

**LAUGHING MATTERS**  
**Sermon, July 8, 2018**  
**Text: Mark 5:35-43**

If you've been in this congregation for awhile, you'll know I've long been convinced that one of the great hindrances to joyful living in the present is the painful memories of past failures that ever haunt, hamper and hinder us in our present. And if you've been in this congregation for awhile ... or even if you have been here just over a month (*as I mentioned this Youth Sunday, Memorial Day weekend*) ... you'll also know I've been long convinced that one of the most effective ministries of the church, and perhaps especially in ministry with young people, is to do all we can to provide *joyful* memories, *good* memories. Memories of joy, memories of happiness, memories of service in mission, memories of healthy relationships, memories of good clean fun, memories of wholesome and enjoyable activities, memories of loving, supportive, lasting friendships ... as well as good memories of adults who love and encourage and nurture and build up, rather than bad memories of adults who misuse or abuse or discourage and beat down. Such happy memories of joy in our past can do so much to help us live joyfully, confidently and freely in our present and our future.

These are happy memories of laughing *with* God, enjoying life as He would have us enjoy it ... for He really does want us to live well, to enjoy life in all its fullness, beginning right now and continuing on into eternity! We have no interest in making memories of life lived laughing *at* God, which is a sad phenomenon in our increasingly secularized culture. When we laugh *at* God, when we join in with the worldly, secular, cynical choruses mocking piety, scoffing at morality, chastity, integrity, honor, reverence, when we make light of God's good ways ... in short, when we don't take God seriously and live accordingly ... more often than not that makes for really *bad* memories, regretful memories, destructive memories, painful memories, memories that continue to wound and cripple rather than heal and/or inspire. People laugh *at* God when they take Him lightly, when they don't understand Him, or they cynically laugh at God because they think He is hopelessly irrelevant to their situation(s).

The people in Jairus' home in today's lesson are doing just that. They are scornfully laughing at Jesus, God in the flesh, because they did not know Him, they did not understand Him, and they thought He was entirely out of His element and place in this particular situation. But after they saw what He could do, you can be sure they weren't laughing then.

Last week we started with the story of Jairus, a prominent leader of the local synagogue in Capernaum, who was the father of a very sick little girl. He goes out to find Jesus, and when he does find Jesus, this distinguished man throws himself at Jesus' feet in full view of a very large crowd, pleading with Jesus to come to his home and heal his terminally ill daughter. As mentioned last time, we are told in other sources that the synagogue has already taken a public position on Jesus, calling Him a false messiah. So, this really wasn't a good career move for this synagogue leader. But when your child is dying ... when anyone you love is enduring great suffering ... you're not thinking much about good career moves or public image. All you're thinking about is the suffering of the one you cherish. Jairus will do anything, try anything, if it might save his little girl. He had heard the miraculous stories about Jesus, so he came to Jesus to beg His intervention.

So, Jesus accepted the invitation, and they head off to Jairus' home, and a large crowd of people followed along. Again as we talked about last week, the parade was interrupted by the healing encounter with a woman who had been suffering twelve years, which coincidentally or not is the entire lifespan of Jairus' daughter (*and is also how old our music director was when he took his first job as a church organist!*). We are told that even while Jesus was still speaking to the now-healed woman, some men from Jairus' house came to tell Jairus his daughter had died. Surely people are thinking Jesus had missed His big moment. Why didn't He hurry up? He had this invitation to do something big for someone really important, but He had delayed too long by paying attention to someone the crowd considered to be an unimportant, unknown woman. We are then told, "... *ignoring what they said, Jesus told Jairus, 'Don't be afraid, just believe.'*" Jesus then dismissed the crowd, taking only Peter, James, John and Jairus with Him.

