

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis Sermon

Notes www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Infinite Power and Intimate Tenderness

Mark 5:35-43, Part 2

Two verses in Isaiah 40 capture the staggering combination of God's infinite power with his gentle tenderness for his people:

Isaiah 40:11-12 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. ¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

The same God that measures the waters in the hollow of his hand and measures off the dimensions of outer space also carries his lambs tenderly in his arms.

Jesus Christ pictured that perfectly in the text we will study today. For he showed infinite power in raising a little twelve-year-old girl from the clutches of the monster known as Death... and he did it with the gentlest touch of his hand in intimate tenderness.

And as he touched her, he spoke these words: "**Talitha koum.**" Talitha, as I will discuss later, means "Little lamb." So Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 40 perfectly!

I. God Majestic Over Us, Yet Close to Us

A. The Infinite Majesty of God

1. Almighty God soars beyond anything we can possibly comprehend
2. The boundless scope of nature confirms this...

- a. The ocean, stretching out to the horizon, unfathomably deep, roaring with power
- b. The towering mountain ranges... peak after peak, dwarfing us and looming over us in their brooding magnificence
- c. The limitless reaches of outer space, with no boundary, stretching to infinity in every direction from our tiny planet
- d. The power of God—saying “Let there be!” and there IS!

B. Yet the Intimate Closeness of God

- 1. The Bible reveals a God that is closer to us than we can fathom
- 2. We are dependent on him every moment for our very existence

Acts 17:27-28 God is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

- 3. More than that, God yearns to have a close relationship with us... to love us and have us love him, moment by moment
- 4. He created humanity in the image of God to know him
- 5. Therefore, this intimate relationship is truly what life itself is

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

C. BUT Sin Ruptured that Intimacy

- 1. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they sought to hide from God
- 2. With sin, a terrible barrier has been erected between us and God
- 3. In our sin and our misery, we live a life distant from God
 - a. God seems distant... to some, he seems literally non-existent
 - b. Suffering people cry out to God for relief, and get no answer
 - c. They thought that proves God doesn't exist or doesn't care
 - d. But the problem was sin

Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

4. Because of our sins, our intimate relationship with God is severed... destroyed... and God is distant from us, ready to judge us for our sins—not seeking intimacy with us apart from atonement for our sins

D. The Incarnation of Christ is God’s Answer

1. In Christ we have God drawing very near to us... Christ is “Immanuel, God with us”
2. By his incarnation, Christ comes to live among us in very close intimacy

John 1:14 the Word [Jesus Christ] became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

It literally says “pitched his tent among us” ... hearkening back to the tent-dwelling days of the patriarchs.

God came to draw near to us... seeking an intimate relationship with us

3. He is near to us in our misery, our sin, our alienation from God, our suffering, our diseases, even our death
4. All of Christ’s ministry is to achieve one end: a reconciled relationship between a holy God and a sinful humanity... the restoration of intimate closeness

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Reconciliation = restored relationship with God... intimacy with God

As is perfectly depicted in the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

Luke 15:20 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

5. Jesus' ministry was all designed to repair the breach between sinful humanity and a holy God
6. In Christ the perfection of intimate tenderness and infinite power
7. He was compassionate toward broken sinners... showing them astonishing tenderness; he also displayed stunning power to heal their diseases and even to raise the dead

E. Context

1. Two weeks on one long account... two encounters with desperate people... a desperate father with a dying daughter and a desperate woman with an incurable illness; but they are united in their display of Jesus' intimate tenderness and infinite power
2. It begins with a man named Jairus... a synagogue ruler... a powerful man, well-connected with the Jewish religious leaders of the day; but a desperate man whose precious little daughter is dying—his only daughter; he has nowhere else to turn, and abandoning all restraint and decorum, he throws himself down on the ground before him and begs him:

