

Today is our Annual General meeting and we have a very appropriate theme, 'The Life Giving Power of God.' We have been looking at the vanquishing of powers hostile to God over the past two weeks. Last week we looked at the demoniac from Gerasa who had multiple possessions and was released and healed by Jesus. The week before that we looked at the disciples caught in the midst of a storm and how they cried out, 'Master don't you care'. Jesus then got up and muzzled the storm and asked it to be calm and the storm immediately subsided. The sequence of incidents that Mark puts together now reaches a climax with the raising of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman who was sick for twelve years. The authority of Jesus that was exhibited in the muzzling of the storm and the healing of the demoniac now soars to new heights as he shows that he has authority over death and disease. The daughter of Jairus is dying according to the Markan account when he pleads with Jesus for her life (v 23), and is told she is dead after the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage (v. 35). Matthew records that the girl is already dead when Jairus pleads with Jesus (Matt 9:18), and Luke records that the daughter was dying (Lk 8:41-42). The exact time of the death is not clear. Jairus believed that Jesus had the authority to heal (5: 22) and therefore approaches Jesus. Mark uses his sandwich technique by which one incident is inserted within another. As he starts off with the incident about Jairus' daughter he inserts the healing of the woman suffering with a hemorrhage for twelve years. Today we will be looking at these two incidents. In both these incidents Jesus proves that he has the power to heal and the power to give life thereby vanquishing death and disease. God's power is sufficient to bring life.

The crowds continue to follow Jesus as they see that he was a person who was performing miracles. One of the synagogue rulers named Jairus came to Jesus and fell at his feet pleading with him earnestly about his little daughter who was on the verge of death. He implores Jesus to come home with him so that he can lay his hands on his daughter and heal her. Here we see the father's love as he is desperately wanting to see his daughter live and therefore pleads with Jesus to come home. Jesus agrees to the synagogue ruler's request and heads towards his home.

On the way something else happens and therefore Mark intersperses that incident in the midst of narrating this one. Among the crowd was a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. A woman in her condition would have been considered ceremonially unclean and anything that she touches would have also been unclean according to the Jewish laws (Lev 15:25-30). No pious Jew would have any contact with her. She had lived her life as an outcast for twelve years. No doubt Mark recorded the incident to dramatize Jesus' rejection of the concept of ritual uncleanness and to affirm his acceptance of all persons no matter what their status in society. The woman works her way through the crowd till she can get behind him and then reaches out her hand in faith that if she touches his garment she would become alright. Her courage is exemplary and so is her faith. She touches the Rabbi with faith hoping to be healed even though she knew she was ceremonially unclean and would not touch anyone. It took her a lot of courage to do so. As soon as she touched him she realized in her body that she was healed.

In the second incident Jesus raises Jairus' dead daughter to life. The people discourage Jairus by saying that his daughter was dead and that he should not trouble the Master any more. Jesus reassures him and tells him not to be afraid but only believe. Jesus goes to the home and then sends away all the mourners and takes Peter, James and John with him and raises the little girl, 'Talitha qum' which means 'Little girl rise' and at once the little girl rose up. He tells them to give her something to eat and commands them not to tell others about this.

In both these incidents we see the life giving power of God. It is he who changes situations and brings about life into dead situations. We need to have faith in God's ability like the woman who was healed and be confident that God has power to bring life. May we as a Church believe in the life giving power of God to change our dead situations.