

Storytellers George and Mary Huttar told the story. Read also Isaiah 40:27-31, in The Message translation of the Bible. Check out the service, which is recorded on www.fpcd.org.

These are moving stories. They bring to mind our own miracles – and tragedies.

The Bible speaks of both, and if you have lived any length of time at all – even children are aware that every single life holds both miracle and tragedy. Many of you – and I too, have suffered the loss of loved ones and it hurt badly to pray and pray and then absorb a loss when we hoped for a miracle.

- ~ So do not hear in this story that you did not have enough faith.
- ~ And, do not hear in this story that only a positive outcome is an acceptable answer to prayer.

This story is about so much more than a victory. The story helps us understand what a life of faith is all about. And it is an exciting story so we must hear it fully so we will learn.

As Mary and George told the story did you imagine what it was like being in that crowd that day? All kinds of people were there. Important religious leaders and simple obscure women. All drawn to Jesus; listening to Jesus teach when suddenly a man, obviously distressed, interrupted Him for help. He was a Pharisee.

It would be like the company president seeking out the newest employee for help. Not only that, but throwing himself at His feet, begging him repeatedly.

It was kind of unheard of; kind of risky.

Would you take that chance? Maybe you would if it was a crisis. Crises make you do things you wouldn't ordinarily do. And so he did, and Jesus agreed to go with him to heal his daughter who was on the brink of death.

But then they were interrupted by the silliest thing. It would be like if you were rushing to the hospital with Jesus and He wanted to stop at a friend's house and visit her grandmother who had been infirmed for a dozen years. Would it have not hurt to tell the woman to wait here until he returned? But no. It was malpractice.

If you were sitting in the emergency room and this happened to you, what would you do? You would be hopping mad.

When you are with Jesus you can always count on learning something.

- ~ First, things happen for a reason
- ~ Jesus knows more than you and He will not be controlled by your timetable.

Do you trust that Jesus may know more about you as Creator of the universe; have more wisdom about your situation?

The woman was sneaky. She had heard about Jesus. Somehow, even though no one had been able to help her, He could. Somehow, even though physicians had taken all the money she had, He would not charge her a thing. So she snuck up on Him. Why didn't she just go and ask? Perhaps she thought of him as one thinks of a celebrity; she's lowly, He's really special.

But she did exactly what a disciple should do. She heard about Him, she came, and she touched Him. She was immediately rewarded – 12 years of shame and failure and frustration were resolved in an instant. He didn't touch her; she touched him.

Do you cast yourself upon Jesus' care? Do you give up or persist?

She could have given into fear but she didn't. She could have given into shame – the “uncleanness” of her illness. But she didn't. Instead, she reached out to hope. **This is God's will: not acting or living in shame; instead, acting in faith, trusting that God wants to heal you.**

Well, Jesus is so perceptive. He knows everything, even the ridiculous. This woman is not going to get to just “hit and run” but must learn to deal with Jesus one-on-one. Jesus insists on knowing who she is – he “kept looking to see who had done this.” He's just as persistent in finding her as she is.

She just wants a cure. She just wants *something*.

Jesus wants an encounter with *someone*. Discipleship is not just getting our needs met; it is being in the presence of Jesus, being known by Him and following Him. So He went to find her. And when He did, He pointed out her faith to the entire crowd. He made her tell her story.

Then He said: “Daughter your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” That means – “go, fully restored to God.”

See, your faith is a witness to others. Are you letting your faith be known? Are you willing to give you testimony in good times and bad? You can change a life. You can help others be fully restored to God.

How many of you have turned to Jesus because someone encouraged you to? My faith is totally built on seeing others live and act on faith.

I have a friend who wrote a book recently – a lovely Christian, and if it had not been for her faith in the face of her husband's alcoholism, I would not be here today. Her story and her willingness to tell it brought me hope that my own troubles could be overcome.

In the meantime, some folks show up to tell Jairus that his little daughter is dead. What a blow.

Jesus ruined it. All this wasted time with the woman. Jesus failed him. Jairus hears the terrible words. Will he go home? Give up? But he pauses and looks at Jesus. Jesus heard the words too. He ignores them. Instead he says to Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe.”

He's got to keep that door of faith open. He's got to stay with Jesus, not run away, but press closer, like the woman. Grab ahold of Him, like she did, at all costs, risking everything. You see, Jesus made her be a public witness because that is how faith grows, from one person to the next. As Jesus brings life in one life, and as you bring the life He brought you to someone else by telling your stories of the reality of Jesus' presence, faith grows.

So Jesus made Jairus wait; made his prayer an unanswered one, so he could witness this answered one. This woman becomes the model of faith for Jairus as she stands there and tells her story right before him.

- ~ Do you think Jesus has a little more insight into your life than you?
- ~ Do you think He knows how to help you have faith?
- ~ Do you believe He has a reason for what He does and the timing He chooses?

Or do you insist on Him answering in your own time and on your schedule?

It had to be the hardest thing for Jairus to trust Jesus in that moment.

Do your circumstances look terrible? This story is not just about a dying child. It is about anything in our lives that seems hopeless and that needs an infusion of life. Whether it's a dead marriage or a dead end job or a hopeless future or a boring life or a dead relationship or anything that you think cannot be overcome. A very affectionate, loving Jesus is the answer – but you have to go to him in faith.

The woman's action is a model of faith. Just reach, reach, reach for Him. It's like Jesus dealt with her to show Jairus how to do the same.

So He's talking with Jairus and says, "Do not fear; only believe." The verb "believe" is in the present tense so Jesus meant, "keep believing" and hold onto faith rather than give into despair. As far as Jairus was concerned, it was over. But for Jesus it was not. Faith for Jairus meant *who he was with*.

Let's say you are on the edge of a cliff and you slip and fall. Right before tumbling down you see a branch protruding out of the ground. Should you grab it? You don't know if it will hold you. How do you find out? How do you have faith in it? Is its ability to hold you firm dependent on you? No, of course not! It's inherent in the branch.

But it is not going to hold you if you do not grab it and hold on.

Do you ever wonder what God's will is? It is reaching out in faith.

So Jairus held on and from that moment, Jesus took over. He went to the house. Entering, He said, "She's not dead, she's asleep." Skeptical, filled with unbelief, everyone just laughed. *Now that's the kind of doctor you want to get, right? Are you kidding? Jesus? Surely not!* He threw the mourners out. There's no room for unbelief.

Unbelief says, "I'm looking at circumstances and nope, I'm not taking any more risks. I risked going to Him once and that didn't work out."

This family could have braced themselves against any future disappointments. But they went with Jesus into her room. He sat on her bedside, took her hand, and said something totally endearing and affectionate, Talitha kum, "Sweetheart, time to get up!" It was as if he were

waking her up in the morning. And immediately the girl got up and began to walk around the room.

They were absolutely stunned!

When you go to Jesus, He requires more than you expect to give. He requires full engagement with Him and then you must make your faith known. And, He requires you to believe no matter how devastating the circumstances.

But when you go to Him on His terms, you receive far more than you could ever have imagined.

Jesus demands faith and also honors faith. Faith requires significant risks in Jesus as the branch that can hold you. Jesus is marvelously sensitive to faith, but in the final analysis, it is His faithfulness that invades our lives in a very real way.

Will you risk touching Him?

Does it seem that your circumstances are completely against you, or that Jesus is taking such a long time it feels like malpractice? We must trust Jesus' judgment about these things, and learn to have faith.

Having faith can even raise the dead. Dead anything. Take the risk and give your dead stuff to Jesus and hang on. He will out-give you. ALWAYS.

AMEN