

Amazing Resuscitation

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 19th of June 2005.

The preacher is Rod McArdle. His sermon is entitled Amazing Resuscitation and is based on Mark chapter 5 verses 21 to 43.

And both of these shows do extensive surveys about the type of stories that are going to grab the attention of viewers. I mean there are stories obviously on diets, lots of stories on rip-off merchants, belligerent councils.

And the producers of these two shows, they're not dummies, there's about a half a million Melburnians that watch these shows each night. They love to run stories about healings from common old back pain cures to more exotic treatments.

People in fact are fascinated by ways to either limit or perhaps even reverse the decaying nature of our bodies. And if you think about it, that's not really surprising, is it? Because we actually live in a fallen world.

[1 : 1 7] A fallen world, a direct consequence of the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden against God. And so this whole world, Paul describes in Romans 8 as groaning as in labour pains.

And apart from what we obviously see in our natural environment with great upheavals, we actually don't have to look all that far to see the effects of the fall in both sickness and also in death.

I'm reminded of the Anglican vicar who, when he was looking through the morning paper, read his entry in the death notices. And his first thought was, of course, I wonder if the vestry members have seen it.

And he immediately gets on the phone and he calls one of them and he says, have you read the morning paper yet? And he said, yes, sir. I mean, it's an unusually subservient vestry.

And the vicar inquires with hesitation, yes, but did you see my name in the death notices? He says, oh, yes, I did.

[2 : 2 0] It's a long silence. Vicar, where are you calling from? I'm also reminded, of course, that little girl who comes home says, mummy, the Sunday school teacher told me this morning that we came from dust and we're going back to dust.

Is this really the case? Yes, dear, that's absolutely right. And she says, well, I just looked under the bed and either someone's coming or they're going.

Well, over the summer months, I spent summer three months, in fact, in a major Melbourne public hospital undertaking a hospital chaplaincy. And every day I was confronted with literally floor after floor after floor of people with just massive illnesses and terribly, terribly sick bodies.

So against that, it's not surprising that issues of suffering, of sickness, of healing, indeed of death, are never far from our conscious thoughts, even if we're actually not verbalising them.

And in fact, in the broader church, healing ministries are nearly as common as, well, sometimes you get the impression perhaps healing ministries are nearly as common as McDonald's. I just did a very quick search on the web and you might struggle to see that a little bit, but this is literally at random.

[3 : 42] This website is Jerry and Mary Breeden. They run a divine healing school. They can bring the divine healing school to your city by simply calling 509-324-1706.

But of course you have to be in the US to make that call or dial the international code. And then there was another site that I came across literally at random. This is Charles and Francis Hunter.

You won't be able to read that small print. Let me give you some highlights. These people are described as, quote, the happy hunters. They are legendary figures in the body of Christ. They're known around the whole world as two of the most anointed and energetic evangelists on earth.

This is their website. They have thousands of people healed of back problems of all kinds. This is one of the areas that they demonstrate in all of their healing meetings because 80% of the world has back problems.

Lots and lots of healing ministries. Well, if you were here last Sunday night, you recall that we looked at just that stunning and wonderful case of deliverance in Mark 5, verse 1, of the demonised man.

[4 : 48] A man who was degraded, who was dehumanised, who was dismissed from society. But the man was utterly transformed, absolutely transformed through his encounter with Jesus, the great deliverer.

And you might recall at the beginning of that message, I highlighted that we need to avoid two extreme positions when we think about demons. That one position that says they don't exist at all, and the other position that says everything that happens in our life which we don't like is the work of demons or the devil.

When we consider the subject of healing, there's also two extremes that we need to avoid. Both of these extremes are not supported by God's revelation in his word.

One of those extremes would be something like, there are no miracles today. View held by many non-believers and some Christians.

And there's another extreme position which says something like this, God must respond with a miracle each time I ask him, and typically using some sort of formula approach.

[6 : 03] In my experience, there are undoubtedly numerous unsupported claims made about miracles, especially by the so-called tele-evangelists. And as I've thought about that, I've realised in my own life that although it might be easy to react against that falsehood, I need to be careful not to lose sight of the fact that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed a miracle-working God.

And a really essential perspective to keep is that the greatest miracle, the greatest miracle that any one of us can experience, is being taken from a state of absolute spiritual darkness, alienation from God, to actually be brought into the kingdom of God's Son, to be an adopted son or daughter.

Of the living God. Well, the New Testament again and again demonstrates that Christ is the Lord of all. He's the Lord of the natural realm. You recall last week we looked at the end of chapter 4 when Jesus calms that terrifying storm on the Sea of Galilee by his powerful word.

The disciples were filled with great awe and they said to one another, Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? And Christ is the Lord of the unseen spiritual realm.

