

The Walking Dead

(Mark 5:35-43)

(preached 12/21/14 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Ponce de Leon is a name that many of you heard in 5th grade world history class.

Ponce de Leon was a Spanish explorer who is credited with discovering Florida.

Most historians say that he landed near St. Augustine Florida in 1513.

One interesting fact about Ponce de Leon's discovery is that he discovered Florida while searching for the "Fountain of Youth."

These were the supposed magical waters that restored a person's youth and gave them the ability to live forever.

I remember going to Florida in seventh grade.

We went to Disney World and toured Cape Canaveral.

On the way home, we stopped at a souvenir shop and I bought two items to take back home to my grandmother.

One was a can of Florida sunshine.

The other was a bottle containing water from the Fountain of Youth.

She never opened the can of sunshine.

(Man, was I gullible or what?)

But she opened the bottle of water and poured it on her hands.

Turns out, it was not from the fountain of youth but probably from a water fountain at the factory.

But the legend of a fountain of youth is a real story.

And people are still fascinated by it.

Why?

Because people are obsessed with living forever.

Imagine that magical water from a fountain of youth existed.

That is what everybody would want for Christmas.

You think the lines are long for that \$99 TV at Best Buy?

Imagine trying to get in a store that sold a bottle of water that allowed you to live forever.

What price would you put on that?

In fact, it would be truly priceless.

That is why Ponce de Leon risked life and limb to find it.

That is why most of his men died while helping him look for this fountain of youth.

IT was an obsession with immortality.

The hope of beating death drove Pone de Leon.

However, the pursuit of living forever has not slowed down.

Even today, the thought of escaping death is still a passion for many people.

Some people buy the safest cars.

Some people install elaborate security systems.

Some people follow the strictest diets.

Some exercise religiously.

And the purpose is to hopefully cheat death.

But the fact remains that everyone stills dies.

The graveyard across the road is proof of that and so are hospitals and nursing homes.

Death is fast approaching every man.

You may have come here this morning hoping to hear a nice Christmas sermon on the birth of Jesus.

But the reality of what is happening here is that a dying man is now getting up to speak to dying people.

And that may not be the news of Christmas cheer, but it is the truth of the Scriptures.

And it is a truth that I must proclaim with my every breath.

Because unless a person finds a fountain of youth under their Christmas tree this year, their future does not have a happy ending.

That is what makes the story of Jesus so incredibly important in the world.

It's not the fact that he God came to earth as a baby in a manger...

Which he did.

It's not the fact that Jesus grew up and lived as a sinless life...

Which he did.

It's not the fact that he was crucified unjustly as a criminal....

Which he was...

The really important truth to hear and see about Jesus in the Bible is the fact that he had power over death.

If you go and check the tombs of every other religious figure of all time, you know what you will find?

Buddha, Muhammadd, Joseph Smith,...

Name the leader and I take you to the tomb and we can dig up the dust and bones.

Know what you will find at Jesus tomb?

Nothing.

No bones, no dust.

Know why?

The grave had no power over Jesus.

Instead, Jesus had power over the grave.

And that power is exclusive to Jesus.

However, on top of that, the wonder of the resurrection is extended to everyone who repents and trusts in Christ.

The remarkable truth of the Jesus rising from the dead is that everyone who believes upon Christ will also rise from the dead.

Power over death is the ultimate power in the world.

Everything else on this earth pales in comparison.

Yet, this power belongs to Jesus Christ.

And we will get a glimpse of that power this morning as we finish up chapter 5 of the gospel of Mark.

Are you looking forward to receiving a really good Christmas present this year?

Well, I can promise you that there is no gift that even comes close to the promise of being resurrected from the dead.

And we get a preview of that this morning in Mark 5:35-43.

If you have been with us the past few weeks, we have witnessed some incredible miracles.

Jesus calmed an incredible storm on the sea of Galilee.

A storm so incredible that experienced sailors were terrified.

Then he freed a man from a legion of demons on the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee.

Just last week, we watched him heal a woman who had been sick for 12 years.

Yet today, in these verses, we will see the most incredible miracle yet.

As Jesus raises a little girl from the dead.

