

INTRODUCTION

In the past few miracles we've seen that Jesus has power over danger. He calmed the scary storm. He has power over demons; He transformed a scary man. Jesus has power over disease; He healed the woman with the scary sickness. In this miracle we're going to see that Jesus has power over death. We need to pay close attention to this miracle because unless the Lord returns, we are all going to face death.

I always like the funny story I heard about a pastor who was preaching about death. He said, "Every member of this church is going to die!" And a little boy on the front row giggled. The preacher didn't like that so he increased his volume. He yelled, "I said, EVERY member of this church is going to die!" The little boy laughed out loud. The preacher stopped and said, "Son, what's so funny about that?" The little boy said, "I'm not a member of this church!"

Well, everyone is going to die. And some would say that death is no laughing matter. But for a believer, death isn't a scary thing. In fact, I love that little verse about the Godly woman found in Proverbs 31:25, "She can laugh at the days to come." That's a picture of faith. But when you know Jesus, you can laugh at whatever this life throws at you and you can even laugh about the prospect of death.

Mark 5:21-23. When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him... This is where Jesus is interrupted to perform a miracle on the way to a miracle, so let's pick up the story in Mark 5:35-43: While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."

But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha kum!*" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

What would have been the worst day of the lives of Jairus and his wife turned into one of their best days. What would have been a day of Disappointment turned out to be an Appointment with God. So, why do you think Jesus asked the parents not to tell anyone about this miracle? If word

had spread about this can you imagine all the people who would have been dragging corpses to Jesus? It would have looked like a zombie parade!

Jesus didn't want this miracle advertised because His main purpose for coming to planet earth wasn't to heal the sick, raise the dead, or teach moral lessons. He came to die on a cross. He came to fix the death issue once and for all. Let's learn four practical lessons from this miracle.

I. WHEN YOU'RE DESPERATE, CRY OUT TO JESUS

Jairus was hurting because his daughter was dying. If you're a parent, you probably understand what is to hurt when one of your children are suffering. One of my worst memories is from a cold winter day when Laura Grace was about four years old. I had come home for lunch and Cindy had cooked hot soup. I set a bowl of steaming soup to cool on the table in front of LG's chair. While we were distracted with the rest of the meal, neither of us noticed LG crawling up into her chair to sit down. I turned around in time to see her pull on the placemat and it seemed as if everything went to slow motion as the hot soup spilled onto her and soaked the sleeve of her sweater. As she screamed with pain, I picked her up and dashed over to the sink and started running cold water on her arm. But the sweater had absorbed the hot soup long enough to cause severe burns on her arm. We rushed her to a local clinic they treated her burns. But what I recall the most is the frustration and agony I felt as a father as my child was suffering. Many of you who are parents have had the same gut-wrenching experience.

Can you imagine the pain and frustration that Jairus must have felt as he stood by and watched his only child grow weaker and sicker with every moment? Finally, he became so desperate he ran and knelt before Jesus and begged Him for help. It's important to note that Jairus was a ruler of the local synagogue. He was part of the traditional Jewish religious leaders who were generally opposed to Jesus. These religious leaders were the same ones who criticized Jesus for offering forgiveness to the paralytic and for eating with a tax collector and other sinners. So for Jairus to run and fall at the feet of Jesus, He was rejecting the official position of the other religious leaders. But Jairus was experiencing what I have witnessed many times throughout my ministry: When you have a desperate need, it often causes you to turn to Jesus.

When David was in trouble he prayed, "In my distress I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears." (2 Samuel 22:7)

When we encounter trouble, our first reaction is often to try to fix the problem ourselves. We use prayer as a last resort, when it should be our first resort. In the first church I served out of seminary, there was a large textile mill in the little town. One of the men in our church told me a story about when he first went to work there running a loom.

These were industrial looms where the shuttles flew at amazing speeds to create the cloth. His first day on the job, his supervisor came to him and said, "If the thread gets tangled, stop the loom, and call me and I'll fix it." This new employee was mechanically minded and he was pretty self-confident about his ability to fix the problem. Soon, his threads got tangled and he stopped the loom and tried to untangle them himself, but the more he worked, the more of a mess he created. The supervisor walked by and saw the tangled mass of threads. He reprimanded the

new employee for his mistake. The man said to the boss, "But sir, I was doing the best I could to untangle them!" The boss said, "No you weren't. The best thing you could have done was to have called on me the way I told you to. If you try this again you won't have a job."

How many times do we try to fix our messes because we don't want to "bother the Lord?" And when we try to the BEST we can and fail, God says, "No the best you can do is to cry out to me." God says, "Call upon me and I will answer you and show you things that you did not know." (Jeremiah 33:3)

II. WHEN YOU'RE DELAYED, TRUST GOD'S TIMING

Jesus answered Jairus' prayer by agreeing to accompany him to his house. But on the way there, a mob broke out and a woman who had been sick for 12 years crept up in the crowd and grabbed the hem of Jesus' robe. She was healed instantly, but then Jesus asked her to give her testimony.

