

Beyond Help: A Two-Voice Sermon
Based on Mark 5:21-43
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Jairus (J): Nothing could touch me.
Woman (W): No one would touch me.

J: I was so sure.
W: I wasn't really sure of anything, anymore.

J: I am a leader of the synagogue. My name is Jairus. Everyone knows me by name. They look up to me. They seek out my advice. They say, "Where's Jairus? I need to talk to him. I need to ask him something." You see, I know a lot about the law and the ways of God. Sometimes, they even fall at my feet, saying, "Jairus, please Jairus, will you just give me a minute of your time!" I'm the "go-to" guy around here. Everyone comes to me for help.

W: I was beyond help. Or so I thought. You see, twelve years ago, I started bleeding and then it never stopped. Every morning for the last twelve years, I woke up thinking, "maybe this is the day it will stop." But nothing and no doctor could stop it. Day by day, drop by drop, my life was draining out of me. No one wanted to hear my whole story.

I just became known as "that sick woman." Parents would tell their children, "Be sure you don't go near that sick woman." People, who I thought were my friends, would whisper to each other when they walked by my window, as if the blood had stopped up my ears, too. They would say mean things that felt like slashes of a knife on my skin. They would speculate about what terrible sin I must have committed for God to punish me this way. They would agree on how unlucky my husband was. I could see them shaking their heads at how I had wasted all our money on doctors for an illness that no one could cure. They called me selfish. They called me foolish. But they never called me by my name.

No, the bleeding illness had become my name. My name and my curse. It made me ritually "unclean." Anything I touched or anyone who touched me would become unclean. No matter how carefully they washed themselves. They too, would be unclean until sunset. It says this in Leviticus, our book of law. The

law written to help us get closer to God. But this particular law had pulled me away from everyone. Even my own husband could not touch me. I felt so rejected. So utterly alone. All I had left was time: Hour after miserable hour, stretching into endless days and long, dark nights for twelve trying years.

J: Twelve years ago, I became a father. God blessed me with a beautiful daughter. She was so bright. Every time she flashed her tiny smile at me, my heart would melt with delight. I was sure that God had blessed me with a charmed life. Not only was I a well-respected leader of the synagogue, now I was a proud father. I thought the world was at my feet. My days and nights were busy--filled with work and family, they flew by quickly. Every year seemed to go faster than the one before.

But then one day, my darling, healthy daughter got sick. It didn't seem that serious at first. Besides, really bad things never happened to me. Bad things happened to other people. So I was sure she would get better soon. Nothing to worry about. But my wife was very worried. She worried enough for both of us. She did everything she could to help our daughter get better. But when she kept getting sicker, we hired the best doctors we could find. And she only got worse.

First she stopped eating. Then she stopped talking. Then she stopped smiling. Pretty soon they were speaking in hushed tones and pulling me aside, telling me there was nothing more they could do, not even for me, Jairus. They were trying to break it to us as gently as they could. But the news was sharp and unyielding. It hung in the air. The air was so thick with dread, I could hardly breathe. But I could hear what they were telling me: She was beyond help. My daughter would not get better. There was nothing more that could be done for her. They were telling me she would die.

W: Things couldn't get worse.

J: Things had never been worse.

W: I was ready to do anything to get better.

J: I would do anything for my daughter.

W: I had to do something. Every day I was getting weaker.

J: I had to do something. Every hour my daughter was slipping further and further away.

W: I was not ready to give up.

J: I was not ready to let my daughter die.

W:I had one crazy idea left: I heard them talking about the man in Decapolis who got his mind back, the lunatic they called “Legion.” He was healed by the teacher named Jesus. Maybe Jesus could heal me too. Could I to go to him?

J: I kept thinking of the one man we hadn’t tried. But he was controversial. Some of my superiors were plotting to kill him. How could I, Jairus, beg *that* man for help? I had never begged anyone for anything. And I hated taking risks. Did I have the courage to ask him?

W & J(*together at the same time*):

Yes! Maybe Jesus can help.

J:I will go to him and explain my situation. I will tell him my name. I will use my influence. I will make him come to my daughter. Others have washed their hands of her, but his hands can heal her, my darling daughter, who they say is beyond help.

W:I will go to him. He doesn’t even need to know I came. I will sneak my way through the crowd. I have been invisible for so long. No one will see me. But I don’t want to make him unclean. I’ll just come up to him from behind, and touch the edge of his cloak. That will be enough. I know he is the one who can help me, the woman, whom they say is beyond help.

J: So I went. I, Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. I fell at his feet. I begged and begged. My story came rushing out of me at once. And when I came up for air, he nodded, stopped what he was doing, and started to follow me. It didn’t seem to matter that he had a huge crowd around him. And my aching heart shifted within me. Was that hope I was feeling? Could it be that my daughter doesn’t have to die? Hold on! Hold on! Help is coming!

W: There were so many, many people, and I was so tired. Tired from my illness. Tired of my illness. Nor was I used to the sun in my eyes or the smell of so many people so close together. But the sound of his voice gave me strength and pulled me toward him. Somehow I knew I could be healed by this man. If only I could get near enough to touch his cloak.

He was moving so quickly. Who was he talking to? Was that Jairus, the leader of the synagogue talking to him? Oh no. I couldn't let Jairus see me. I ducked down and worked my way through the crowd, not really seeing where I was going, and then all of a sudden, I was there, right behind him. Here was my chance! . So I reached out my hand and gently touched the edge of his cloak. Instantly I knew I was healed. The bleeding stopped. That dreaded feeling was gone! Could I possibly be well, be made whole again?

But all of a sudden the teacher, Jesus, stopped and asked, "Who touched me?" Oh no. Now what could I do? I fell at his feet and the next thing I knew, my voice, silent for so long, came back to me. He wanted to hear my story. Even in this moment when the whole crowd was swirling around him and Jairus, obviously upset about something. No one had listened to me that way, ever. So I told him the whole truth. All of it.

J: My daughter was dying. Why did he stop for that poor, pesky sick woman? Every minute counted. Come on, Jesus! Prioritize! Let's get going! My heart was pounding. We were getting so close to my house. There was still time. Then my friends appeared, their faces ashen. They spoke the words I dreaded to hear: "It's too late. Your daughter is dead. There is nothing more to be done."

But Jesus said, "No. Don't give up. She is not beyond help. Do not fear, only believe." How could he be so sure? So full of hope? He didn't care what the crowd thought. He didn't listen to them. When we got to my house, everyone was laughing at him. Everyone except me, my wife, and three of his disciples.

So we went to her bed. She looked so still and pale. What had happened to our little girl who loved to run and play? It hurt so much to look at her now. But Jesus took her by the hand and told her to get up. Instantly, my little girl, who hadn't been able to lift her head to drink a cup of water, rose up. And then she stood up on her feet and began to walk. And then Jesus told us to get her something to eat.

So my wife ran to get her bowl: the bowl she had put behind all the others, just that morning, thinking it would never be filled again. I was too stunned to move. Our daughter was alive!

W: I was not beyond help. No. I was neither too low nor too far gone, for the reach of Jesus.

J: My daughter was not beyond help. Nor was I above needing help from him. Yes, Jesus had healed me, too.

W & J: *(together at the same time)*
No one is beyond the help of Jesus.

J: No one.

W: No one.