

"Our Lord's Authority over Death"

Mark 5:21-43

Advent Midweek 4

Messiah, Boerne

December 21, 2022

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Text: Mark 5:21-43

Dear Friends in Christ:

Introduction: "Biblical vs. 'American Pop' Theology"

- A. The now-sainted Dr. Horace Hummel of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, taught the Old Testament for many years. His no-nonsense approach challenged his students regarding their views of the Old Testament, particularly regarding their theological presuppositions. For example, if a student were to say, "God loves the sinner, but hates the sin," he might point out that although God destroys the power of sin, he still sends unrepentant sinners to hell. *So, stop saying this!*
 - B. On another occasion Dr. Hummel was teaching on the purity laws from Leviticus 11-15 and Numbers 19. In attempts to make sense of these commands, some of the students suggested that they must have been associated with health and hygiene in some way, a common explanation. "Well, you know," he said, "I don't think God cared more about the health of his Old Testament people than he cared about the health of his New Testament people," since the Old Testament regulations—the ceremonial laws—do not carry over into the New Testament age. The simple fact is that they were unclean because they were unclean. Period.
 - C. Dr. Hummel pointed out that these purity laws were a reminder that we live in a fallen creation, and things like skin diseases and other physical ailments were unclean because they were associated with a fallen creation and the universal presence of death. The purity regulations were reminders that we live in a world corrupted by sin and are subject to death. *We ourselves are going to die. And we should never forget it.*
- I. Jesus Heals the Sick and Raises the Dead

- A. In today's text, we find two stories sandwiched together, one dealing with ritual impurity, and the other dealing especially with death. The first story begins with Jairus, a synagogue ruler, approaching Jesus to request that he heal his daughter who is sick. In the second story, a woman with a twelve-year discharge of blood has suffered greatly and has heard about Jesus, so she believes he can save her from her condition. She is afraid to come to Jesus openly, so she touches his garment and is saved from her condition. Jesus, however, knows that someone touched him because power left him. "Who touched my garment?" Jesus asks, and the woman, fearfully, comes forward and confesses. Jesus responds, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction."
- B. So Jesus commends the woman's faith. She did not need to be afraid after all, and the second story concludes with Jesus' words to the woman. What's truly amazing about this story is that Jesus is so full of power that, unbeknownst to him, some stranger can touch him and be saved from her physical ailment. The fact that Jesus saves someone without initially realizing it is a surprising testimony to Jesus' power to save.
- C. Now story one picks up again, but tragedy strikes. Jairus' daughter is dead. Why trouble Jesus any longer? Jesus cannot deal with death, can he? Then comes the climax of the sandwiched stories, as Jesus enters Jairus' house, enters the daughter's room, says to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" And the girl is resurrected and lives again.

II. Common themes among the stories.

- A. The joining together of these two stories likely has some meaning for us, so what do these stories have in common? Well, first of all, both stories show that the proper response to the in-breaking of God's reign in Jesus is to believe in Jesus. "Stop being afraid! Only believe!" And second, both stories have something to do with the Old Testament regulations concerning being ritually clean and unclean. *Why was the woman afraid to come to Jesus openly?* It's likely because she was unclean according to Leviticus 15. *Why was she afraid when Jesus asked, "Who touched my garments?"* It's because she may have sinned against Jesus even by touching his garments. She might have made him unclean.

- B. A bigger question, however, is *why wasn't Jesus angry with the woman for touching him?* The fact is, the purity regulations no longer applied, *at least not to Jesus.* Remember how the Holy Spirit came down into him at his baptism. Remember the exorcism in Capernaum and how the unclean spirit identified Jesus as the Holy One of God. Jesus now possesses a holiness that cannot be defiled. In fact, this holiness drives out impurity. An unclean person can even touch Jesus without asking permission and, rather than defile him, that person's impurity is removed. This already happened in chapter one when a leper approached Jesus—breaking the law in doing so! The leper asked Jesus, "If you are willing, you can cleanse me," and Jesus reached out and touched the man, saying, "I am willing. Be clean!" And the leper was cleansed.
- C. You see, according to Mark's Gospel, Jesus is super clean. He cannot be made impure. He cleanses everyone with whom he comes into contact: first, the leper, and now, the woman with the discharge. So, if impurity truly is best understood in terms of the fall of creation and the presence of death, then Jesus appears opposed not only to impurity, but to death itself, the ultimate impurity.

III. Jesus Has Authority Over Death

- A. The story continues with the resurrection of Jairus' daughter. We see that Jesus' authority extends even to death itself. He can literally raise the dead as he does with Jairus' daughter. He grabs the dead girl's hand, which according to Numbers 19 would be the cause of great impurity, yet Jesus cannot be defiled even by death.
- B. Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, has authority even over death, yet consider this great paradox. At the conclusion of this Gospel, we will find that our Lord Jesus Christ himself will die. He will be crucified and die a cursed death. Then his body will be transferred to a tomb. Jesus' body will lie in an unclean place.
- C. The one with authority over death dies. *What is going on?* Jesus explains this in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom in exchange for many." Why did the one with authority over death die? Why did the Holy One of God subject himself to impurity? This was done in order to save us from the power of death. It was so Jesus can tell

us, even in the midst of this fallen world and present evil age, "Stop being afraid! Only believe!"

Conclusion: "The Second Advent"

- A. Dear Friends in Christ, as this Advent season comes to an end, I ask you to ponder the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who has authority over death has, through death, saved us from death. And so, he who rose again on the third day will raise us back to life on the Last Day.
- B. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, is coming again, and on that Day, He will banish death forever and so purify His creation completely.
- C. The Lord God still your fears, strengthen your faith, and preserve you as we await the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection on the Last Day. Amen.