Mark Lesson 16 (2022)

**“DON’T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE.”**

(The Technic of Faith)

Mark 5:21-24/35-43

Key Verse: 5:36

“Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’”

Highlighting the divine power of Jesus through two miracles, the calming of the storm in the Sea of Galilee (4:35-41) and driving thousands of demons out of the man in Gerasenes (5:1-20), the author Mark seems to emphasize the power of faith in two persons, the bleeding woman, and Jairus, the synagogue ruler. In the previous passage, Jesus blessed the bleeding woman’s faith by saying, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” (34). In today’s passage, Jesus helps Jairus’ faith by saying, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” (36). Faith is the focal point of today’s event.

When we hear the word “faith,” we often affiliate it with religion. But faith isn’t just a religious matter. It’s a part of human nature. It is true that without faith, it’s impossible to please God, as Hebrews 11:6 states. But we can also say that we cannot be truly happy and satisfied without faith. The Creator God gave us not just a physical body, emotion, and reason but also faith. Faith is one of the most fundamental assets for humans. Just as our body, emotion, and reason need to grow, our faith also needs to be developed and grow. We’ve been told to “have faith” in God. But the problem for many of us is that we don’t know how. Some people have vague ideas but don’t know any practical method to develop faith. That’s why I put the title *“The Technic of Faith.”* This morning, let us think about how we can build our faith in God.

Before launching into today’s event, let us review the context of it. In the previous passage, we learned that Jesus was going to Jairus’ house to heal his daughter. On his way to Jairus’ house, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years approached from behind and touched his cloak because she believed that if she could touch his cloak, her bleeding would stop. And it did. Yet, realizing that power had gone out from him, Jesus turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” The woman couldn’t hide any longer. She stepped out and told him the whole story of her suffering from chronic bleeding and the miraculous healing as she touched his cloak. Jesus blessed her faith and said, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” (5:34)

Probably, while she shared her story, Jairus must have been getting more anxious, thinking that Jesus was taking too much time with her while his daughter might die anytime soon. Yet, hearing her instant healing could have convinced him that it would be okay if Jesus arrived at his house before she died.

Look at verse 35. “While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they said, ‘Why bother the teacher anymore?’” Unfortunately, Jairus’ worst nightmare became a reality. Jairus could have been shaken up by the sad news about his daughter’s death. Their advice, “Why bother the teacher anymore?” indicates that they didn’t believe that Jesus could do anything further despite his good intention since she crossed the line. Why would Jesus take so much time when he could’ve gone to Jairus’ house before she died?

Whenever Jesus delays things, he usually has a purpose. That was the case with Lazarus in John’s Gospel (John 11). Jesus might have delayed on purpose because he planned to let her die and raise her from death. Yet, no one knew about it, except Jesus himself. However, instead of telling Jairus what he would do, he simply said to him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” I would be terrified and saddened if I were in Jairus’ shoes. I might have asked myself, *“What does he mean saying ‘don’t be afraid, just believe? “What can he do for my daughter when she is dead?”* Jairus did not know precisely what Jesus was going to do. Yet, Jesus asked him not to be afraid and just believe. Believe what?

It seems that Jesus was asking Jairus to trust him even in the worst situation, her daughter’s death. Wow! That’s extremely difficult to do. But that is precisely the point. Jesus was trying to teach Jairus that faith is to trust God for his goodness even during the worst situation. Jairus had been hanging on the rope before falling down the cliff (Pic#2). And Jesus seemed to cut the cord, saying, “Don’t be afraid; just believe!” We don’t know Jairus’ response to Jesus’ words. It seems that he did trust in Jesus.

Look at verses 37-40a. “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.” We don’t know how long it took for them to arrive at Jairus’ house. We also wonder why Jesus didn’t allow anyone except his three top disciples to follow him. Of course, it was not the only time Jesus took only three of them. Probably, he thought other disciples were not yet ready for the things they would experience.

The atmosphere of the house of Jairus was sad because the little girl had just died. Hired professional mourners were already at work, weeping, wailing, and playing sad music. Probably, they looked at Jesus with resentment for his late arrival. Yet, Jesus told them that they shouldn’t cry or make a big commotion because the girl was not dead but asleep. Jesus used the word “asleep” figuratively, meaning that even though she was dead, her death would be temporary, like sleep. But people didn’t understand what Jesus meant and laughed at him.

Generally, we consider death as a permanent departure from life. But Yet, Jesus compares it to sleep because physical death is like resting until we wake up again in the time of resurrection. Even though it’s very encouraging, it’s hard to believe it. Especially after death, our physical body turns to dust, whether we bury it in the tomb or criminate it. The Prophet Daniel 12:2 states, “Multitude who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting condemnation.” We wonder how the handful of dust can be resurrected and transformed into a glorious individual. Apostle Paul said it’s a mystery of God (1 Cor. 15:51). The resurrection of our body is also God’s sure promise for his children. Even though I don’t understand precisely how it would happen, I believe that God, who loves us, is able to do so. Honestly, we are not entirely free from the fear of dying. But we are not afraid of falling asleep, like a baby. Then, someday, Jesus will wake us up.

