

Do you have faith?

Mark 5:21-43

*Praise the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits –
Who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion.
(Psalm 103:2-4)*

Do you have faith? *'I believe in God – isn't that enough?'* Have **you** been in a situation where your trust in God was **tested**?

Here, in St Marc's one Sunday, towards the end of the service, an opportunity was given, to tell a personal story – which I took. I said, "My daughter has been deeply depressed. She went on holiday to Morocco, but fell mentally ill and was taken to hospital. Val has flown out there to bring her back to England. This morning I read these words from Psalm 112 (v.7) *'He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting the Lord.'*" That service was followed by Family Lunch. In the course of it, a message came from my wife, *'Our daughter is dead; she took her own life this morning'*.

Our reading today, from Mark's Gospel, teaches us how we are to trust God, and how he helps our trust to grow. **Why does God do that?** Because he loves us, he wants us to know and trust him better. He seeks our love for him to become real and deep.

I don't know what conversation Jairus may have had with his wife before leaving home that morning. But they must have talked about Jesus. I believe they had known of his compassion and power to heal. Now their only beloved daughter lay dying.

Suddenly he sees a great crowd at the lakeside, welcoming Jesus, listening to him. As the ruler of the local synagogue, he knows **the people** in that crowd and **they** know him. But this is no time to stand on his dignity. So he falls at Jesus' feet and makes his plea, revealing his trust: *Please lay your hands on her – and she will live!* I'm sure Jesus says, *I will come.* He goes with Jairus, and the crowd follows.

But someone else that morning has had the same idea. She also believes Jesus has power to heal. But her illness is embarrassing and makes her 'unclean' – she shouldn't really **be** in that crowd. *If I just touch his clothes – he need never know – I'm sure his power will heal me.* But Jesus **does** know. She **has** been healed and she **knows** it.

At that moment, **God is doing two things.** He allows this woman to interrupt Jesus' progress to Jairus' house – because he wants Jairus' faith to be tested, and to grow. Despite the fatal delay, Jairus hears this woman's story and is surely helped by it. God also wants this woman to know of **his love for her**, and for **her** trust to be better expressed.

So Jesus asks, *Who touched me?* As he looks around, she realises she can't remain hidden. *Won't he be angry with me? I have made **him** unclean!* So, in fear and trembling, she confesses what she had done. At once, Jesus greets her with loving tenderness, *Daughter, your faith has healed you.*

It wasn't enough that she has **touched** him and been healed. She needs to know God doesn't answer prayer **as if** he were just a slot-machine. He wants a **relationship** with us. God's mercy results from **his love for her.** *Go in peace – into shalom! Into wholeness and well-being.* To experience God's love is **so much more** than just being healed. Now her suffering is **known to all** the crowd – and her **healing, her cleansing** – the synagogue ruler is witness to it!

At this moment, news was brought to Jairus – *Your daughter is dead! Why bother the teacher any more?* Jesus sees Jairus' pain, and wants him to know God loves **him.** *Don't be afraid – go on trusting God.*

Jesus asks only 3 closest disciples to follow (it would still be a shock for the girl to wake up and find 4 men in her bedroom, as well as her parents). Now he rebukes the professional mourners – (and there were flute-players there, too, Matthew tells us). Jesus tells them the girl was not dead, but asleep. Their 'sorrow' turns instantly to scornful laughter – they **know** she is dead. Jesus knows that, too – but also that he is going to wake her up!

Jesus takes the girl by the hand, and speaks the words her mother must often have used, *Little girl, get up!* And she does! And she walks around. They are all astonished! But Jesus thinks of the girl's need – of food, after days of being without. *Don't just go out and tell others – **she** needs you; and **God** waits first your thanks and praise.*

What are we to learn from all this?

Perhaps we're like the crowd – just going along and **seeing** (or **hearing!**) – but doing nothing more. Or we could be like the woman – finding there's more than just 'getting better'. Finding we need to confess to Jesus our need and uncleanness, discovering his love and gift of peace. ***Have you reached out to touch Jesus – here, this morning?! Have you confessed your need and trust?***

Have you told others of your trust in Jesus – and know you've been rewarded?

All of us have our faith tested – at one time or another. *Will we respond by **going on trusting** our Saviour-God? Will our faith be steadfast when **we** receive 'bad news'?* I had already had other times to discover God's faithful love and care, especially in bereavement, but it was still very sad, for Val and myself, and still is.

When we pray, God **doesn't** always reverse the circumstances, as Jesus did for Jairus and this woman. **But God may**, increasing our love and trust!

Some of you know that, quite recently, I was asked by her mother, to pray for Rosa, a 21-year old young woman, in hospital here in Grenoble. She had had a severe skiing accident and had been operated on. Subsequently, as a result, her brain was damaged and she was in a coma, without any sign of life, except she was still breathing. It was a privilege to anoint her twice (as James tells us to do) and pray for her recovery, although she appeared to be 'brain-dead', all that time. Her mother arranged for her daughter to be transported back to Rome, where the family lived – and a few weeks later, we were sent a photo of Rosa, sitting up in bed and smiling! What joy! What a miracle! She still has a long way to go, for her injuries were severe. But I trust God has a special purpose for her life ...

*Will you go on trusting God? Have you begun, **really** to trust him?*