We looked last week at how thousands of demons, thousands of demons begged Jesus not to send them out of that particular region. And the Lord is the realm of humanity.

- [7 : 35] He's the Lord of humanity. These two healing stories that we're going to look at tonight from Mark 5 classically demonstrate that Christ is the Lord of all.
- So the context of this is Jesus has been over in this region, this mainly Gentile region of the Gerasenes. He travels with the disciples back over the Sea of Galilee to the west side of the sea.
- And there's a large crowd that come out to meet him. And you will have noticed as we went through that reading that actually both of these stories are intertwined, if you like, they're sandwiched together. And first of all, we meet Jairus who begs Jesus to come.
- He says, My little daughter is at the point of death. And then on the way to the house, a woman with long-term hemorrhaging has an encounter with Jesus and then the story goes back to Jairus.
- We need to see this message of the two stories, how they're revealed as we look at them together, if you like, look at them in stereo. And I want to do that by considering some of the parallel themes that come out of these two extraordinary miracle stories of healing.
- [8 : 41] The first thing I want us to consider some aspects of the sufferers and Jairus' daughter. Because it's in verse 42 that we learn that this little girl was 12 years old.
- She's desperately ill. And in fact, before Jesus reaches the house, she dies. You can imagine the grief of that for a parent. Perhaps you can imagine that.
- The loss of a child, laying there lifeless, dead, the body quickly becoming cold and stiff, where there was life, where there was vitality, where there was great expectations of the future, now dead.
- In fact, just yesterday, I was speaking to a mother who lost a baby son at only seven weeks of age through infant cot death. Devastating.
- And that's nearly 40 years ago for this woman. And when the doctor arrived at her house, his response was absolutely unambiguous. He apparently said, sorry lady, there's nothing I can do for the little boy.
- [9 : 46] He's well and truly gone. So here's Jairus' apple of his eye. Gone. Dead. I mean, the grief for Jairus, I think, would have been particularly great.
- I mean, if he was like any father, any typical father, he would have had a special bond with his daughter. Ask my wife Cheryl tonight, have a supper. Whether there's anyone in the world who can twist me around her little finger like our daughter Stephanie.
- She seems to be laughing in agreement. Let's then also consider then the second sufferer, this bleeding, hemorrhaging woman. Jairus' daughter was 12 years old and this woman has been hemorrhaging for 12 years.
- We're not told the precise details about it, but we can presume that it was related to uterine bleeding. And this would have made the woman ceremonially unclean.
- Her bleeding was abnormal and it had gone on for years and years. In fact, in verse 26, we're told that she'd endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and she was no better.
- [10 : 51] In fact, she grew worse. So there's one sufferer dying and then in fact dies and there's another sufferer with an incurable disease.
- Let's then consider the life situation of both Jairus and this bleeding woman. Firstly, Jairus. I mean, the contrast between these two main characters are extraordinary, aren't they?
- When you think about both on an economic, a social and on a religious level. Take Jairus. What a prestigious family he comes from. In verse 22, we read that he was the ruler or a ruler at least in the synagogue.

Some suggest perhaps the head ruler. He was accepted by society. He was influential. He was wealthy. He was a male. He was a leader and he could come directly to Jesus. But what a contrast with the bleeding woman.

She's a female. She's nameless. In fact, one person describes her as walking pollution. Her condition of hemorrhaging rendered her ceremonially unclean in Jewish society in accordance with Leviticus 15.

[11 : 58] She would have been subject to just tremendous social pressures for year after year after year. If she'd been married, she was likely divorced. She was ostracized. She was debarred from worship in the temple and the synagogue.

Penalious. She'd spent all the money she had and it got nowhere. In fact, her condition was getting worse. What a contrast of this woman to Jairus. But did you notice they do have something in common?

They've both heard about this man Jesus. They desperately desire healing and they're completely out of options.

As we consider those accounts tonight, I want you to just continue to think through in your mind how do you then respond to this man, Jesus of Nazareth?

In fact, who do you actually say he is? What claim does he have on your life, if any? Let's then consider thirdly both of these people coming to Jesus.

[13 : 05] Jairus, at the beginning of the story, he's a man of distinction, he's this man of wealth, he's this man of influence, but he comes to Jesus not in that condition, if you like, he comes to Jesus as a desperate man.

He's a desperate father. He's seeking to have the life of his little girl spared. And this huge crowd comes and gathers around Jesus, maybe to greet him, but I think more likely out of curiosity just to see what he might do next.

And verse 31 shows us that this was a jostling crowd, perhaps a very noisy crowd. And we can guess that a quiet lull would have fallen over that crowd as someone quite unexpected approaches Jesus.

And Mark records in verse 22, one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and when he saw him, he fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, my little daughter is at the point of death, come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live.