They go to the home, and find the mourners have already gathered. There is a lot of commotion; there are people crying and wailing loudly, and Jairus' friends, his neighbors, his business associates are probably all there. Jesus says to the mourning crowd, *"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep."* Well, you can imagine the awkward response. First there's the stunned silence which usually follows when someone says something really stupid at a time like this; it just seemed so ... inappropriate. Then you can imagine the muttering, then the tittering. Can't you just hear the murmurs beginning, and then growing into outright scornful laughter? They laughed at Jesus, a derisive, dismissive laughter. And some of that laughter is certainly directed at Jairus. *"Where'd you find this guy, Jairus?"* How can Jairus hope to remain respected when he pins his hopes on this holy man who doesn't even know a dead body when he sees one? Jairus stands to lose credibility in the community, and he stands to lose even his livelihood by bringing Jesus into his home.

But while they are all laughing at Jesus and Jairus, Jesus took charge! He just shooed everyone out of the home except for the parents of the little girl and His disciples Peter, James and John. He then went in to where the little girl was, took her by the hand and raised her from her deathbed in what is really an extraordinarily ordinary scene. Aramaic was the vernacular of the day; it was the common parlance of Jesus time. Mark is unique in including Aramaic phrases in his Greek text five other times (*see 3:17, 7:11, 7:34, 10:46 and 14:36*). Mark gives us this ordinary phrase, "Talitha koum", which I am told is certainly not some magical incantation; it is simply a routine phrase used by a mom waking up her daughter in the morning ... roughly akin to "Wakie, wakie little girl." He speaks to the girl softly and tenderly, using this ordinary phrase to get an extraordinary result ... a scene, by the way, that I believe will be replayed for each and every one of us when He calls us from our deathbed, and we are awakened eternally young in Paradise ... but, that's almost another sermon.

When we've looked at this passage in the past, I pointed out three things to note about Jairus; three things I'm sure his little girl learned about her dad after she was healed: **First**, I am sure she learned that Dad took the initiative and assumed the parental responsibility of bringing Jesus to his child. Note that *he* sought out Jesus. He did not send his wife, he didn't send any of his subordinates, he didn't send the babysitter, he didn't send the grandparents. This good father assumed the parental responsibility of seeking out Jesus *himself*, and then bringing Jesus to his daughter. **Second**, I'm sure she learned her father was not at all afraid and/or ashamed to bring Jesus into their home! Remember, as the synagogue leader, Jairus is taking a big risk. But he doesn't care about the risk, because he wants his child to live. He wants his daughter to be well, so he brings Jesus to her. **Third**, Jairus not only brought Jesus into his home, he understood that if his daughter was to be well, he would have to allow Jesus to *take over and take charge* of his home. So he brings Jesus to the house, and he gives Jesus charge of that house. Note that Jesus is the one who chose who was to stay, and who was to go.

Jairus allowed Jesus the authority to bring into that home who or what Jesus desired, and he allowed Jesus the authority to just get rid of those people and those things that would hinder His ministry of life and healing in that home. Jesus just ran out of the house all those who mocked and laughed at Him and/or made light of His ways, all those who might hinder what He intended to do in that home, anyone and anything that might challenge His Lordship. And I've always believed this as a father and a pastor: the only way our children will have a chance to live, and live well, is if we bring Jesus Christ into our homes *and* permit Him to take charge of our homes. Is there anything in our homes that will hinder the ministry of Jesus Christ to our families? If so, why allow it there? If we want our children to be well, then we'll allow Jesus Christ to run whatever it is right out of our houses. Make certain Jesus Christ is always a welcome guest in our homes.

We don't know how long Jairus' daughter went on to live, but I don't believe there was a day that went by, that this girl didn't think, *"I'm alive today because of my daddy's love for me."* Perhaps she grew to have children of her own. Perhaps Jairus' grandchildren heard the story again and again of how Grandpa once put his reputation on the line and brought Jesus Christ into their home, gave Jesus Christ charge of the home, and how as a result their mother was healed and given the gift of life.

What an effective ministry. What a happy memory.