

## Mark 5:21-29

Being put on hold is a familiar, and also a frustrating experience. I was having trouble with my home computer a few weeks ago, and called the technical support number. I went through the customary press 1, press 2, press 3, menu, and then the number for tech support began to ring. A voice answered and thanked me for calling, assuring me that my call was very important to them, and telling me that a technical support person would be with me soon. I waited for several minutes before a voice came on the line saying they were experiencing an unusually high volume of calls, and the average wait time would be approximately one hour. Well, I don't care how good the recorded music is, I was not about to wait for an hour! I have to admit that even when the wait is short, I get frustrated every time I'm put on hold.

Picture this situation from our scripture lesson today. A frantic father whose daughter is dying hears that a specialist is nearby who may be able to help his daughter. He puts on his coat and searches the community for this esteemed physician. He finds him, and even though he is a man of some prominence and power in the community, he lays aside his pride and gets down on his knees at the physician's feet and begs him to come see his daughter. The father's name is Jairus. The great physician's name is Jesus. Would Jesus come lay his hands on the girl? Mark tells us simply, "Jesus went with him."

But this story is really two stories in one. As Jesus is going with Jairus, the trip is interrupted by a woman with a hemorrhage of blood who reaches out and touches Jesus' robe. Jesus stops, talks to the woman and ministers to her in a beautiful way. We thrill at this story. What love, what compassion Jesus has for this woman who has been sick for 12

years. Her healing is a testimony to her great faith. She never gave up hope!

But put yourself in Jairus' shoes. How do you suppose he felt? His young daughter was dying and there was not a moment to waste! Can you imagine the stress this father was under at that moment? HE WAS PUT ON HOLD while the Master ministered to another.

The same thing happened to Mary and Martha. They had sent for Jesus at the sickness of their brother Lazarus, but Jesus delayed his coming and did not arrive until Lazarus had been dead for four days. "If you had come when we called," Martha said with more than a hint of irritation in her voice, "our brother would not have died." Why does the Master delay sometimes? Doesn't God know that the matter about which we are praying is urgent, or we wouldn't be praying? Why don't you answer my prayer, Lord? Is there anyone here who hasn't asked that question at some time or another?

THIS QUESTION CERTAINLY GOES RIGHT TO THE HEART OF PRAYER. Why do our prayers sometimes seem to go no higher than the ceiling? A third grade teacher had been working long and hard to help a certain student improve his behavior and attitude. After a reading session that was continuously disrupted by this student, the teacher in her frustration said to the boy, "Johnny, I am going to have to turn you over to God!" Another boy who was in the reading group said, "Mrs. Jones, God is just going to give him right back to you."

THAT SEEMS TO HAPPEN WITH OUR PRAYERS, SOMETIMES. We have prayed and prayed, and our problems seem to end up right back in our laps! Doesn't God hear our prayers? Isn't God concerned? God seems to move so very slowly sometimes, and it is difficult to deal with those delays. We feel so helpless when we have been put on hold!

I'm told that studies indicate that nurses have more stress than physicians. And at

least part of the reason for that is because nurses have much of the responsibility for patient care, but little control over it. And in situations where we have responsibility but little control, we easily become frustrated and feel helpless.

Can't you just feel the anxiety level rising in this frantic father as he waits for Jesus to minister to the lady with the hemorrhage of blood? Then his worst fears are realized. Some friends from his household come to him. Before they spoke, he could sense their news. "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Master any longer?" Jairus feels a sudden terrible ache within. His friends seek to comfort him, but there is a limit to the help even your best friend can give at a moment like that.

Fortunately, Jesus was still there. Perhaps Jesus touched Jairus on the shoulder or arm as he said, "Don't be afraid, just believe." He was asking a lot of this man who had just had all the meaning drained from his life. It is at moments like this, when everything seems to be going wrong, that I recall some of the most beautiful words of assurance of God's presence that can be found in scripture. In Habakkuk 3:17-18 are written, "Though the fig tree does not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, YET I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Here was a man who had learned to put his trust in God!

