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## Jesus and distress

### Mark 5.21-43

21 Jesus went back to the other side of the lake in the boat. There, a large crowd of people gathered around him on the shore. 22 A leader of the synagogue came. His name was Jairus. He saw Jesus and bowed down before him. 23 He begged Jesus again and again, saying, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and lay your hands on her. Then she will be healed and will live." 24 So Jesus went with Jairus. Many people followed Jesus. They were pushing very close around him. 25 There among the people was a woman who had been bleeding for the past twelve years. 26 She had suffered very much. Many doctors had tried to help her, and all the money she had was spent, but she was not improving. In fact, her sickness was getting worse. 27 The woman heard about Jesus, so she followed him with the other people and touched his coat. 28 She thought, "If I can just touch his clothes, that will be enough to heal me." 29 As soon as she touched his coat, her bleeding stopped. She felt that her body was healed from all the suffering. 30 Jesus immediately felt power go out from him, so he stopped and turned around. "Who touched my clothes?" he asked. 31 The followers said to Jesus, "There are so many people pushing against you. But you ask, 'Who touched me?'" 32 But Jesus continued looking for the one who touched him. 33 The woman knew that she was healed, so she came and bowed at Jesus' feet. She was shaking with fear. She told Jesus the whole story. 34 He said to her, "Dear woman, you are made well because you believed. Go in peace. You will not suffer anymore."

35 While Jesus was still there speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. They said, "Your daughter is dead. There is no need to bother the Teacher." 36 But Jesus did not care what the men said. He said to the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid; just believe." 37 Jesus let only Peter, James, and John the brother of James go with him. 38 They went to the synagogue leader's house, where Jesus saw many people crying loudly. There was a lot of confusion. 39 He entered the house and said, "Why are you people crying and making so much noise? This child is not dead. She is only sleeping." 40 But everyone laughed at him. Jesus told the people to leave the house. Then he went into the room where the child was. He brought the child's father and mother and his three followers into the room with him. 41 Then Jesus held the girl's hand and said to her, "Talitha, koum!" (This means "Little girl, I tell you to stand up!") 42 The girl immediately stood up and began walking. (She was twelve years old.) The father and mother and the followers were amazed. 43 Jesus gave the father and mother very strict orders not to tell people about this. Then he told them to give the girl some food to eat.

These two miracle stories, about two different people from two different age groups, suffering from two different problems, in two different locations and brought to the attention of Jesus in two different ways - come together in the one story about human suffering and distress to illustrate the Lord's compassion and his authority over disease and death.

Before we look at these two stories in detail, it is worthwhile that we first compare Mark's gospel to the other gospel writers so as to be aware that each gospel writer presents Jesus with a different emphasis upon who he was, ie:

**Matthew**,<sup>(1)</sup> writes in Jewish style and presents Jesus as '**the King**' - the fulfilment of the OT promises but rejected by them. Matthew focuses on the divine nature of Jesus.

**Luke**, the companion of Paul the apostle to the gentiles, presents Jesus as '**the man**' that many had heard about but did not know the full story of who he was.<sup>(2)</sup> Luke focuses on historical accuracy.

**John** the evangelist forthrightly presents Jesus as the '**Son of God**' and focuses on him as the Saviour of mankind.

**Mark**, the companion of Peter, presents Jesus as '**the servant of God**' and focuses more upon his good deeds than upon his teachings and so these two stories are brought together as wonderful examples of his many good deeds to ease human suffering and distress.

Now, the two stories:

**First:** the older woman had suffered for twelve years with a specific feminine complaint<sup>(3)</sup> which made her unclean<sup>(4)</sup> and therefore she was avoided by all men: she did everything she could to address the problem - in fact, spending all her money on Doctors only made it worse.<sup>(5)</sup> She was no doubt **distressed** by this problem.

She heard of Jesus, she saw Jesus, she came up behind him and touched his garment and was, then and there, healed.

But Jesus, discerning that someone had touched him as distinct from

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1 Most scholars believe the Gospel of Matthew was composed between 80 and 90 CE, with a range of possibility between 70 to 110 CE

2 Accordingly Luke, therefore, **all but** writes a biography of Jesus.

3 This is understood to have been a vaginal discharge of blood..

4 Leviticus 15.25 Lev 15:25 "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not during her time of monthly bleeding, or if she has a discharge after that time, she will be unclean, just as during the time of her monthly bleeding. She will be unclean for as long as she has a discharge.

5 This is the meaning of the Greek word xeiron.

all the ordinary contact of people mingling around him, stopped and asked **who** had touched his garment!

Mark writes, as no doubt Peter told him, that Jesus was calling out, "*Who touched my clothes?*" But his followers could not believe this and said to Jesus, "*There are so many people pushing against you. But you ask, 'Who touched me?'*" Nevertheless, Jesus continued looking for the **one** who touched him.

Two things from this particular story:

**First**, even though Jesus was busy with the crowd around him, his compassion was such that, in a kind of automatic way, healing went forth from him to meet an unspoken need.

This is how it is with God in His grace and love for us - He is always a *step-ahead-of-us* and all the time so that if we fall, He is there to pick us up again. <sup>(6)</sup>

Not everyone in our world today knows this and therefore cannot appreciate the Fatherly nature of God who created everything and everyone of us - He is fully committed to us.

