

## *Time to Get Up*

*For the children:*

Let me ask you a question.

How do you know when it's time to wake up in the morning? I mean, when we're asleep, we're not aware of what's going on around us. What makes you wake up?

When I was your age, I think it was my mom who called my name to let me know it was time to get up. Now I set an alarm clock, but I wake up before my alarm goes off most mornings. Like lots of people, my body just knows when it's time to get up. Sometimes we call that an internal clock.

I think I liked it better when it was my mom who called my name, though.

Do you ever want to go back to sleep? 😊

On Friday, a groundhog woke up to check the weather. Then he went back to sleep! People say he was predicting the weather for the next six weeks. But I wonder, what woke him up? My guess is he has an internal clock that told him it's halfway between the start of winter and the start of spring.

In the story we'll hear from the Bible today, a little girl is sleeping. Her parents thought she had died (Mk. 5:35). I'm guessing they tried to call her name, but she didn't answer. Maybe they tried to shake her, but she didn't wake up. She finally wakes up when Jesus tells her it's time to get up (Mk. 5:41).

Wouldn't that be cool? To hear Jesus call your name and say, "it's time to get up"?! (And I'm going to guess she didn't want to go back to sleep, either!)

Let's pray:

*Dear Jesus, thank you for sleep that lets our bodies rest and grow. Help us wake up every day ready to share your love with other people. Amen.*

Jesus crossed the lake again, and on the other side a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came forward. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded with him, "My daughter is about to die. Please, come and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live." So Jesus went with him. A swarm of people were following Jesus, crowding in on him. A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors, and had spent everything she had without getting any better. In fact, she had gotten worse. Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. She was thinking, If I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed. Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed. At that very moment, Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said to him, "Don't you see the crowd pressing against you? Yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus looked around carefully to see who had done it. The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward. Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth. He responded, "Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease."

While Jesus was still speaking with her, messengers came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?" But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting." He didn't allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James' brother. They came to the synagogue leader's house, and he saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "What's all this commotion and crying about? The child isn't dead. She's only sleeping." They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Then, taking the child's parents and his disciples with him, he went to the room where the child was. Taking her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Young woman, get up." Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. They were shocked! He gave them strict orders that no one should know what had happened. Then he told them to give her something to eat.

Mk. 5:21-43 (C.E.B.)

*For the adults:*

I suspect every parent can identify with the plight of Jairus. We can sense his fear for his daughter's life; we can almost hear the tremor in Jairus' voice as he pleads with Jesus to make his daughter well (Mk. 5:23). She is at the point of death, and he has most certainly tried everything he could to make her well – but still she is dying.

I know I can identify with his plight personally. We spent too many nights in the hospital with Melissa over the years. We sought the advice of every specialist we could find. We would do anything to make her well.

And I certainly can identify with the agony he feels when the news arrives that she has died (Mk. 5:35). There is no more need for Jesus to come. The story is over.

In between his plea for help and learning she has died, we read about Jesus facing an interruption. Whether Jarius feels it or not, we might find ourselves perturbed that Jesus seems to lose his focus on the dying girl as he stops to help someone on the way – thus slowing down his arrival and perhaps allowing the girl to die by his delay!

But that's when I remember learning the importance of allowing for interruptions in my life. I was reminded of that lesson when I read Lamar Williamson's commentary on this text. Listen to what he said:<sup>1</sup>

The interruption offers food for thought to busy people in the twentieth century [and I might add the twenty-first century]: to physicians pressured by specialization and overwork, to parents harried by the demands of neighborhood children or their own, to professors distracted by students with problems, to preachers interrupted in the middle of sermon preparation. [He then quotes Henri Nouwen who says] "you know my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work."

I had a seminary professor remind us to pay attention to those moments when we are interrupted because those are often moments when God is trying to speak to us. He probably referred to the same quote by Nouwen, although I can't remember for sure.

I do remember being at work that evening. At the time, I was working as a secretary in a Community College; my primary function was to provide administrative support to adjunct faculty who taught evening classes. That evening I was busy working on a syllabus or a test or some paper for one of the instructors. I was rushing, not knowing if I had enough time to finish it before the instructor came out of class to get it. That's when the phone rang. I stopped typing and dealt with the issue of the person who called. And as I hung up the phone, I thought "interruptions are my work."

