

Faith and Fear

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Date: 27 January 2019

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[0 : 0 0] I want to start with a question. When have you been really desperate? What's it like to be desperate? How does it feel? Maybe you were running late for an exam. Maybe you couldn't pay a bill that you needed to. Or maybe you just got completely lost.

With the hot weather we've had the last few days, I'm reminded of a time where I was desperate and I almost missed a flight home. I was in uni at the time. I went with some friends to Japan in the summer holidays. They left before I did and I stayed around and met up with some other people.

So for the flight back home, I wanted the cheapest flight possible. And luckily for me at that time, years ago, Jetstar had just started doing international flights.

So to save money, probably, Jetstar International only flew from a few cities in Asia and only to Brisbane.

And after you got to Brisbane, you had to take a domestic flight home. This meant, after arriving in Brisbane, I'd have three hours to check out, pick up my luggage, go through customs, walk three kilometres to the other terminal, check my luggage in again, and then go to Melbourne.

[1 : 2 7] But it's fine. Three hours is enough. Also, one of the wheels on my luggage had broken. One of the two wheels. And on the second last day, when my bags were mostly packed, and when they were at the weight limit, a friend I was visiting gave me some gifts from her mum.

Two kilos of rice. And a bottle of local whiskey, which was about another kilo. It's the middle of January, this time of year. It was winter. It was cold.

So to fit everything in, I put on my biggest, warmest clothes for the flight, and my bag was just at the limit. And then the plane was delayed.

It was delayed two hours to de-ice the wings. That's how cold it was. So when we finally got to Brisbane, there I was, with one hour to make it to the other terminal, in Brisbane's scorching January heat, half-carrying, half-dragging my broken bag, with my jackets on my shoulders, and sweat pouring down my body.

I was in utter despair. Would I make the flight? Would I miss it and have to pay extra? Didn't I choose Jetstar because it was cheap? What if I had to leave something behind?

[2 : 4 8] What would it cost to get home? These were the fears that were all around. And I kept thinking about them. And sometimes people say about planes, they won't leave without you.

They'll do an announcement. They care because you paid. But this was Jetstar. I had no faith in them. I had no hope in anyone to get me home.

I was desperate and I was afraid. So in our passage today, we have two people that we meet who are desperate. Way more desperate than I was.

And if you've been with us, we've been going through a couple of chapters in Mark, looking at how people respond to Jesus, to what he says and what he does. And in the last two weeks, especially, fear has been a major theme.

We've seen Jesus' power over some really scary and powerful things. We've seen people who turn and fear him as a result. Today, we see that it's faith in Jesus that overcomes fear and saves.

[3 : 54] So let's start by meeting the first of our two characters. And it's the first point on your outline. So if you have your Bibles, read with me from verse 21, where we started.

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 leaders, named Jairus, came.

And when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him. My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she'll be healed and live.

So Jesus went with him. So here we are. Jesus has crossed back again over the lake. Maybe a day's passed. Maybe more than a day. But the crowd remembers him.

Immediately, they gather when he gets there. And from the crowd, our first character emerges. Jairus. Now, you might not know, but this guy is a big deal.

[5 : 00] Mark tells us. He's one of the synagogue leaders. He's a prominent guy. And he'd be quite righteous. He knows the law. It's his job.

He'd be well respected. So you can almost imagine, as he comes towards Jesus, the whole crowd parts in two as he approaches. And everybody's watching as he comes.

This guy who comes up to Jesus and then falls at his feet, pleading earnestly. My little daughter is dying. Please, come and put your hands on her so that she'll be healed and live.

This guy is desperate. What can he do? But he's come to the right man, to Jesus. See how he falls at Jesus' feet. See his humility as he begs and he pleads.

And see the faith he has to say that Jesus only needs to put his hands on her to heal her. As I said, faith in Jesus overcomes fear and desperation and saves.

[6 : 13] Jesus sees this in Jairus. And so he goes with Jairus, as we see in 24. So that's Jairus. Now, at this point, Mark completely interrupts the story.

He's got another story and he's just shoved it in, sandwiched in the middle. Why does Mark do this? I think Mark does this because he wants us to compare the two stories.

So let's meet this other person and then we'll do that. We're now at the second point of your outline. Shameful woman. Secret courage. I couldn't find an S word for courage.

If you know one, don't tell me. It's too late. But let's read from verse 24. So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. She'd suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had. Yet instead of getting better, she grew worse.

[7 : 17] When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought, if I just touch his clothes, I'll be healed.

Immediately, her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body she was freed from her suffering. So let's compare them. Again, it's out of a crowd that our person emerges.

And again, just like Jairus, she's desperate. For 12 years, she's been suffering. And we're actually told later on, Jairus' daughter was 12 years old.

Again, like Jairus, who asked Jesus to put his hands on the girl, the woman thinks she'll be healed by touching Jesus' clothes with her hands, as we see in verse 28.

But there are some obvious differences. Jairus was a prominent man who'd be well known in the community, but we don't even know the woman's name.

[8 : 19] Jairus was a synagogue leader and a righteous man. But the woman's bleeding makes her unclean. She wouldn't even be allowed in the synagogue. What's unclean?

Many normal parts of life cause Jewish people to become unclean, according to the law. But by doing certain things and certain rituals, people would become clean again so they could participate in temple stuff.

It's normal to be unclean sometimes. But for this woman, she would have been unclean for the whole 12 years. You can hardly even consider her Jewish anymore.

And Jairus was probably fairly wealthy. We read later his house had servants. But we're told this woman had spent everything she had on doctors.

She had no money left. And Jairus came and he pleaded with Jesus publicly and humbly in front of everyone. While the woman, we're told in 27, snuck up behind him secretly, shamefully.

[9 : 29] But both of these people show their faith. For this woman, see how confident she is that she'll be healed. In verse 28, she thought, If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.

That's confidence. And also remember she's unclean. If she touches anyone, they would become unclean because of her. So the last place she should be is the middle of a busy crowd, bumping into people all over the place.

If she's found out here, she'd be completely shamed. Think of, we're talking about planes before. So think of in a plane, someone tries to sneak into first class because they're desperate to get some sleep or nice food.

And think of when someone does that, just when they get caught, they have to walk back to their chair in front of everyone else. You don't want to be that person.

It's just a walk of shame, isn't it? You don't want to be in that situation. You don't want the people to see you. She can't afford to get caught or seen in the crowd.

[10 : 49] And yet, such is her desperation and her confidence she'll be healed that she goes to Jesus anyway. And at once, we're told, she's healed.

Immediately, the bleeding stops. She's freed from suffering. Isn't that really good? It's nice. It is. But no one actually knows. And she's still poor, isn't she?

She's still unknown. She still carries her shame. So why is this story about the woman here? What's going on with Jairus? Well, again, we see faith in Jesus and that it's faith in Jesus that overcomes the woman's fear and saves her.

And also, I said before, Mark wants us to compare the two people, the two who come to Jesus. Now, the reason I think Mark wants us to compare them is because in the following section, that's exactly what Jesus does.

So let's go on. Jesus gives his verdict on each of the two people so that we can compare them correctly. So let's read on. And now we'll be at point three on the outline.

[11 : 58] And we'll see what Jesus says. So reading from verse 30. At once, Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and he asked, Who touched my clothes?

You see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered, and yet you can ask who touched me? But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. So, well, she came in secret and she thought she could get away with it.

But Jesus noticed at once, it says. No one else noticed. And we see the disciples, they don't have a clue what's going on. When he asks them, What do you do when you don't have a clue what's going on?

Obviously you make bad jokes. They mock him. The disciples mock him in 31. Maybe that's just what I do when I don't have a clue.

[13 : 13] But Jesus is persistent. We see in 32, he still asks, Now, how does this woman feel right now? Put yourself in her shoes. This was supposed to be secret.

She's not even supposed to be here. She's not even supposed to be in crowds. She would be making everyone else unclean. Jesus is probably really mad.

He's the teacher. What's going to happen? Will she be punished? Will she be killed? And the synagogue leader, Jairus, he's over there. And he's looking kind of impatient.

This woman is terrified. And she has every reason to be afraid. And yet she comes out and she falls at Jesus' feet, trembling with fear, as we read in 33.

She falls at his feet, just like Jairus had done, but not desperate for healing, as Jairus was, because she's already healed.

[14 : 14] She falls at his feet, confronting her shame and her guilt. And she's desperate for forgiveness and restoration. So what's Jesus' verdict?

Jesus commends her faith. And he says, Your faith has healed you. The faith that enabled her to come before him in spite of her great fear and overcome it.

And it's more than just healing. She's completely restored. As Jesus tells her, Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. What a good verdict.

Such a strong faith from this unseemingly woman. So surely our synagogue leader, with all his knowledge of the scripture and what God can do, his faith will be even more amazing.

Let's have a look right now. So we'll be at point four. We'll read from verse 35. While Jesus was still speaking, Some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader.

[15 : 23] Your daughter is dead, they said. Why bother the teacher anymore? Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, 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 leader, 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. Let's stop there. So straight away, some messengers arrive, and they tell Jairus that his daughter is dead.

Can you feel the despair in their message? Why bother the teacher anymore? It's too late. It's over. There's nothing he can do to help us.

And aren't they right? Isn't death the end? Sure, they knew Jesus could heal her, but it's too late now.

[16 : 29] She's dead. Now, we don't know exactly what Jairus is thinking, and if he would give up. But Jesus' words in 36 tell us he probably would.

Don't be afraid. Just believe. Don't be overcome by fear. Continue in the faith you started with. And how hard would that be when they get to his home?

There's a commotion, crying, wailing. It's a far cry from the amazing, courageous faith that we saw in the woman. It's the complete opposite.

Utter despair. But aren't they right? Isn't death the end? What could Jesus do? And when Jesus tells them that the girl is asleep, they laugh.

They mock him just like the disciples had done. Which, as we said, shows that they don't have a clue. They laugh because they don't understand.

[17 : 40] Death isn't the end. Jesus is more powerful than death, but they just don't have the faith to see it. They don't get it. Jairus is supposed to know his scriptures.

He's a synagogue leader. But he's totally underestimated Jesus. He's misunderstood that Jesus is God. He doesn't get it.

Now, Jesus could have gone home at this point. Clearly, no one wants him here. But he doesn't. Let's read from verse 40 to the end. But they laughed at him.

Verse 40. 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 began to walk around.

[18 : 41] She was 12 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.

There's two main things to see here. First, Jesus is more powerful than death. Death is not the end. Jairus' family were wrong.

Well, they're kind of right. If it's up to themselves or to human doctors, death is the end. But in Jesus, it isn't.

So it's only faith in Jesus that can overcome the despair and the fear of death and save. Now, we don't know what happens to Jairus after this, just that he's astonished.

Should he be surprised by Jesus' power? Or should he have expected it? We don't know if he became a follower of Jesus after what he saw, but we don't really need to know.

[19 : 43] Mark records this story so that we can see Jesus' power over death for ourselves. We have evidence that Jesus is powerful over death.

So with faith in Jesus, we don't need to fear death either. And the second thing that we see here is Jesus is incredibly gracious.

I said before, he didn't need to stay. No one wanted him there. They mocked him. But he insisted. He was the one who encouraged Jairus the whole time, don't give up, just believe.

And I think this is something that we can all benefit from hearing. As awesome and inspiring as the woman's faith is, I think we're all a bit more like Jairus and his family, more than we would like to admit.

But Jesus still saves the girl in spite of Jairus' lack of faith. And so this part of the story is really encouraging to me. That when our faith does fail, and it will, at times, God is full of grace and forgiveness.

[20 : 56] Our Old Testament reading was from a well-known story in Exodus that you might know that's very similar to Jairus' situation. Israel knew well what God could do as they saw his deliverance in Egypt.

Likewise, Jairus should know the scriptures well enough to know what Jesus could do. But when faced with the reality of their situation, Israel stuck between an ocean and an army, their faith is completely overcome by fear, and all that's left is despair.

Moses encourages them much like how Jesus encourages Jairus. Do not be afraid, stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.

The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still. So how can we here, how can we have a faith that overcomes fear?

It's because of the one in whom we have faith. Jesus is powerful over sickness and death and over the sea and the storm and demons as we've seen the last couple of weeks.

[22 : 17] If it was faith in just myself, I couldn't even overcome getting out of bed probably. But faith in Jesus can overcome all fear and save because of his power.

So what do we fear? What are the things our faith should help us overcome? Probably not just missing a flight, although that is scary, but we have two big examples in the text.