Look at verses 40b-43. “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 koum!”* (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve 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.” Only seven people were in the room; Jairus’ daughter, her father, and her mother, Peter, James, John, and Jesus. Outside, people didn’t know precisely what was happening inside the room. Since Jesus told his parents and disciples not to tell anyone about it, people could speculate that she didn’t die but was asleep. Yet Jesus healed her from sickness.

I wonder why Jesus wouldn’t want people to know about what happened there. It may be because if people knew that Jesus raised the dead girl, they might have brought many other dead people so that he could raise them. Of course, he could do so if he wanted. But it wasn’t God’s will to do so until the final day. Yet, today’s miracle clearly illustrates that Jesus is the Son of God who has the power and authority to forgive sins and give us everlasting life. Yet, Jesus kept it as the messianic secret until the appointed time.

In this event, we see that the author Mark focused on Jairus's faith, particularly his faith's development in the worst situation. Overhearing the news of the death of Jairus’ daughter, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” With the help of Jesus, Jairus seems to have overcome fear and doubt by putting his absolute trust in Jesus even in the worst situation. I can imagine that after this event, his faith in God had grown much more solid and mature so that he could have peace and experience God’s living presence in his life, even in the worst situation.

We seem to have faith in God as long as things are favorable to us. Yet, our faith is challenged and often shaken when things are not so good. The fact is that we are constantly surrounded by problems in this world, one after another. Even though we want to have faith in God, it’s not easy. Even though we have been attending church for many years, many of us don’t seem to have the practical wisdom to build our faith in God. So, how can we develop our faith? Based on today’s key verse, I suggest two ways to build our faith in God. “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

***First, we must have a habit of prayer and personal devotion***: Christian faith is relational. It’s different from having self-confidence. Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing.” Our faith can grow through our intimate relationship with God.

One of the best ways to build a relationship with the Lord is to have a personal devotion and daily prayer. Starting our day with at least ten or even two or three minutes of personal devotion is essential even though we might be busy and hurried all the time. People say that they are too busy to have personal devotion. Yet, they spend enough time on what they want to do. We need to withdraw from the busy world and be in our own quiet inner temple by closing our eyes, taking a deep breath, meditating on his words, and having communion with the Lord. During ten minutes of devotion, we can think of God and Jesus, confess our sins, pray for those who have done wrong against us, and ask for strength.

Suppose we do this consistently day after day. In that case, true faith will begin to send spiritual health and power through your healthy personality. It will surely give us calm strength and undisturbed tranquility for the day. Psalm 46:10a states, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Pic#3) It also reminds us of Philippians 4:6 and 7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” When we do so, the presence of God becomes real to us rather than remaining a vague concept.

***Second, the ultimate way to have faith in God is to trust.*** We can learn how to trust in God simply by an act of trust. There is no other way. We tend not to trust anybody, even God and ourselves. So, it’s hard to trust. That is why Jesus told his disciples that we could never enter the kingdom of God unless we change and become like little children (Mt. 18:3).

“Just believe” means to believe that in all things, God works for the ultimate good of his beloved children (Ro. 8:28-30). Sometimes, things around me may go from bad to worse. But we should not allow fear to occupy us. Instead, we should surrender ourselves entirely to God’s hand. When we do so, a strange thing happens. We start to have inexpressible peace regardless. Have you experienced such absolute peace during the storm in your life? Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and trust also in me.” (John 14:1: NLT)

Many problems we face often look impossible to overcome. Yet, we need to trust in God, believing that we can do everything in him who gives us strength. (Phil. 4:13) I like what Nelson Mandela said. *“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”* I found this phrase in my coffee mug (Pic#1). I am encouraged to face challenges with courageous faith whenever I read this phrase.

The Great Depression in the 1930s in the US swept the entire world. But the leading cause of the Great Depression was also fear. People were afraid before the depression came, and rumors spread all over the nation. In their fear, everybody went to the bank and withdrew their money until all the banks collapsed, and businesses were ruined. But President Frank Roosevelt (1882-1945) did not allow fear to destroy the nation. He said in his inauguration address, ***“We have nothing to fear except fear itself.”*** Through his courageous faith, the country was revived. We have just experienced the pandemic for the last three years. Many people are struggling with constant anxiety and stress. What we need as an individual, a nation, and a global community is faith in God.

Fear is the opposite of faith. Faith is essential for every human being to find true meaning in life, to be truly happy and victorious. It can be developed and grow through our daily devotion and an act of trust. Most of all, we need to hear Jesus’ words to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” May we learn to develop our faith in God through daily devotion and with a simple act of trust in God.