If you remember last week, we called this section of Mark from verses 21-43....

A Miracle Sandwich.

Because in verses 21-24, we met a desperate dad with a dying daughter.

Jairus was a synagogue official who came to Jesus in hopes of finding help for his little girl.

Yet when Jesus decided to depart and go help this little 12 year old girl...

He was stopped by a nameless woman with a 12 year illness.

And last week, we looked at the pity that Jesus had for this woman...

And also the power he displayed by curing her problem.

So, when we pick up in v 35 today, Jesus is still at the scene speaking to this poor woman...

When he is interrupted by friends of Jairus who come to tell him that his daughter has died.

So let's pick up the story there in verse 35 of Mark 5.

I have broken up these few verses into a simple outline on the back of the bulletin..

The first section is.....

I. A Deadly Delay (35-40a)

Verse 35....

*³⁵ While He was still speaking, they *came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?”*

As Jesus is finishing up one miracle, the news of Jairus’ daughter reaches the crowd.

A group from the home finds Jesus and Jairus to spare Jesus the trouble of coming to help the little girl.

Now, we have no idea of the tone of this message.

Obviously, a dad would not leave his dying daughter’s bed side without telling everyone where he was headed.

You can imagine the scene in that house with a little girl at the point of death.

And then the words that Jairus must have spoken fill the house....

“I’m going to find Jesus.”

And we can only imagine the response that probably brought from some in the house.

“Jesus? What is he going to do? He is just a teacher.”

“This girl is almost dead. She doesn’t need a sermon from the Old Testament.”

“She needs a miracle.”

I’m sure there were skeptical remarks when Jairus went looking for Jesus.

And it may have been some of these critics who came running to tell Jairus.

We know that belief in Jesus was not popular.

And some people in this world only exist to share bad news with others.

The news really shook up Jairus, as it would any dad.

Can you imagine being in his shoes?

Daughter is on her death bed.

He runs and actually finds Jesus in a huge crowd of people.

Then Jesus actually responds, but all of a sudden there is an interruption with this woman.

I cant imagine the anxiety as he sat and watched
Jesus tend to this woman.

He knows his daughter is taking her lasts breaths...

Yet, to his credit, he never leaves Jesus side.

He doesn't run on home while Jesus heals this
woman.

No, he stays there.

Is he worried?

Absolutely.

Is he panicked?

No doubt.

Does he leave?

Not a chance.

And that is a small picture of the focus of these
verses.

The focus is always upon Jesus.

Death is horrible especially for a young person.

Disease is devastating.

But the central focus at all times in all things is the person of Jesus Christ.

Is Jairus upset by what he has heard?

Look at verse 36...

³⁶ *But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, *said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid any longer, only ^{im}believe.”*

Jairus is terrified.

But Jesus simply says, “Don’t be scared, simply believe.”

What words of comfort in the midst of tragedy.

And you know what?

Jairus would have never heard those words had he left Jesus and went on home.

This is incredible faith.

Jairus had no idea that Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead.

Jesus had never demonstrated that kind of power before.

He had healed people; that’s why Jairus sought Him out.

But raising someone from the dead is not even in anyone's mind at this point.

However, they set out for Jairus' home in verse 37...

*³⁷ And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and ^[u]James and John the brother of ^[o]James. ³⁸ They *came to the house of the synagogue official; and He *saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing.*

Funerals in this part of the world are vastly different from our funerals.

Westerners view funerals as times of restraint and sorrow.

Funeral homes and funeral services are marked by hushed voices, whispers and silent tears.

Occasionally, you will find people out of control at funerals...

But it is not the norm here.

However, middle eastern funerals are a different affair.

You can even see glimpses of it today on TV.

If a Palestinian or Israeli teenager is killed, they will often hoist the body on their shoulders and carry it around town...

With screams and cries of sorrow as a parade of people follow in the streets.

It is a loud affair without any restraint or control.

The funerals in Jesus day were very similar.

Families would hire professional mourners who would get paid to scream and cry at the top of their lungs.

You see this here.

You see this is the story of Lazarus' death and other places in the Bible.

It was a sign of respect for the dead.