Fear of shame and fear of death. So let's start with fear of shame. I've heard people say before, you know, if God knew me, if God knew all the things that I'd done and how terrible they were, there's no way God could forgive me, it's just too much.

If that's you, I want you to look at the woman in this story. For 12 years, she was considered unclean and outcast by her community.

Now, Jews would have their sins forgiven regularly at the temple, but because she couldn't go into the temple, she's carrying 12 years worth of sins.

[23 : 34] and Jesus forgave her in an instant because of her faith. It's good to have a big view of sin because it's a big problem that none of us can deal with on our own.

But we should have an even bigger view of Jesus' power to defeat sin and shame because he is more powerful. It was costly, it cost him his life, but he could afford it and he did pay for it.

Through faith in only Jesus, we don't have to fear shame and sin and we can be saved from it. This is the most important thing the Bible teaches.

If you're new here or new to church or if this is new to you, then I urge you talk to me or talk to Jeff or if someone brought you along, talk to them.

God is gracious, loving and powerful to forgive for anyone who puts their faith in him. But for Christians who already trust in Jesus, do we have a faith that overcomes fear of shame or of guilt?

[24 : 50] Really, do we? Or are there certain temptations and parts in our lives where we give up a little, where we let them take over a little, that we don't give fully over to God?

I suspect that we all struggle with something, and in fact that we will for our whole lives until we get to new creation. Now, I don't want to guilt you.

In fact, it's the opposite. And remember, God is gracious and that we're already forgiven as his people. But my challenge is that we would aspire to the faith of the woman in this story, that you would take your faith seriously and your spiritual maturity, and that we would take seriously the spiritual maturity of our brothers and sisters around us at church.

So this is my challenge. Find someone you trust, not anyone, a good friend or a mentor probably. Tell them what things, what temptations, what shame you struggle to overcome.

And then make them keep you accountable. They won't remember to do it otherwise. You need to make them do it. You can use Google Calendar or something like that.

[26 : 15] It's not just about being better Christians, so God loves us more, because that's not how it works. But there's so much more joy and comfort when we find our hope in Jesus and the kind of words to the woman, go in peace, be freed from your suffering, than there is in the unfulfilling and fleeting pleasures of our desires and temptations.

That's why I want to challenge you. Do you have a faith in Jesus that overcomes fears of any shame and guilt? The second one is fear of death.

Death is scary. Of course it is. I got hit by a car a few years ago, only in the leg, but I still think about what might have happened if I wasn't fast enough to get out of the way, and it is scary.

There are Christians all over the world who live every day of their life with the choice of giving up their faith or fearing for their life. We can thank God that we don't live in those places here in Australia, but what if you did?

Would you last? Or would you give up? Do you have a faith that overcomes even fear of death? And even here in Australia, it's not easy.

[27 : 46] we will face persecution. Jesus promised that all Christians would face persecution. Christians in Australia are getting less and less popular and more and more hated.

People hate the things the Bible teaches. They hate what it teaches about marriage, which is probably the big discussion of our time. They hate what it says about parts of politics and even science.

And people hate Jesus, especially the one in the Bible who claims to be God. They might like their own version of Jesus, but they don't like the one who talks about sin or God's just judgment.

And they'll hate us, they'll hate you, because you're a Christian. Even some of your friends will. We'll have people at school, at work, at uni, who hate Christians and who give us a hard time because of it.

How long will your faith last? Or do you have a faith that overcomes fear of hatred and persecution? Will you just give up?

[28 : 56] Again, I don't want to scare you. God's gracious when we fail, which we will do. We'll fail just like Jairus. But this is the challenge of the passage today.

Do you have faith in Jesus that overcomes fear and saves? So I want to encourage, I want to finish by encouraging us all. I want you to continue to be encouraging one another in each other's faith and spiritual maturity.

And I'll use the words of Jesus as he encourages Jairus in verse 36. Don't be afraid, just believe. Let me pray.

Lord God, thank you for sending your son Jesus. Lord, thank you that he is powerful to save. Lord, thank you for the example of this woman and her faith and of Jairus and Jesus' graciousness to him.

Lord, help us in our lives to seek to become mature in our faith, that we might rely on you and have a faith that overcomes all fear and that would save us.

[30 : 11] we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.