rope and trust God. Jesus is there for you. Jesus cares for you and Jesus shares hope with you. Remember, where there’s death, with Jesus, there’s always hope!

OUTLINE

I. JESUS IS THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU ARE DESPERATE

When you reach the P.O.T.D.:

1. Actively seek Jesus
2. Humbly kneel before Him

"Before I was afflicted I went astray; but NOW I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good." *Psalm 119:67-68*

II. JESUS CARES FOR YOU WHEN YOU ARE DISAPPOINTED

"Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." *Psalm 121:1-4*

Keep on walking with Jesus when:

1. You receive bad news
2. Your five senses tell you it's hopeless

III. JESUS SHARES HOPE WHEN YOU FACE DEATH

You can trust Him when:

1. You are grieving over the death of someone you love
2. It's your time to die



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes