

In the House Of... Part 4 (Jairus)

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

Written By: Pastor John T. Anderson

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We are continuing our tour of homes in which Jesus ministered while He was on earth. We first stopped at the home of Peter in Capernaum, where Jesus healed his mother-in-law, as well as where the paralytic was forgiven and healed. We next visited the home of Matthew, where Jesus ate with “publicans and sinners” and announced that His purpose was to bring salvation to those who knew their need, like a physician does for those who are sick. Last week we were at the home of Simon the Pharisee, also known as Simon the leper, where Mary poured out her love in an offering of precious perfume with which she anointed the head and feet of Jesus. The sweet fragrance of that act of gratitude filled the whole room, and indeed, the whole earth as Jesus’ prophecy has come true that wherever the gospel is preached, the story of Mary’s love has been told.

Today we’re going to go to the home of one by the name of Jairus. Our study will come primarily from the book of Mark. “Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet.” Mark 4:21, 22. Jesus had just crossed over the Lake of Galilee, where on the eastern shore He had healed the demoniac and commissioned him to “Go tell” his friends about the wonderful things God had done for him.

Now, He has crossed back over the lake to the western shore and was immediately surrounded by a crowd, among whom was one named Jairus. In the Bible we’re not given the specific name of the location where this took place, but given the fact that Jesus spent so much time in Capernaum and that it was conveniently situated on the western shore of Galilee, it seems highly likely that it might have been there.

He is identified as being a “ruler of the synagogue.” As such, he would have been a man of great authority. The synagogue (meaning “gathering place”) was the center of religious and cultural life for the Jews. The temple at Jerusalem was where the sacrifices were offered, and where people met three times a year for the annual festivals, but every Jewish community of reputable size would have had its synagogue, where services were held each Sabbath and school children would have received instruction from the rabbis during the week. The “ruler” of the synagogue would have presided over the elders who composed their “board of directors.” The “ruler” was hence

the “CEO” or main person in charge of the activities of the church. Among other things, it would be his responsibility to arrange for those who participated in the Sabbath service.

The synagogue of Capernaum plays a role in several of the New Testament stories. According to the seventh chapter of Luke, the cost for the building or remodeling of the synagogue in that town had been supplied by a generous centurion, whose servant was healed by Christ while He was at Capernaum. According to John chapter 6, it was in the synagogue of Capernaum that Christ later preached the sermon on the living bread, the true Manna that came from heaven. John 6:35-59.

Jairus was a ruler of this synagogue. Before Jairus came to Jesus, as reported in Mark 5, Jesus had been to the synagogue in Capernaum. In Mark chapter 2 we’re told the story of Christ teaching “with authority” in that synagogue on a Sabbath, when the service was interrupted by the shrieks of a demoniac. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and the man was healed. It was later that very day that Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law.

So when Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, came to Christ with his request, he had already heard Him speak and witnessed His healing power. We find no evidence that he confessed faith in Christ before this, but when the moment of desperation came, at the grave illness of his little girl, in his extremity he remembered the healing power of the Galilean Teacher, and when he learned that He had returned, he brushed his pride aside and knelt before Christ. Those in positions of authority in the Jewish culture, such as rulers of synagogues, were slow to receive Christ as the divine Son of God. But now whatever impediments to faith there might have been are laid aside, in the context of his daughter’s dire situation. There was nowhere else to turn! Sometimes that’s what it takes; sometimes God uses our moments of desperation to bring us to our knees and seek His solutions.

The name “Jairus,” has roots in the Old Testament, where it is spelled “Jair.” There was a “Jair” who was one of Israel’s judges after Gideon. Judges 10:3. “Jair” was the name of Mordecai’s father, as reported in Esther 2:5. Often in the New Testament an “s” is added to Old Testament names, and so just as “Isaiah” became “Isaias” and Jeremiah became “Jeremias,” “Jair” became “Jairus.” “Jair” is a contraction of “Jah-ir” and means “Jehovah has enlightened.” The Jairus who was ruler of the synagogue was looking for light in this hour of darkness, the illness of his daughter. Sometimes this “enlightening” comes during the times of our darkest experiences. If you’re having a dark moment, as this man was having, if you find yourself right now in a dire situation, know that you can find help if you come and humbly kneel before Christ.

Jairus came and “fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’” Mark 5:22, 23. So Jesus turned in the direction of his home, but because of the throng that pressed about Him, progress was slow. Jesus was not rushed, but paused along the way to bring blessing by His touch to one or encourage another with a word or two.

