**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“Giving Credit Where Credit is Due”**

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*“They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when He had entered, He said to them, ‘Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at Him. But He put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with Him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand, He said to her, ‘Talitha cumi,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And He strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat” (Mk. 5:38).*

It is a harrowing time when a child is critically ill, when nothing seems to be working, and no one is sure what to do next. It is a desperate helplessness for doctors, parents, pastors, grandparents. And so, who cannot sympathize with a father who runs and falls at the feet of Jesus, desperately begging, because his 12-year-old daughter is dying?

His name is Jairus. He is an important man, a leader in the synagogue. He has access to the best medical resources available, and has, no doubt, tried them all. Nothing has helped; day by day, the health of his little girl continues to decline. Out of options, Jairus goes for broke, and runs to Jesus, whose reputation as a teacher and a healer is spreading far and wide. Jairus throws himself at the feet of Jesus. “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put Your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

Without a word, Jesus goes with him – a large crowd of the curious following along to see what would happen next. On the way, men come with news Jairus fears the most. “Your daughter is dead.” And then, just because some people have the gift for always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, “Why trouble the Teacher any further?” Surely Jairus is in a state of shock. He can hardly believe his ears: “Your daughter is dead.” And he can hardly believe his ears when Jesus says to him, “Do not fear, only believe.” What could that mean?

Once again, they set off for Jairus’ house. Upon arriving, Jesus sees a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. He says to them, “Why all this weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” They laugh at Him. It’s derisive and contemptuous. “You think we’re idiots, Jesus? You think we don’t know what death looks like, Jesus?” They assume they know better about death and how final and irrevocable it is. But Jesus calls it “sleep.” He acknowledges death is real, but not permanent, not irrevocable. Death doesn’t have the last word.

Putting those laughing mockers out of the house, He goes back to where the child is, with Jairus and the disciples. And, taking the lifeless child in His arms, He says something affectionate, intimate even, as if she were His daughter too. Mark is so struck with it that he gives it to us in the Aramaic that Jesus spoke so we would know exactly what Jesus says. “Talitha cumi!” which means, “Little girl, get up.” Immediately she gets up and starts walking. Everyone in the room is, of course, astonished, speechless, except for Jesus. “Give her something to eat,” He says.

Well, what happened? Whatever it was that happened does not submit to your human reason, nor does it need to, because to believe in God is to believe He has the power to do the unusual, the extraordinary, the miraculous. To believe in God is to believe He doesn’t have to play by natural laws as we do because He is the author of those laws. To believe in God means it doesn’t need to square with your experiences in the world. But the real question is what does this mean? What does Jesus intend to teach us with this miracle?

First, this: There is no human condition so bad, so horrible that hope is absent, because there is no human condition that is outside the reach of God’s power and love and grace. There is no illness so acute, no sin so grievous, no addiction so strong and entrenched, no death so dusty and irrevocable that God cannot reverse it and set things all things right again. That’s the first point: no matter the situation, there is hope because of the all-surpassing power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When someone you love no longer loves you, when you have no desire to carry on but just want to be done with life, when you know you are sinner to the core, unclean, unfit, and unworthy, when you have more doubts than you do faith, still, you are never outside the reach of God’s holy love.

Second, true healing comes from God alone. If a child suffered from this same illness today, her physician might prescribe some antibiotic that clears the thing up before it snowballs and threatens her life. Because God used the means of a drug, is He to be praised any less?

In some Wisconsin hospital today, a patient’s heart will stop, breathing cease, there will be a code blue, emergency drugs will be injected, perhaps directly into the heart, electric shock administered, and the heart may resume beating, lungs fill with air, eyes flutter open, and a man or woman or child will be alive again. Because He used a medical team as His means, His instruments of healing, is God to be praised any less? Even if the docs were to insist God had nothing to do with it; that it was their training, their skill, their experience that saved the patient, we can politely thank them, but we know the thanks and praise belongs first and foremost to God.