Put yourself in Jairus' sandals for a moment. He has an urgent need. His daughter is dying and time is critical. I can imagine Jairus' standing there nervously tapping his toe and glancing repeatedly at his Rolex sundial. He's thinking, "Come on, Jesus. Come on! Let's go! I'm in a hurry, but You don't seem to be!"

Have you ever had that kind of attitude when you begged God for something? You need God to answer your prayer and you need it answered NOW. But it seems that the Lord doesn't seem to be in a hurry. With God, timing is more important than time. I've found that there are usually four ways God answers prayer. First, He answers prayer DIRECTLY. Sometimes God gives a quick answer. When Peter was sinking on the Sea of Galilee, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" That's the kind of prayer that God answers directly. If you need to be saved today, pray, "Lord, save me!"

Second, God answers prayer DIFFERENTLY. Sometimes He doesn't give us what we ask for, He gives us something different. Paul begged God to take away his thorn in the flesh, and God gave him a different answer. He gave Paul the grace to deal with his affliction.

Third, sometimes God DENIES our requests, because it is not in His will. Even Jesus faced this answer when He prayed in the garden, "Father, take this cup away from me. But not my will, but Yours be done." If your preschool son asks you for a rattlesnake for a pet, your answer is going to be, "No." The Father knows best.

But the fourth way God answer is prayer is when His response is DELAYED. That was what Jairus was facing. In John 11, Jesus' friend, Lazarus, is sick and Mary and Martha send word for Jesus to come immediately. But Jesus intentionally delayed for four days. By the time He arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. You can almost hear the animosity and accusation in Martha's words to Jesus. She said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Have you ever felt the same way? You asked God for something and it didn't happen on your timetable? Jesus knew that there would be greater glory in raising Lazarus from the dead than in healing his sickness.

So, if you're still waiting for an answer to your prayer, be patient. The prophet Habakkuk began his prophecy with a prayer, "How long, Lord will I have to wait? There is so much sin and injustice." He had a vision from God for the restoration of his people, but it didn't happen immediately. God gave him this word, "For the vision is yet for the appointed time... Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late." (Habakkuk 2:3)

Just remember, that a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day with the Lord. And when you get in a hurry for God to answer your prayer, don't be surprised if God isn't in a hurry. Jairus had to learn that lesson, and it's a lesson for all of us.

III. WHEN YOU RECEIVE BAD NEWS, KEEP WALKING WITH GOD

Finally Jesus resumes His journey to Jairus' home. But suddenly a messenger comes and delivers bad news. He says, "Your little girl is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?" Can't you imagine that Jairus' collapsed in grief? He thought, "That's it. We're too late. There's no hope. She's dead." But before he could express his grief and dismiss Jesus, the Lord had a word for him. He said, "Don't be afraid. Just believe." And Jairus took this word and kept on walking with Jesus.

Bad news comes in all forms and fashions. I've been with families in the ER when the doctor comes in and tells them their loved one has died. It's a difficult job when law enforcement officers have to ring a doorbell at night and tell a family their loved one has died in a car wreck.

Bad news can come as an unexpected phone call in the middle of the night. Or it may come from a diagnosis in the doctor's office. But whenever you receive bad news, don't give up. Don't quit. Hear the words of Jesus. "Don't be afraid. Only believe."

The best news that turns all bad news into good news is that your Creator wants to have a personal relationship with you. In the Garden of Eden, God would walk and talk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening. Sin interrupted that intimate relationship. But Jesus came to restore the ability we have to walk and talk with our Creator.

The prophet Micah cuts out all the fluff of a righteous life and summarizes what God requires of us. He writes, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

When you receive bad news, your first temptation is fear and doubt. That's why Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Only believe." Fear says, "Give up." Faith says, "Keep walking." Fear says, "There's no way." Faith says, "Only believe."

In the midst of all the bad news swirling around us. We sometimes want to say, "Why, God? Why are these innocent people being slaughtered in Iraq? Why, God is there a rash of suicides? Why is there so much sickness and disease?"

Remember this: God doesn't owe us any explanations. He has given us something better. He has given us His promises. He has promised He will never leave you or forsake you. He has

promised that in all things God is working for the good of those who love Him. So when you face bad news and disappointment you should remember the words to that great old hymn by Keslo Carter: "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."

IV. WHEN YOU FACE DEATH, CLAIM HIS HOPE

There's a saying that we often quote that isn't completely true. It says: "Where there's life there's hope." Instead, we should say, "Where there's Jesus, there's hope." And HOPE means Having Only Positive Expectations. There are two times when we all need to claim this hope.

A. He gives hope when you experience grief

The Apostle 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." (1 Thessalonians 4:13) We all go through the experience of grief, but when we know Jesus, our grief is infused with hope.

Jairus and Jesus walked into a scene of grief. There were professional Jewish grievers whose job was to weep and wail at a death scene. Since Jairus' was a leader in the synagogue, they probably had the Deluxe Package. The richer a person was, the more ostentatious the noise and racket would be. These professional mourners wore thin clothes and tore their clothes into shreds. Then there was loud crying, wailing, and a high-pitched warbling that could be heard at a great distance. They also played musical instruments, but the music wasn't soothing—it was discordant, chaotic music. Flute players would play loud notes that clashed with each other. Drummers would beat on drums. This was the scene of grief Jesus and Jairus entered when they arrived at his house.