Mark 5:23 "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

3. Jesus could easily have healed her from a distance... occasionally he did that; but he wanted INTIMACY... RELATIONSHIP; so in humility, he gets up and goes with this sorrowing man, surrounded by a crushing crowd
4. En route, the second desperate person approaches him
5. A woman suffering from a chronic bleeding problem heard about Jesus' healing power and hope flickered in her heart; Mark tells us her sad history of seeking healing:

Mark 5:26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

6. She sought to be healed from Jesus without any interaction at all:

Mark 5:27-28 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

7. Her healing was instantaneous... she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering

8. BUT Jesus felt in his body that the power of God had flowed through him to someone in the crushing crowd:

Mark 5:30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

9. As we have noted, Jesus had come into the world not merely to be a dispenser of miracles, a pipeline of impersonal blessings

Jesus came into the world to reconcile sinners to God... to bring those distant and make them near

So he wanted the interaction with this woman:

Mark 5:32 Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

The surging mass of humanity was not his focus... one person in that crushing crowd was – one desperate sinner, and he wanted to do more than heal her body; he wanted to save her soul

Mark 5:33-34 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

10. BUT in the intervening time he spent with this woman, the little girl died... her flickering candle of life went out

II. The Terrible Crisis of Faith

A. The Faithless Bearer of Terrible News

Mark 5:35 While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

1. This messenger is curt and unfeeling; he crushes Jairus with this devastating news with the delicacy of a sledge hammer... YOUR DAUGHTER IS DEAD
 2. Behind this blunt news is a significant measure of unbelief... "Why bother the teacher anymore?"
 3. In other words, there's nothing he can do at this point; everyone knows death cannot be defeated
 4. In our technologically advanced world, we live in state-of-the-art medical science... among the best doctors and nurses in the world; picture them in the ER, working urgently and with stunning focus on a dying person ... but as soon as the lead physician declares the person dead, all labor instantly stops... no more activity, no more urgent commands or nurses running with a device or with some medicine... IT IS FINISHED!! There is nothing more they can do
 5. So also this messenger believes there is nothing Jesus can do
 6. Death is the FINAL ENEMY... the monster no one can defeat
- B. The Great Sorrow of a Dead Child
1. The agony is all the greater when a child dies
 2. We feel a sense of rage, a sense of injustice
 3. In 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached a funeral for a young teenager named Billy Sheldon entitled "**Youth is like a flower cut down**"
He later revised that same sermon and used it to preach the funeral of his own beloved daughter, Jerusha

"Youth may be likened to a beautiful wildflower growing in a field; their death like the sudden cutting of the flower in the stem. Youth is an age wherein people are commonly full of hopes and promises to themselves of the good and prosperity they shall see in the world. They are just entering upon the stage of the world, and they promise

themselves much that they shall see and enjoy afterwards. And their parents and friends are also ready to promise themselves much future comfort in them and are full of hope of seeing them settled."

He told the young people at the funeral to look on the dead face of this beautiful youth... how cold and grey is the pallor, how stripped of color the cheeks... like when a wildflower is cut down and soon droops and withers and has none of its vitality

How instantly this happens...

So it was with Jairus's daughter... twelve years old, happy, energetic, promising life and joy to her parents; still happily hugging her beloved father and kissing his cheek with tender affection; he imagined the years ahead, when she would be married and bear them grandchildren... perhaps a beautiful little granddaughter to continue pouring out affection on her beloved granddad...

But suddenly, a sickness came on her; fever burned her up; as the days passed, she only got worse, not better. Her mother nursed her, patted her damp forehead with a cloth; together they cried out to God for her healing... but all to no avail. Instead of getting better, she grew worse

Jairus had one hope... Jesus, the healer; he went to find him, but he had gone across the Sea of Galilee. So he waited. Jesus came back the next day, and with urgent anguish, Jairus begged him to come.

But the woman with the bleeding problem had distracted him; he stayed to talk with her. This must have gone on awhile, because the funeral rituals for the little girl were going by the time Jesus got there.

Then, suddenly, the cold, blunt message...

"Your daughter is dead... Why bother the teacher anymore?"

C. What Did Jairus Feel?

1. Waves of dark grief... what he dreaded has now happened
2. Perhaps some anger at the crowd; perhaps some questioning of Jesus

3. And like the men who came with the message, probably thinking there was nothing more Jesus could do
4. His faith in Jesus had been pushed to the crisis level

D. Jesus Addresses Jairus's Faith

Mark 5:36 Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

1. Jesus never coddles unbelief... even in the most extreme circumstances, like the raging storm filling the boat, he still says

Matthew 8:26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

2. Faith alone saves us from sin; so when any disciple begins to doubt, this is a greater crisis than all sickness and even death itself
3. So, he speaks directly to Jairus's soul... literally in the Greek:

"Stop being afraid and keep believing."

4. Fear and faith are opposites; Jairus needs to beat back his fear by trusting in Jesus; he DID believe... he needs to KEEP believing... even in the face of our greatest and final enemy, death itself
5. An additional promise
 - a. Faith feeds on the promises of God
 - b. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gives Jairus an additional and specific promise

Luke 8:50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

So it is with us; in our greatest trials, God speaks to our souls by his Word to renew our faith in Christ!

Notice also the serenity and commanding presence of Jesus! He was always like this in every storm... peaceful, wise, purposeful, powerful. He is the Captain of our Salvation!

III. The Commotion of Unbelieving Grief

A. The Unbelieving Crowd Excluded

1. First, Jesus filters out his own disciples and the huge crowd following him:

Mark 5:37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

2. Peter, James, and John are the inner-circle of his twelve apostles; the rest of the apostles, all the disciples and the huge crowd are eliminated at this point
3. As Jesus arrives at Jairus's house, he is confronted by another crowd... this time of noisy mourners

Mark 5:38 When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.

4. Jewish funerals were very different than what we are accustomed to
 - a. If you go to a funeral home for the visitation, everyone speaks in hushed tones, quiet whispers; people dress in subdued, respectful clothes and quietly go up to the bereaved family and express whispered condolences
 - b. Not so the first century Jewish funeral; there people were expected to give loud and boisterous expressions of their agony
 - c. They were expected also to tear their clothing in open display of grief over the dead person
 - d. Even more, there were professional mourners and musicians who were paid to come to funerals and set the tone with loud wailing and agitated commotion, also with loud discordant flute playing to represent the mental anguish that this death has caused
5. BUT these professional mourners were merely actors... they felt no appropriate level of grief for Jairus and his wife at their loss

6. Why do I say that? Because in a short time they are laughing at Jesus and mocking him
7. Even worse, they were unbelieving toward Jesus

B. Jesus Rebukes them and Clears Them Out

Mark 5:39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."

1. Jesus is about to show his infinite power in the greatest possible context... our ultimate enemy, death, will be defeated
2. Before that, however, he rebukes these fake mourners and makes this clear assertion: DEATH IS LIKE SLEEP... it is temporary
3. It is no more difficult for Jesus to raise this girl from the dead than it would be for her parents to rouse her from an afternoon nap
4. Jesus' resurrection will prove this and change everything for all time
5. BUT the mourners' reaction is pure faithlessness and mockery

Mark 5:40 But they laughed at him.

6. So Jesus clears them all out

Mark 5:40 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.

Our powerful commander will go down into the valley of the shadow of death and rescue this beautiful little lamb!

IV. The Tender Touch of Infinite Power

A. As I have said, everything Jesus did was for RELATIONSHIP

1. He could have healed this girl from a distance
2. Instead, he wanted to touch her with his own hand
3. He wanted to display his power nestled in his astonishing tenderness and gentle mercy

Mark 5:41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

B. The Touch and the Word

1. The combination of Jesus' touch and Jesus' word is powerful

Franco Zeffirelli's classic "Jesus of Nazareth" films this encounter with tremendous sensitivity; Jesus goes into her room and there is sunlight streaming through three small windows, but the room is still mostly dark; Jesus kneels down next to her, and the camera focuses closely on his hand... his hand turns toward her, reaches down and takes her by the hand. She sits up and puts her arms around his neck. It is the hand of Jesus that ministers the gentleness and love... along with that are the actual words he spoke... how gentle they are!

2. Only Mark's Gospel gives us the actual words he spoke... the Aramaic language: **"Talitha koum"**
3. The word "Talitha" is translated "Little girl," but it really means "Little lamb"... a term of gentle endearment
4. Though she was twelve years old and would soon be entering the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, to her parents she would always be their little lamb
5. So she was to him as well
6. This scene is why Christi and I named our daughter Daphne Talitha... because we trusted that Jesus would raise her from the dead spiritually through faith in the gospel (which he has!) and that he would raise her from the dead physically at the end of the world (which he certainly will!)

C. Instantaneous Healing

1. Jesus has absolute power over death!

Mark 5:42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old).

2. As with all his healings, there was no need for convalescence, no need for rehab or a long process of recovering her strength; her body is as healed as it was before the illness ever came
3. This dark enemy, the most powerful, implacable, undefeatable foe of the human race, Jesus defeats with effortless power
4. After his own resurrection, Jesus will claim absolute power forever over death for all his people

D. Worship

Mark 5:42 At this they were completely astonished.

Jesus' awesome power is breathtaking... this is the combination of majesty and intimacy we spoke of at the beginning

V. "Don't Tell Anyone"

Mark 5:43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this

A. Again and Again We See This Restriction

B. Obviously It Is Temporary! The Whole World Knows Now

C. Why?

1. Crowd control... keeping the fanatic crowds to a minimum
2. Jesus' own ministry was not yet finished
 - a. Only once Jesus rose from the dead was the whole redeeming work finished
 - b. Then the message could be spread far and wide

Revelation 1:17-18 "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

One final practical command:

Mark 5:43 [Jesus] told them to give her something to eat.

Jesus cares for every aspect of life... it had probably been several days since her last significant meal. She needed food to regain her full strength.

VI. Lessons

A. Infinite Power and Intimate Tenderness

1. Go back to the beginning of the sermon
2. It is vital for us to realize how powerful Jesus is... there is nothing he cannot do
 - a. There is no enemy we face he cannot defeat
 - b. There is no need we have he cannot meet
 - c. He created the universe and sustains it every day
 - d. He rules the wind and the waves with his word
3. But instead of that making us terrified of him, we need to read these accounts and hear his intimate tenderness

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

He is perfectly gentle... and he wants a close relationship with us

All his power in his ministry – all his miracles, all his teachings, his atonement on the cross, his resurrection from the dead – all of it is toward one end – to reconcile us to God and to himself, so that we might live in perfect closeness with him

Do you know him? Have you received his gift of forgiveness of sins by faith in his name?

B. Faith vs Fear

1. We lived in a culture of fear long before COVID... but COVID brought out people's fear of death more than ever
2. We Christians have fears too...

3. But again and again Jesus says to us, “Do not be afraid. Only believe”
4. How can you build your faith in Jesus to drive away faithless fears? How can these amazing accounts—the amazing healings, the stilling of the storm, the driving out of thousands of demons, the raising of this dead girl... how can meditating on these stories drive away any fears you may have?
5. What are you afraid of in life? How can you marshal the promises of God to drive away your fears?

C. Sharing the Gospel to Liberate People from Fear of Death

Hebrews 2:14-15 by his death he ... destroyed him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

We are surrounded by people who need to be liberated from their fear of death... but first, it would be good for them to fear God’s judgment of their sins

“Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.”

They should understand that death does hold legitimate terrors for those who die apart from Christ. Use the law to show them their danger... and when the law work is done then you can relieve their fears by the gospel!