And what a surprise. I mean, here's Jairus, the leader, the one who the people in the crowd would have said, he's the one with authority. He's a member of the Jewish establishment, a Jewish establishment which was increasingly hostile to Jesus.

[14 : 17] And here he is, he comes to Jesus and he prostrates himself. He begs Jesus to come to his home and heal his little girl. I don't think we should think that Jairus was some devout follower of the Lord.

He was desperate, he needed Jesus. He probably wasn't sure really who this person was in totality, but he knew that he needed him. Jesus was the only chance for his little girl.

Great faith? I don't think so. But Jairus' infant faith, if you like, was directed rightly. It was directed to Jesus.

And Jesus responds immediately and he sets out with Jairus. But Jairus' infant faith is soon going to be sorely tested because we then come to the woman and Jesus stops.

You can imagine when Jesus stops what Jairus is thinking in this desperate state of trying to get home with Jesus to his house. But someone has touched the cloak of Jesus and his healing power has gone forth.

[15 : 25] In fact, Jesus willed it. This week, I noticed on that Channel 7 show, The Great Outdoors, this is not just by illustrations that I'm only watching TV through the week, but on The Great Outdoors, they were presenting a resort up at Port Douglas in Queensland.

And at this resort, there was all sorts of pampering, literally on tap, providing you had a pretty healthy credit card with you. And one of the specialties at this resort in Port Douglas was sea shell massage.

So they'd take those beautiful, smooth seashells and massage your body. You might ask, well, why would you use shells? Well, the presenter, with quite a serious expression, stated that the shells transfer the power of the ocean to the body.

You laugh. I suspect that's pretty appealing to a world heavily influenced by the New Age and a postmodern world. But it's fanciful, totally fanciful.

What is real, what is genuine, what is infinitely great is the power of God. And it was this power that was manifest by Jesus in front of the crowd.

[16 : 33] And we know from the Gospel account in verse 28 that the hemorrhaging woman had thought to herself, if I touch his clothes, I'll be made well. Now, the woman obviously held some superstitious views, maybe some magical ideas that somehow if she touched the edge of Jesus' cloak, that she'd be healed.

And I think it's fair to say there was selfishness involved. She was interested in the healing. She wasn't interested in the healer. Imperfect faith for sure, but real faith.

And Jesus honoured her. Immediately, verse 29, her hemorrhage stopped and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus wants the woman to be reconnected back into her society.

He shows great compassion to this lady. He wants the woman who's been healed to know that he cares about her, that, in fact, he knows her. And so Jesus forces her to publicly acknowledge her cure.

We read in verse 33, the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him and told him the whole truth. He said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well.

[17 : 52] Go in peace with all of the wonderful fullness of that word. Go in peace and be healed of your disease. You see, the woman needs to step out in faith and be identified.

So, if this woman had been thinking maybe that there was some magic that was involved, then Jesus just absolutely sweeps it away by declaring that, in fact, it was her faith that healed her.

It wasn't her touch, it wasn't her superstition, but it was her faith in Jesus. Although, probably no bigger than a mustard seed. This poor, desperate, bleeding woman is actually a lot like us.

We're real, we've searched for cures, for the worst of all diseases, that disease of spiritual alienation from the living God. And Jesus comes to us from the cross, do not fear that you haven't understood every aspect of the Christian faith in Jesus coming to you.

This woman clearly didn't. But, what you ought to fear is that you will let Jesus pass by without reaching out to him in faith. Now, the story comes back to Jairus again.

[19 : 09] We might imagine that when Jesus stopped and Jairus would have had all of this frustration, it probably was a frustration level that was going into outer space.

But he stands there and he witnesses this extraordinary miracle of the woman. And you can see that this frustrated level would have given rise to just a growing faith as he saw what Jesus did with this lady.

Makes me wonder what his thoughts were increasingly of the identity of this man, Jesus of Nazareth. That's the question that continues to be before each one of us tonight.

Who do you say that Jesus is? And, if you like, just as Jairus' hope was rising, we're told in verse 35, some people came from the leader's house to say, your daughter is dead, why trouble the teacher any further?

You see, for the crowd, Jesus was what? He was just simply a teacher. And no teacher could deal with death.

[20 : 12] Their conclusion is actually true. But is Jesus only a teacher? Who do you say that Jesus is?

Jairus had come to Jesus initially trusting that he'd cure his 12-year-old daughter. He hadn't worked out fully who Jesus really was. But there was some faith there.

Back in verse 23, even the words that he used of heal and life suggest that Jairus considered Jesus to be more than just some sort of wonder worker. We know that Jairus had faith because in fact Jesus commands Jairus in verse 36 to not be afraid but keep on believing.

That's actually the tense of the verb used there. Keep on believing in the way you began. Jairus had shown faith in coming to Jesus and if you like, now he needs to continue.