And I've tried not to forget that.

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<sup>1</sup> Williamson, p. 112

But I'm not sure Jairus is comforted by the way Jesus responds to the interruption, to this woman who slows Jesus down by simply reaching out and touching him (Mk. 5:30).

It may be easy to identify with the plight of Jairus. It's harder to empathize with the unnamed woman, although we might recognize her dilemma. She has been experiencing a flow of blood for twelve years. Her situation is made more difficult by the Levitical law requiring her to isolate herself (Lev. 15:25-33). In other words, she has also been living in exile for twelve years.

We don't know how old she is.

- She could be in her thirties, a young woman who could not start a family when it would have been appropriate to do so.
- She could have been in her fifties and missed the birth of her grandchildren.
- She could be in her seventies and missed her husband's funeral.

We don't know how old she is, but she has been separated from her community for twelve years; she has missed important events in her family and her community. I mean, she could be the sister-in-law of Jairus who has never met her niece!

Understandably, she sought medical attention (Mk. 5:26). She wanted to return to her family, to her community. But first the blood must stop flowing. In desperation, she reaches out to Jesus.

At first glance, the unnamed woman in this story has very little in common with Jairus.

- Not only is she a woman
  - and he a man,
- she has also been treated as a pariah because of her infirmity
  - while he has received the nodding approval of everyone in the community.
- She is one of the many "invisible" people in society that no one notices
  - while he is a person that everyone acknowledges as they pass on the street.
- It is not much of a stretch to say that people went out of their way to avoid her
  - while people went out of their way to greet him.
- She is frail,
  - he is powerful.

But don't be fooled by first appearances; they both have much in common, too.

- They are from the same town.
- They were both raised in homes where God is worshipped and glorified.
- They are both Jews by birth.
- And they are both in a state of crisis – she because of her own infirmity, he because of his daughter's.

We know the woman spent her last cent on doctors that made her worse rather than better (Mk. 5:26). We don't know for sure what Jairus has done to help his daughter, but it's hard to imagine any father not seeking help from wherever he could find it – and since he was a man of influence, it's probably the case that every medical expert has already been consulted.

They both desperately reach out to Jesus for help.

Maybe you can remember a time when you were in a similar crisis. It may have been a situation related to your own health or the health of a loved one. It may have been a crisis at work. Or maybe it was a close relationship gone sour. Some of us have struggled with mental health issues while others have struggled with financial worries.

Not many of us go through life without some point at which we have pursued every available option – from expensive treatments to extensive research, from expert opinions to exhausting regimens.

Like both people in our text, we have all come to the point where we see our own need for Jesus and our dependence upon God.

Unlike us, however, both the frail woman and the powerful man take a great risk in reaching out to Jesus. The unnamed woman enters a crowd, knowing she is unclean and could be punished for being there without warning everyone of her status. Meanwhile Jairus, the man of respect in the community, defers to Jesus in a way that gives tacit approval of Jesus and his ministry, something that may diminish Jairus' own standing in the community.

Fortunately, both of them know the power of touch: Jairus asks Jesus to come and touch his daughter while the woman reaches out to touch Jesus (Mk. 5:23, 27).

It is a touch of love that reaches both the well-off and the cast-off.

They may appear to be as different as night and day, but in fact they have as much in common as dusk and dawn. Both women are loved by God, and in that sense, if in no other, they are very much like us. Their stories remind us of our own need to reach out and touch Jesus, to “put our hand in the hand of the man who calmed the waters” (as the folk song says it).

And Jesus says to both women, both of whom are daughters of Abraham, it's time to get up (Mk. 5:34, 41). It's time to move on. It's time to receive the gift of healing and be restored to your community.

You see, both Jairus and the sick woman were held back by disease. But Jesus offers more than a cure – he restores Jairus' family to wholeness when he raises his daughter from the dead. The unnamed woman tries to sneak away after being cured of her disease, but Jesus insists she be healed as well, that she be welcomed back into the community of faith as a daughter, a sister, a mother.

We are all included in the family of God. We are not given the promise of a cure, necessarily; but we are given the assurance that we are made whole by the power of God.

Jesus continues to tell us, it's time to get up.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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