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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Pentecost Season

Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

WHEN GOD LET'S THINGS GO TOO FAR

Last week, the theme of Pastor Arndt's sermon was "When the Lord Doesn't Calm the Storm." From the Gospel Lesson we had heard the account of Jesus calming a storm on the sea of Galilee. But life is not always so neatly episodic. We also heard from the book of Acts about Paul and Luke on a ship that was tossed on stormy seas for two weeks before the whole ship was broken to pieces and the passengers had to grab on to planks in order to make their way to shore. Not so neat and tidy. And yet the Lord was no less in control and no less involved in what was happening. He had even sent an angel to encourage Paul during that ordeal.

Today I'd like to continue along the same line as the theme, "When the Lord Doesn't Calm the Storm." From the account of Jairus and the death of his twelve-year-old daughter in Mark chapter 5, let's contemplate "When God Lets Things Go Too Far."

Couldn't Jesus have prevented the little girl from dying at all? Yes, of course, He could have. Then why didn't He? Why couldn't He have just spoken a word when Jairus first approached Him and she would have been healed? Why did He let things go too far?

There is not a more desperate feeling in the world than when your child becomes seriously ill. It is heart-wrenching to read what Mark wrote: *One of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."*

On the one hand, let's note how quickly the Lord responded to his prayer. So busy was Jesus training His disciples, constantly surrounded and ministering to crowds of people, consciously managing events toward the outcome of His death and resurrection – yet, Jesus immediately drops everything and goes with Jairus – as though no one else in the world existed, as though nothing else mattered right then.

That's how your Lord dealt with you too calling you by name in your Baptism – as though no one else in the world existed and all that mattered was you. And because He adopted you to be His child in Baptism, He gives you still His undivided attention now.

On the other hand, Jesus let Himself get delayed on the way to Jairus' house. We didn't read this part of chapter 5 today, but a woman who had been suffering with a bleeding illness for 12 years secretly touched the edge of His cloak to be healed. Jesus stopped and searched for her in the crowd – not to scold her as she feared, but just to assure her, one-on-one, that she had not done wrong, that He was pleased to have healed her.

But how does this make any sense? Jesus heals this woman but not the little girl? He gets sidetracked and loses precious minutes while the life is draining away from the little girl?

And as Jesus appears to dawdle, the worst happens. Mark chapter 5 says, *Some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"* It would seem that Jesus had let things go too far.

But then, at that very moment, Jesus said something crucial. Mark 5 tells us, *Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."* Just believe. It is through faith that we are saved and that we receive every good blessing from God. Forget everything else. Just believe. It's really the same thing that Jesus spoke into your heart at Baptism, "Just believe," and by that powerful word your faith in Jesus was born.

Is it possible that in the same way Jesus knew the woman in the crowd needed His personal assurance, He also knew Jairus needed this? As a leader in the local Jewish church, for that's what a synagogue ruler was, Jairus would have been familiar with the Scriptures. It is clear He already had faith in Jesus – enough to go to Jesus in his dire need. But now Jesus was taking Jairus' faith to the next level.

Taking Peter, James and John with Him, Jesus entered the house. Understandably, people were distraught. Jesus said, *"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep". But they laughed at him.*

People laughed. But not Peter, James or John. Not Jairus or his wife. They did not laugh, because faith is trusting that things are not as they seem. Faith is trusting what God says even when it seems absurd, even when things appear to be the opposite. Faith believes God turns things on their head. The Apostle Paul wrote, *God chooses the lowly things of this world and the despised things -and the things that are not -to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.* You see, the secret of faith is that though it may seem to us like the God has let things go too far, things can never go too far for God. He is bigger than all of it and He reverses things to make them the very opposite of what they appear to be to us. That is the essence of salvation.

In a sermon on this very section of Scripture, Martin Luther preached: *What the Lord speaks is the exact opposite of what we see with our eyes. As, for example, the little girl was dead in the eyes of all the people, but in my eyes, Christ said, she was alive and sleeping. David was in his own eyes and in the eyes of the world a poor shepherd, but in my eyes he was a king. All of you who believe on me are in your own eyes miserable sinners, but in my eyes great saints and as the angels of God. For I need speak no more than a word, and sin, death, and disease must flee away, and righteousness, life and health shall be in their place. As I speak, so it must be and it can never be otherwise.*

By His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, Jesus has reversed everything for us who believe. Things hadn't gone too far. Jesus demonstrated this truth. Listen again to Mark chapter 5: *After Jesus had put everyone 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, "Talithah koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!") Immediately the girl stood up and walked around. At this they were very astonished.*

What Jesus did for that little girl He promises to do for you and me and for every believer on the Last Day. He will call each of us to arise from our graves even if there is nothing left of us but dust.

What's more is that Jesus already called you to eternal life when you were baptized. He said to you, "Little girl or little boy, I say to you arise! Come to life!" And there at your Baptism you were born to eternal life so that even now when you are feeling your mortality and the stiffness of age and your limitations and life seems to have you trapped and death seems to rule everywhere, eternity still lives within you. We heard the Apostle Paul's words in the 2nd Scripture reading today: *We always carry around in our body the death of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and bring us (together with you) into his presence.*

So often in this life it seems like the Lord lets things go too far. But remember what Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. Just believe." Nothing is ever too far for God. He makes things the opposite of what they seem to be. The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*