**Second**: by insisting this woman declare herself, Jesus was not seeking to embarrass her but completely the opposite - to complement her for her faith and to use her as an example to others in how to reach out in faith.

Mark writes, "The woman knew that she was healed, so she came and bowed at Jesus' feet. She was shaking with fear. She told Jesus the whole story. He said to her, "*Dear woman, you are made well because you believed. Go in peace. You will not suffer anymore.*" <sup>(7)</sup>

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6 Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." John 6:44: "No man can come to me, unless the Father who has sent me, draw him..." John 12:32: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." Romans 2:4: "...the goodness of God leads you to repentance..."

Ephesians 1:13 (NASB): "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise..." Philipians 2:12-13: "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that works in you according to his good pleasure, both to will and to do." 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us."

Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

7 According to the Greek it can be translated that Jesus said to her, "*your faith has brought you salvation.*"

It's a simple enough story and illustrates well that faith has to be **in action** to be effective.

The second story is different and whilst the 12yo child - the daughter of Jairus a synagogue leader - is on the point of death,<sup>(8)</sup> it is Jairus himself who suffers the deep **distress**.

Jairus pleads with Jesus to go to his daughter. Mark, again as Peter probably related the story to him, writes, Jairus "begged Jesus again and again, saying, *'my little daughter is dying. Please come and lay your hands on her. Then she will be healed and will live.'*"

For Jairus, it must have been an agonising test of faith when Jesus was delayed by the woman touching his garment and then, as Mark puts it, while Jesus was still there speaking, some men came from the house ... and they said to Jairus, *"Your daughter is dead. There is no need to bother the Teacher."*

His **distress** must have been very difficult to bear at that moment in time.

I have been to many homes and situations involving the death of children. **Alford's point:** Police/Ambulance - cot death.

Jesus had some good news for Jairus, she was not dead but still alive even though she may well have been critically ill and close to death.

Although arterial pulse was known from at least 600BC and continued to be refined up to Hippocrates in 375BC and onwards, without a stethoscope which was not invented until 1816 by French Professor Rene Laennec,<sup>(9)</sup> it would have been very difficult to know for sure if she was **really** alive or dead.

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8 The Greek is εσχατως εχει

9 He used a hollow tube and placed one end on the heart of his patient and the other end he placed his ear. Ironically, he died of tuberculosis in 1826, aged 45.

Similarly with the human heart - a crude understanding of it from the 4th century BC but not until the 2nd century AD that Galen identified arteries and veins and much later, in 1242, that coronary and pulmonary circulations were better understood.

Matthew, and particularly Luke who was a doctor in those days, imply the child was probably dead as did the crowd of people who gave the bad news to Jairus and, who later scorned at him for saying she was only asleep.

Mark, who heard the story from Peter who was there at the time - an eyewitness and indicates she was either in a coma or trance-like sleep.

Two things from this:

**First:** if there was confusion about whether she was dead or not, at the very least, Jesus may well have saved her from being buried alive which is known to have taken place throughout history and to at least the 1890's.<sup>(10)</sup>

**Second:** even though it is a long-bow, it is possible that the word "sleep" was not so much to be taken literal but the germinal truth of later christianity that the faithful dead will be "awakened" from their sleep."<sup>(11)</sup>

In any case, it is still a miracle to wake a child from a coma or a trance-like sleep and it is still true that the authority of Jesus extends beyond the grave.

When Jairus was probably at his worse moment, Jesus turns to him and says, *"Don't be afraid; just believe."*

This is no doubt the harder test of faith for our humanity, to be free from fear by placing our faith, hope and love in God.

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10 Philosopher John Duns Scotus (1308) was found outside his coffin. A Mr Jenkins (1855) was found turned over in his coffin and his hair pulled out. In Canada (1886), a young girl with the surname "Collins" was found in her coffin with her knees bent up and her shroud "torn to shreds". In Massachusetts (2005) a man in a body bag at a funeral home was found to still be alive.

11 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. I Thess 4.13-14

## Conclusion

According to the English Dictionary, the word **distress** (as a noun) means extreme anxiety, sorrow or pain.

Accordingly, if you suffer from anguish, agony, affliction, torment, discomfort, heartache, misery, sorrow, grief, sadness, desolation, despair, trouble or worry, you are **distressed**.

Many people are distressed today. Franklin Graham, son of Billy, was recently interviewed on American Television CNN (2015) and he highlighted the difficulties around the world which indicate that globally we are in deep trouble and distress. He believes global distress will eventually consume us.

City Morgue: young man killed on Ferry Road, no seat belt. "Get up son ...". If the Lord was there his compassion was such he would have told the young man to get up and go home.

Our distress is to help others with their distress.

That this church and you could become people who others can come and "touch" with their suffering and we can encourage them in faith.

In June 2015, as I prepared for the 9am service at St Luke's Concord-Burwood, a young woman approached me and said she needed help with her life - she was in a mess and wanted God to help her.

At 33, she has had 4 children to 3 men and had suffered domestic violence from each of them and now, all her children have been placed in foster care - she has put her faith in the Lord and the people of St Luke's have embraced her with acceptance and love.

We assured her we will do all we can to help her and that Jesus in her life will take away her distress - in just three weeks she is a changed person and gives thanks to God for his love, grace and compassion and for easing her distress.

Pray that God will give you such a ministry to others that you can ease their distress and bring them to the Lord.