

Mark 5:21-43

Life's Little (or Larger) Interruptions

The Big Idea

This passage is a classic “Markan Sandwich”, i.e., a story sandwiched inside another story. Mark uses this technique several times in his Gospel.

The theology behind the story clearly indicates that Jesus has authority to heal, and even more awe-somely, the authority over death too! These connected stories also give us an opportunity to reflect on how these come to Jesus as interruptions, and how we handle interruptions.



*"Maybe I haven't made myself clear enough.
I really don't want to be disturbed today."*

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTION: Have you ever had an interruption that turned into a memorable, even powerful, event in your life?

How do you handle interruptions? Are you open to them, do they make you frustrated? Has your attitude about interruptions changed over time?

Read Mark 5:21-43 ²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then 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. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

How does Jesus handle these interruptions that are constantly coming at him? How does Jesus demonstrate his faith in his interactions with Jairus, the woman and the girl? Why do you think the number 12 is used as a link between the woman's time of suffering and the girl's age?

Remember that Jesus did take time to "get away" and pray in solitude (though sometimes these prayer retreats were interrupted). What do you do to center and focus yourself?

What strategies or centering thoughts might we use when we encounter interruptions to turn them from distractions to opportunities for Kingdom work and witness?