Then another interruption occurred, and Jairus was feeling his patience and faith tested. A woman had silently and quietly reached out to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, reasoning that by thus doing she might find relief from an ailment which had afflicted her some twelve years. She was healed, and Jesus stopped, inquiring, "Who touched Me?" When the lady came forward, Jesus acknowledged her faith and her encouraged her to "Go in peace."

This was wonderful, but it cost valuable time! Could not the Master hurry? His daughter lay at the very point of death! Jairus had faith. He expressed it when he begged Jesus earnestly to "come, lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." But it was quite another thing to endure the trial of time passing, with all these interruptions, before the healing act would be accomplished. Oh, so often we want the Lord to move faster than our short-sighted vision desires! How slowly the wheels of His providence turn when we're in a hurry! By the end of the day, Jairus would have a renewed confidence in the Savior's love. We need that same confidence today, to know that "in His time" He will work out all things according to His benevolent will.

Just after the healing of the woman, a messenger from the household of Jairus rushed up. "While He was still speaking, some called from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" Mark 5:35.

This messenger no doubt felt that he performed a necessary and justifiable task in delivering his speech, but he had a couple of things wrong. First, he assumed that the girl's death put her beyond the reach of the Savior's mighty arm of salvation. Not true! As they would soon see, this assumption was entirely false. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and it was appropriate that while He was on earth He would give evidence on a number of occasions such as this one, that His power extends beyond the grave.

Secondly, the giver of this message made another mistake. He assumed that any further request would amount to "bothering" Jesus. Question: is God "troubled" by our petitions? Does He look at the caller i.d. when a prayer is dialed up and say, "Oh no, not him again; or, not her again"? Never! Impossible! Satan may tempt you to believe that God doesn't want to hear from you, but that's absolutely not true! Heaven is bending low to listen to the cries of the saints. The problem is not that we're bothering God with our prayers; the problem is that we're not praying enough! The Bible is filled with encouragements to be in prayer constantly. David said, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:17. When Daniel knew that his colleagues had crafted a law against him, "He knelt down on his knees three times that day and prayed." Daniel 6:10. We need to pray more, not less!

When Jesus overheard the message of the girl's death, He immediately looked Jairus in the eye and with a kind and confident-building gaze said, "Do not be afraid; only believe." All is not lost! There is still hope! That's what Jairus needed to hear, and it's what we need to hear today. That may be one of the shortest sermons on record, but it has great power. "Do not be afraid; only believe." What is it that brings clouds of anxiety into our lives? It is the fear of the unknown, the anxiety of uncertainty.

Someone might say, "I can't afford to return tithe; I'm afraid I won't have enough money to live on." Jesus' answer is, "Do not be afraid; only believe." Someone might say, "I can't keep the Sabbath faithfully; I'm afraid I'll get fired or run short of money." Jesus' answer is, "Do not be afraid; only believe." The purpose of life is to grow faith; that level of trust which will trust Him to the point of death. We need the faith of Job who said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Soon the test will come that will try our souls to the utmost. If we can't trust Him with the tangible things now, how will we be able to trust Him with our lives when the final test comes? Jesus gives us these opportunities to trust Him and be faithful, so that we can advance in faith, and know that we can trust Him in everything. The time is coming very soon when it will cost everything to be a follower of Jesus and keep His commandments. If we are failing on the small tests now, how will we fare when the big ones come?

We need to know and believe that there is not a circumstance in which we may find ourselves for which He has not made provision. That only comes by personally experiencing His watchcare in the trials of life. You cannot get that knowledge by reading about it in a book or by hearing about it from someone else. You have to acquire it personally. Jairus was soon to find that out. The consternation and despair furrowed into his brow would soon be turned into unspeakable joy.

We will soon find that out as well. When the same Jesus returns in the clouds and sweeps us up to glory and into a rapture which words cannot describe; when we begin to realize that an eternity awaits in which there is nothing but unending joy and happiness, we will wonder whatever it was that caused us to doubt His love and power.

Why did we pine and murmur? Why did we allow ourselves to live in the shadows when in His presence there is only light and glory? God give us faith to believe! God give us the faith that banishes all fear!

If the Lord tarry, everyone of us will walk the pathway that leads to the valley of the shadow of death. When that time comes, will our hearts be shaken by fears and dreads, wondering what lies beyond the veil of darkness? Will anxiety grip our soul and rob it of peace? Or will we face death with courage, and say like Paul, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"? II Timothy 1:12. Will we approach that day knowing that our destiny rests securely in the hands of the One Who unerringly guides the stars? When that day comes, hear the words of Jesus spoken to you, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

"Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly." Mark 5:38. It was the practice back then to hire mourners who would wail and play flutes, tambourines and other instruments to proclaim their proxied grief. Thus a great commotion broke forth as Christ approached the house. When He witnessed it, He protested

against it. "When He came in, He said to them, 'Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.'" Mark 5:39.