As Christians, we believe all healing is of God, whether miraculous, or through dramatic, modern medicine, or through a long, slow convalescence . . . all healing ultimately comes from God. Therefore, we do not attribute healing and relief to something apart from God.

In Tuesday’s Wall Street Journal (6/25/2024), there was an article about the crystal craze, used by western wellness practitioners and promoted by celebrities who say they believe quartz has special healing properties. Of course, that’s just old-fashioned idolatry, attributing divine qualities to someone or something. But as a result, crystals are becoming a growing slice of the wellness industry in America. Scientists say there is no evidence that crystals have the power for healing or other powers. But, if you believe nothing, you’re more likely to believe in anything, and so the market is strong for crystals in the western world. Ironically, in South Africa, informal, untrained miners work in grueling, dangerous, anxiety-inducing conditions to find and sell a few dollars’ worth of crystals that western pagans use to try to quell their anxiety.

True healing doesn’t come from crystals, the cardiac rehab unit, Carbone Cancer Center, or Coriander Essential oil. True healing comes from God alone. Consider our psalm where David writes, “O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.” David is not like us. It would never occur to David to attribute his healing to anyone or anything else but God. In David’s view, healing is always the result of divine intervention. David prayed; Yahweh rescued. David responds with praise and thanksgiving. In fact, he cannot thank Yahweh enough. Words are insufficient, but he also knows the delight is incomplete until it is expressed.

Unfortunately, we don’t think like that anymore. We’ve been educated to assume that divine intervention never (or almost never) happens anymore. Some people might mention a miracle, but the tendency is to attribute it to the docs or Mayo Clinic or whatever. David, however, lives by a different truth, and interprets his experience in a different way. God is the one who rescues us from the pit. God is the one who frees us from the bird cage, breaks the chains, and snaps the crutches in two. God is the one who turns our mourning into dancing.

Sometimes, God, in His good will, chooses not to give healing, and those who need a miracle and pray for a miracle don’t get the miracle. Family members hold an around-the-clock vigil in the room, sleeping in snatches, praying in snatches, waking in the middle of the night and checking to see if their beloved is still breathing. Their desperation is just as acute as that of Jairus, their sense of helplessness just as pronounced, their begging at the feet of Jesus just as earnest. And yet, Jesus does not give them the healing for which they are desperate. All they can do is watch as their beloved dies and it seems all God is doing is watching too. What then?

That’s the time to hear and inwardly digest the same words Jesus spoke to Jairus, “Do not fear. Only believe.” Keep trusting God and His promises, even when your fervent prayers are not answered as you would want. Believe in the goodness and grace of God, His good will for you, even when healing is not given. Keep praying, even when we do not get what we ask for. And keep giving thanks and praise to God that your beloved is in His good hands, though he or she has slipped out of your own. It makes me think of Job when he lost everything, but not his faith. “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (1:21).

And finally, there is at least one more miracle in this text. The miracle of God coming to us in Jesus, whose name means “Yahweh saves.” He saved us by His death on the cross. Some laugh at that and think of it as foolishness. Remember, those in Jairus’ home laughed at Jesus too. And the Roman soldiers also laughed at Him having dressed Him up as a king. Additionally, on the cross, Jesus was mocked then too, by chief priests and teachers of the law and by those simply passing by, challenging Him to save Himself if He truly is the Son of God. But He didn’t come to save Himself. He came to save you, to be polluted by your sin and humbly pay its wages. He came not to save Himself but you, and He has, through the means of water and word and wine. He has forgiven and washed you and assured you of His love. He has reached out with His strong arm and made you well.

I invite you today to receive Him again in His supper. Receive His blood, that cleanses you of sin and shame as He promised. Receive His forgiveness, His healing, His salvation, not just for today but also for the Last Day, when, in a flash, in the twinkling of the eye, at the last trumpet, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. Today, and on the Last Day, praise Him as David praised Him. “O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me. . . You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness . . . O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever!” Amen.