Even the poorest families were expected to hire at least one professional mourner and 2 flute players.

Nearly every Jewish funeral has a professional screamer, flute player and everyone at the funeral ripped their clothes to show grief.

It was a grand production, and all of these people were already at it when Jesus and Jairus got there.

In our day, Jesus and Jairus were getting there while the funeral home was putting a flower on the door and funeral signs along the road.

This was official.

The girl was dead.

The grief had begun.

And Jesus walks up with the dad and a small group of disciples that were part of Jesus' inner circle among the group of 12.

Peter James and John were with him.

We will learn more about this group in the chapters ahead, but all of them arrive at the house...

Verse 39...

³⁹ And entering in, He *said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." ⁴⁰ They began laughing at Him.

The story of the SS Californian is the story of too little, too late.

On the night that the Titanic sank and 1500 people drowned in the North Atlantic Ocean...

The Californian sat only a few miles to the north stuck in an ice field.

Though the crew reported seeing distress rockets fired by another ship...

The captain of the Californian did not attempt to leave the ice field until dawn...

And then he took an unusual route to the place where the Titanic sank....

Arriving 6 hours after Titanic sank and finding only wreckage and empty lifeboats.

If only the Californian had acted sooner, 100s of survivors may have been snatched from the sea.

As a result, the captain of the Californian received much criticism.

And this is the reaction of the people to Jesus' arrival.

“Sorry, pal. You are too late”

This little girl is dead.

Which is further proof of this incredible miracle.

Even the professional mourners who were always surrounded by death knew she was dead.

And we see that they were hired mourners because look how quickly they went from crying to laughing at Jesus.

The verdict is in.

Jairus daughter is dead.

And with that, this section of the story closes.

The hope of a miraculous recovery is over.

But the story doesn't end there...

Let's look at the second part....

II. The Remarkable Resurrection (40b-43)

Verse 40...

But putting them all out, He *took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and *entered the room where the child was.

The remarkable truth of this verse is that Jairus is still here...

He went in hopes of bringing home Jesus to miraculously heal his daughter.

But she is dead at this point.

Yet, he continues to follow Jesus' instructions.

He didn't run off in grief.

He hasn't been discouraged by the people laughing at Jesus getting there late.

He continues to follow Jesus into his daughter's room here.

His plan to get Jesus there before her last breath has failed.

But yet, his faith never wavers.

As Jesus requested, he continues to believe.

I still don't know if he has any idea that Jesus is preparing to raise his daughter.

He simply obeys.

That is astounding faith in the face of the worst possible situation of losing a child.

And then verse 41....

*⁴¹ Taking the child by the hand, He *said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").⁴² Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old.*

Then Jesus takes the little girl by the hand.

Such a tender display of affection.

And he says to her...

"Talitha cum."

Mark gives the actual words that Jesus spoke that day.

Aramaic was spoken in Israel but there was also a mix of Greek as well.

However, Jesus speaks these exact words on that day...

Talitha cum...

Talitha is the word for a little lamb.

It would be a term of affection for a young girl.

We would say something like... "sweetheart"

Cum means arise and come forth.

It may have been the phrase that her mother used every morning to wake up this young girl.

"Sweetheart, time to get up."

And with that compassionate command, Jairus daughter is raised from the dead.

And like any 12 year old, she gets up and walks around the room.

Mark writes at the end of verse 42..

"And immediately they were completely astounded."

I remember the first time I saw someone die.

I was 8 years old and I watched my elderly neighbor pass away on his front porch from a sudden heart attack.

I still have that image in my mind to this day.

But I'm sure it doesn't compare to the image of someone returning from the dead.

To say that they were amazed is probably a great understatement.

The people in that room were blown away by such a display of power.

We assume that they all knew that Jesus was going to do this...

But remember no one had seen this before.

Sure, there had been some OT resurrections, but none so recent and none so amazing.

With a simple touch and two words, Jesus had raised a girl from the dead.

And the people in that room were amazed.

The disciples were amazed that he calmed the sea.

The people of the town were amazed that he cast out demons from the wild man.

The crowd was amazed that he healed the woman.

And now in this tiny little room, this group of 3 disciples and Jairus and his wife are amazed at the power of Jesus.