It was not becoming of faith to express this degree of unlimited grief. Yes, we sorrow at the passing of our loved ones. We miss them. But we do not "sorrow as others who have no hope." I Thessalonians 4:13. Having Christian faith makes a difference, a huge difference! If there is no difference between the funeral of a believer and a non-believer, then something is dreadfully wrong. Sorrow such as was being exhibited by the mercenary mourners was not in keeping with the mind-set of one who is God's child and has accepted by faith His plan. The faith of such a one sees a bigger picture, as did Jesus that day.

Jesus entered the very chamber where the body of the little girl lay. We may know for a certainty that He is likewise close to us when we share in this experience. We may not see Him visibly, but Jesus and His angels are close beside us to comfort us and point us to the glad resurrection day. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints." Psalm 116:15. He enters the chamber of death when our loved ones pass. He entered the chamber of death Himself when taken from the cross. He knows; He cares.

He said to them, "The child is not dead, but sleeping." Christ saw the bigger picture. He saw that through sin Adam and Eve had forfeited their life in the Garden and deserved to die; they deserved the death from which there is no resurrection, the eternal separation from God. But Jesus also knew that He had come to receive the punishment that we deserved, that we might have the life that He deserves. The cross was a reality already in His mind, as it had been before the foundation of the world.

Thus the death that comes upon all mankind, as it had on this little maiden, Jesus referred to as "sleep." Over 50 times the Bible uses that terminology, in both Old and New Testaments. Jesus Himself used that word when speaking of Lazarus "sleeping." The Bible uses that term because when in deep sleep we are unconscious, as are our beloved dead. There's correct theology in the gravestone marker that says, "Rest in peace." There's correct theology in the word "cemetery" itself, which means literally "sleeping place."

The devil has been very active to turn Bible truth around, so that the popular view today is that one goes directly to his or her reward at death. Such teaching is not supported by Scripture. Solomon's statement "the dead know not anything" is beyond equivocation or dispute. Ecclesiasts 9:5, 6. The Bible view is that Christ comes "with His reward" at His second advent. Revelation 22:13. Until that time the dead rest unconsciously in their graves.

This death, this first death, the death that the daughter of Jairus now entered, is not the one to be dreaded and feared. It is but a short interruption before the resurrection. The one to be avoided at all costs is what the Bible calls the "second death." From this, there is no resurrection; it is an eternal separation from God and from life.

On the cross, Christ destroyed the “works of the devil,” that is death, and has brought life and hope to light through the Gospel. Christ saw things from a bigger perspective, and therefore asked, “Why all this commotion. She’s asleep.” But they, not sharing His wider view, the view of God’s eternal plan, the view of faith, could not understand His speech. They began to mock, laugh and ridicule. Today’s world is no closer to understanding the truths God has disclosed in His Word than were the people of Capernaum 2,000 years ago. Faith is scorned; the Bible held in derision. Do not be surprised if your friends don’t comprehend the mysteries of Bible faith. These mysteries are revealed to those who come to Him in humble sincerity and are willing to obey His commandments.

“They laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ Immediately the girl arose and walked for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” Mark 5:40-42.

Notice that Jesus said to this child, “Arise.” He did not say to this little girl, “Come down.” She was not in heaven. She was dead. When Jesus addressed Lazarus, having been dead for four days, He said, “Lazarus, come forth.” He did not say to him, “Come down.”

One day soon Jesus, according to His promise; Jesus, the God Who “cannot lie” will return in the clouds of glory. He is going to both split the sky and split the graves. And then His melodious voice is going to ring out, all over the earth, “Little girl, little boy, I say to you arise.” The one who came to life in the story we’re looking at today was but 12, but even if one is 80 or 90, we’re all God’s children. In the estimate of the One Who inhabits eternity, the One with Whom a “thousand years is but a day,” what is 70, 80 or 90 years? We are all but children in His eyes. He is our life-giving Father. And on that day He will exercise that same life-giving power to all who have been laid to rest, to all who now are “asleep in Christ.”

What a day that will be! How could there be anything on this feeble and fallible earth that would be worth losing out on heaven? How could there be anything that would be so valuable that we would chose to not be a part of that great inheritance He has provided at such great cost. In the words of Hebrews, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” Hebrews 2:3.

In the house of Jairus that day there was tragedy followed by triumph. There was pain and sorrow followed by jubilation. Have you been to Jairus’ house?