You have to read between the lines to understand there was a little tense interaction between Jesus and these professional mourners. Jesus said, "Why all this weeping? The child isn't dead; she's just asleep." The Bible says that the mourners laughed Jesus to shame. They scornfully said, "We're the death experts, who are you?!" And the scripture simply says Jesus put them out. I don't imagine they wanted to be put out. I would have loved to see how Jesus did this. Maybe he stared at them with a gaze that turned their insides to jelly. Or maybe He spoke to them in a voice that made it clear He was in charge.

There's a great song by Don Francisco I used to sing that tells the story from the eyes of Jairus. It picks up as they approached his house. He said, "We were still a long ways down the road when I heard the sounds and cries of the mourners and musicians as they strove to dramatize my grief they had no business with beneath their loud disguise. My wife just sat there silently and stared through empty eyes. Then Jesus asked the mourners, 'Why is it that you weep? She isn't dead as you suppose, the child is just asleep.' It only took a moment for their wails to turn to jeers. 'Who does this man think he is? Get him out of here!' With authority I've never heard from the lips of any man; He spoke and every sound rolled out with the thunder of command; and in the sudden silence, they all hurried for the door, wondering what the reason was they'd ever come there for."

Jesus was teaching us that when we face grief that we never lose sight of the fact that He gives hope whenever there is death. Grief is a painful process for everyone, including Christians, but it is a process, not a destination.

A friend of mine had his three-year-old daughter die a few years ago. He told me the pain is still there, but God gave him one word that made a difference in his grief. He said, "One day I was reading the Twenty-third Psalm and I noticed these words, 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.' I looked at that word 'through' and realized I hadn't gone through the valley; I had gotten STUCK in the valley of grief. God was there to walk with me as I passed THROUGH the valley." Are you stuck there? Jesus will carry you through the valley of grief.

Through the years I've been asked by parents, "Pastor, why didn't God answer our prayer to heal our dying daughter?" Nobody knows why God chooses to extend the physical lives of some but not others. My mentor, Ray Stedman wrote, "Why doesn't Jesus heal everyone and raise everyone who dies? Jesus has a different perspective on death than the world. 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." (*The Servant Who Rules*)

B. He gives hope when it's your time to die

The Apostle Paul was facing death in a Roman prison cell. As he was contemplating whether he would live or die. He wrote these amazing words, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." (Philippians 1:21-24)

When you follow Jesus, you are in a win-win situation. If you live it's Christ, and if you die it's gain. It's like flipping a coin. Heads you win; tails you win. If you live you win and you keep on living for Jesus. If you die, you win because you get to go be with Christ, which is far better.

Jesus walked into a house that was full of death and grief and He transformed it into a house of life and rejoicing. One of my favorite paintings of this scene is a picture that hangs in the National Art Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. Vasily Polenov painted it in 1871.

As you look at the picture, let me share the rest of Don Francisco's song lyrics: "Then He called His three disciples that were with us on the way. He led them and my wife and me to where our daughter lay. He took her by the hand, he told her, "Child arise." And the words were barely spoken when she opened up her eyes! She stood and walked across the room and stood there by our side. My wife knelt down and held her close and at last she really cried. Then Jesus told us both to see that our daughter had some food. But as for how her life was spared, not to speak a word." But the song ends by Jairus saying, "But I've got to tell somebody."

CONCLUSION

Life is full of disappointments. But if you're looking for God, then disappointment can be His appointment. Jairus' daughter wasn't resurrected, she was raised, because she died later. The moment Jairus' daughter opened her eyes, the first face she saw was Jesus. And if you know Jesus, the time will come when you'll go to sleep too, but that's not the end. When you wake up in heaven, the first face you'll see is that of your Savior.

This miracle is a parable of our own salvation. At one time we were all dead in our trespasses and sins according to Ephesians 1. And Jesus has given life to our spirits. He said that she was just asleep, and that's a comforting picture of death for a Christian. When we die, our bodies sleep, but our souls and spirits immediately go to be with Jesus in heaven.

I can recall as a child, my family would visit relatives in Panama City, Florida and we'd be driving back late on Sunday evening to our home in South Alabama. Most nights I would fall sound asleep in the car. This was long before child protective seats. I might be asleep in the floor or on the hat rack under the back glass. But when we got home, my dad would take me in his strong arms and carry me inside and put me in my bed. The next morning I'd wake up and wonder, "How did I get here?"

That's what death is for a Christian. We go to sleep here and we wake up in heaven. And we don't have to wonder how we got there because Jesus took us there. He said to Jairus' daughter, "*Talitha koum*. Child, wake up." And one day we'll hear something similar as Jesus says to us, "My child, wake up. You're in heaven now!"

Are you ready to face death? If you know Jesus as your savior, you can laugh at the days to come. But if you don't know Jesus, today is the day that you need to turn from your sins and place your faith in Him.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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