And finally verse 43...

⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that something should be given her to eat.

We have seen this before.

Jesus has no desire to be only known as a miracle worker.

His ministry was to preach the gospel and call people to repentance.

And his eyes were on the cross that lay before Him.

He didn't want people to get side tracked even more on his healing and now resurrection ministry.

His purpose was not to heal people physically, it was to heal people spiritually...

And only his death on the cross and resurrection would accomplish that.

Obviously, it would be hard to keep this a secret.

The resurrected child would resume normal childhood activities.

So people would know.

But Jesus is also seeking to protect the girl and her family, since they would be overcome with attention.

And then he ends this scene by asking that the girl be given some food.

You can imagine everyone sitting there with their mouths wide open.

They have probably even forgotten about the girl at this point.

But Jesus, being the Great Shepherd, tends to the needs of his lamb that he just raised from the dead and simply reminds her family to feed her.

People at the point of death are eating very little, if they are eating at all.

Yet, here she is.

Restored to perfect health and like very 12 year old in history needs a lot of food to sustain her.

And with that simple act think of what all have been accomplished...

Well, first the faith of Jairus is confirmed.

He saw Jesus as the only source of help for his little girl, and Jesus responded to that faith by raising her from the dead.

Second, the faith of these disciples is strengthened.

They have watched him cause the wind and waves to die down.

And now they have watched him bring a little girl to life.

Third, Jesus has shown that he has power over death.

The baby born in a manger has become the One who held power over the grave.

The baby born in a tiny little town.

Walks into a tiny little room and brings a girl back to life.

The Christmas story is the wonder of God being born in the world...

But it is also the wonder of that baby growing up, going into ministry and then demonstrating his power over demons, disease and death.

The baby in the manger is only part of the story.

The rest is the fact that the baby is God in the flesh.

Who has authority over this world and your very life.

Conclusion

When I read this story, I look with amazement at the authority of Christ.

I am astounded at his incredible power and authority.

I am also amazed at his sympathy and care for the sick and poor.

But there is one last thing that amazes me as well....

And it is this.

All of the unbelief around Jesus.

We have met the Pharisees and scribes who are already planning to destroy Jesus.

We have met a town that can't wait to send Jesus out of town.

And today, we meet people who openly mock and laugh at Jesus.

For every person of saving faith in the gospel of Mark, we have met hundreds who show no faith in Jesus.

And I would say that percentage hasn't changed much over the years.

The world is still full of people who show little regard for Jesus.

For many, he is simply a reason to gather with your family, eat a good meal, while hoping that you don't get another pair of socks for a present.

For others, he is simply someone who you tip your cap to twice a year at Easter and Christmas...

And then lives of sin the rest of the year.

For others, he is simply a name that comes out of their mouth while trying to get their political party elected to office.

For others, Jesus is just Someone that their grandmother loved and they show up at church to show respect for her.

And if that is all that Jesus is to you, you might as well laugh at him like the people in these verses today.

Because you have as much faith as they did.

True faith falls at the feet of Jesus in faith and repentance.

That is what Jairus did.

But true faith also stays at Jesus side through thick and thin.

Like Jairus did.

True faith obeys, just like Jairus did.

And true faith continues to believe even in the worst of circumstances.

Just like Jairus did.

True saving faith is always seen in our commitment and loyalty to Christ.

The rest of the story of Ponce de Leon is that he searched Florida 8 more years in search of the fountain of youth.

Unfortunately, his expedition stumbled upon a native tribe and they shot Ponce de Leon in his thigh with an arrow.

The wound eventually became infected and he died in Cuba in 1521, never having found a fountain of youth.

The rest of the story of Jesus is this.

He continued ministry for 1 more year.

Was tried, convicted and executed unjustly to pay the penalty that sinners deserved.

Was resurrected from the grave and now sits at the right hand of God.

And the blood that he poured out doesn't form a fountain of youth...

But it does form a fountain of life.

For those who turn from their sin and put their trust in him.

Dear friends, you have no hope of finding a fountain of youth...

But you can be plunged into Jesus' fountain this day and erase the sin that will eventually end your life.

Let us pray.