But can such faith continue in the face of death? Can it? In the face of death? Death is such a stark reality.

[21 : 21] If any of you have ever been to Europe and through those killing fields, that's probably an apt expression through France and Germany and it is just the most haunting sight to walk through these cemeteries because as you walk through them, it's as if in the quietness there's this massive loud scream of death.

Can faith continue in the face of death? Well, in the face of death Jairus obeys. His trust in Jesus, because that's what we're talking about when we speak of faith, is further tested.

It's tested because there are mourners in the house and they have caustic and mocking laughter when Jesus says, why do you make a commotion and weep? The child isn't dead, but sleeping.

I mean, of course the mourners knew she was dead, but Jesus is going to bring her back to earthly life, a resurrection. Where God is active, death does not need to be the end of existence.

Well, the crowd's scepticism puts them outside. There'll be no miracles for the scornful throng. Such unbelief will never experience the power of God.

[22 : 45] We need to think about that in our own lives and the life of the world around us. Such unbelief will never experience the power of God. So it's in private that with the parents and Peter and James and John, that Jairus' faith is vindicated.

Verse 41, Jesus takes her by the hand, the little girl, and says to her, Talitha kum, which means little girl, get up. And immediately, the text says, the girl got up and began to walk about.

She was 12 years of age. At this, they were overcome with amazement. In fact, literally, the text reads, they were amazed with great amazement.

God. I think we can probably relate to that. This wasn't an illusion. It wasn't a hallucination because Jesus asked that the girl be given something to eat.

So this raising of Jairus' daughter was, if you like, a proto-resurrection. It declared Jesus' triumph over death. In fact, both of these stories of healing in Mark chapter 5 are symbols of Jesus' resurrection.

[23 : 57] resurrection. But we know in our lives the reality of illness and death. So this amazing resurrection of Jairus' daughter, in fact, points forward to a time when God will completely break the grip of death on all who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when Christ returns.

So these two gospel accounts stunningly portray the power and the authority of Jesus. They also present two very different people with faith.

Faltering, imperfect, certainly immature faith. But faith, nevertheless. Faith is a critical aspect of our relationship with God.

In fact, in the book of Hebrews we read that without faith it's impossible to please God. But it is essential that we keep a biblical perspective on faith and healing.

Because no matter how desperate nor how genuine our faith is, the reality is we're not all healed and we're not saved from earthly death.

[25 : 14] faith. The so-called prosperity gospel growing out of the also so-called word of faith movement, we might just think of it as health and wealth, is a heresy.

Because the catch cry, which is typically have faith in your faith, makes faith a force. It makes it a force like Luke Skywalker in Star Wars.

God's power isn't put into operation by using some formula that if you say the words in the name of Jesus, somehow God robotically must respond to that.

It's not put into operation by some name it and claim it or by some positive confession. God's sovereign. And so when God does heal, it is his sovereign miracle bestowed by the merciful God.

It's his sovereign miracle bestowed out of his mercy. When we read an account like this, we certainly need to keep an eternal perspective, don't we?

[26 : 26] Because these miracles in Mark 5, they attest to who Jesus is, the Messiah and the Lord of all. And that power that was displayed by Jesus in this Galilean region, is related to the kingdom of God.

And the kingdom of God is present. It's a present reality now. But it will be fully manifest in the future. So in the now, in the present, we do continue to suffer.

Paul says all of creation groans. But in the present reality, we continue to trust in the Lord, who will indeed bring about the new heaven and the new earth, a new creation, not just a restoration of the old order.

So in this earthly life, if God does heal you of some ailment or illness, praise him. Continue to praise him. In this earthly life, God may not heal you of some ailment, disability or illness.

If he doesn't, what should we do? Continue to praise him. He's the sovereign Lord and he's working all things out in accordance with his perfect will.

[27 : 46] So this stilling of the storm that we've referred to in Mark 4, the deliverance of the demonic, the curing of this otherwise incurable, bleeding woman, the raising of the little girl, these amazing, stunning miracles, these mighty acts of power, they reveal God.

Not just an all-powerful God, but a God who's a deliverer, a God who's understanding, a God who is lovingly gentle and inviting. But more than that too.

Because Jesus Christ is able to totally reverse all of the forces that oppose God, whether natural, demonic, disease or death.

Recognise then if Jesus actually does have power over death, then we will actually, all of us, one day have to deal with him. And God promises that all rebellion against his will, his sovereign rule, will one day be dealt with.

So what's your response to Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus Christ. Have you reached out to Jesus Christ in faith?

[29 : 03] Notwithstanding that there's probably lots and lots of questions still on your mind. Or is your response like that of that scornful, mocking crowd around the house of Jairus?

Mark 5 just continues to reverberate with that rhetorical question, doesn't it? Who do you say that Jesus is?

Who do you say that Jesus is?