And I believe that is the central message for this morning. When our prayers seem to go unanswered, when our dreams are put on hold, when the desires of our heart seem to be ignored by God, TRUST IN GOD, for God is working all things together for good for those who love him. Remember the words of Job who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I praise Him." The woman in our scripture waited twelve years for God's answer.

How does this story speak to you this morning? Perhaps in many ways. You are very likely dealing with some problems in your life, you have prayed to God, but God seems silent. Don't give up on your prayers. Don't lose hope!

Let me tell you some of what I hear it saying. As I have begun to visit with many of the people of this church, I have noticed a real excitement among you about the church. You tell me of its great heritage. This church has a reputation of being one of the finest churches in our Conference. It has effectively ministered in this community for many years, and it has been blessed with great leadership, both lay and clergy. You are excited about the new Fellowship Hall and Family Life Center, and the New Connection worship service and the ministry that is being accomplished through those! BUT I ALSO PICK UP SOME FRUSTRATION. Many sense that there is a new level of growth and spiritual commitment toward which this church must move, and the church needs a jumpstart. There is a desire for a greater outreach to our own youth and the youth of this community. You want to see these marvelous facilities used to their fullest potential. Many want this church to reach out more effectively to the unchurched and the less fortunate of our community. If we are going to grow spiritually and be Jesus' disciples, we are going to need more people in Sunday School and our activities on Wednesday night will need to be expanded to include more people and programs. We need additional Sunday School classes for children and adults, and fellowship opportunities for college age singles and younger married couples. We need a Minister of Music who will lead and grow our outstanding music program. We need an Associate Minister who will share the preaching, and pastoral and leadership responsibilities. Personnel requirements and financial commitments must be seriously considered if we are going to accomplish these goals! It is not hard to identify the needs and desires, but

sometimes we seem to be put on hold.

HOW THEN CAN THIS STORY SPEAK TO OUR SITUATION? It says to those who are feeling frustrated, "Don't give up hope!" Even when our plans and dreams seem to be shattered or at least delayed, hold fast to the promises of God! It is the conviction of my soul that God Almighty wants this church to grow, in numbers and in spirituality and vitality, and God wants it to prosper and become the dynamic influence for Christ that most of us want it to be. IT MAY SEEM THAT THE ODDS ARE STACKED AGAINST US. I've been reminded on numerous occasions that we still owe over a million dollars on our new buildings, and until that debt is paid down, it will be difficult to achieve some of our hopes and dreams.. And that is a legitimate concern. I'm concerned about a million dollar debt! But Jesus has a plan for this church, and as faithful disciples, we must pray and seek Christ's plan, AND MAKE IT OUR PLAN, and then Jesus will give us the desire of our hearts — IN HIS TIME.

And notice one thing more. Only Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus on his mission to raise Jairus' daughter. Apparently not everyone believed that it could happen. ANYTIME YOU ARE GOING TO ATTEMPT SOMETHING GREAT FOR THE LORD, SOME WILL THINK IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! There will never be 100 per cent support for anything we try to do. BUT IF WE ALLOW GOD TO DIRECT OUR FUTURE, EVEN THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST GOD'S PLAN FOR THIS CHURCH.

Are you praying for the ministry and mission of this church? Are you praying that God's will, will be done? Are you praying for your pastor and the other leaders of this body of Christ? Are you praying that we will be able to have the needed funds, and hire the needed personnel, that will allow us to move forward? Have you committed YOUR money, YOUR time and YOUR talent to the Lord for His use through this church? God is able, but we are

His hands and feet and voice, and God wants our cooperation and commitment.

When our prayers seem to go unheard, REJOICE IN THE LORD!! In God's time, God always answers. And when our prayers are heard, again I say, REJOICE IN THE LORD!! "Do not fear, only believe." Our God is an awesome God, and God's plan will be accomplished in us, and in this church, in God's time.