

June 30, 2024 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

### When Jesus went to a funeral

He showed his compassion for grief

He shared his perspective on death

It's not something we like to do. Going to a funeral is hardly ever a joyful occasion. We go to show respect for the deceased, to demonstrate how much they meant to us. We also go to show support and love for the family. It is good to express our sympathies and also to remind the family that their loved one in the Lord is happy and in heaven. For the believers, death is not the end. Jesus proved that point when he went to a funeral. When Jesus went to a funeral, he showed his compassion for grief and he shared his perspective on death.

#### He showed his compassion for grief

Jesus was preaching and teaching in Galilee. Suddenly, a man forced his way through the large crowd and dismissed all dignity and pride as he put his face in the dirt in front of Jesus. He was showing that he was unworthy of any blessing, but he was begging Jesus to help. His name was Jairus. He was a respected leader in the synagogue. Certainly, he heard how Jesus healed many people and his daughter needed healing – quickly. He pleaded earnestly with Jesus (:23), “**My little daughter – my sweetie – is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.**”

Why would Jesus bother to help Jairus? He was sinful and did not deserve anything from God, certainly no special treatment. Jesus could have said, “Your daughter is going to die someday anyway. Too bad.” But Jesus showed his compassion in grief. He stopped what he was doing and took the time from his busy schedule as he started walking to Jairus’ house. It’s easy to imagine Jairus rushing in front urging Jesus to come as quickly as he could.

As they were on their way, some men who did not have any compassion approached the group. In a cold and calloused manner they simply blurted out (:35), “**Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?**” There was not a hint of sympathy. Jairus must have felt as if he was punched in the gut, as if he was in shock. It was all over. His girl was gone Jesus again demonstrated compassion by looking Jairus directly in his eyes and saying (:36), “**Don’t be afraid; just believe.**” In

other words, “Jairus, you came to me because you trusted that I could help your daughter. Don’t stop trusting me now. Keep on believing in me.”

When they arrived at Jairus’ house, there was a lot of noise as people were crying and screaming. In our culture, funerals are quiet affairs. People talked in hushed tones with quiet music in the background. In the Jewish culture, they gave expression to the sorrow and sadness in their hearts. Professional musicians came to play sad sounding music and professional mourners came to cry and add to the mood of loss and sadness. Jesus showed his compassion again by saying that the noise was not needed. He explained (:39), “**The child is not dead but asleep.**” Sadly, they laughed at Jesus. They were just as cruel and cold as the men who told Jairus that his daughter died.

Jesus continued showing compassion by throwing them out of the house. Then he took the mother and father aside, giving them personal attention. He also brought along his three closest disciples – Peter, James and John. They were going to be leaders in the early Christian Church and it would be good for them to serve as witnesses to what Jesus did. Once they were alone with the girl, Jesus stepped forward and took her by the hand. Most people recoil at the thought of touching a corpse, but Jesus showed compassion by not shying away. He spoke to her in the gentlest of ways (:41), “**Little girl,**” a term of tenderness.

This gives us insight into the kind of God you have. You have a God who has compassion for grief. He is not just some emotionless ruler who is watching the world go by like a foreman watching machines and robots in a factory. He cares about you as an individual. When you are mourning the loss of a loved one, he understands. He gets it. He can empathize. He knows about the nightmares and the worry. He knows about the emptiness and loneliness in your heart. He knows how overwhelmed you feel and how hard it is to focus. He knows that just a song on the radio or a comment from someone can stab you in the heart and make your pain fresh again. Friends, relatives, pastors may care and try to comfort, but none of them can be there for you all the time. Your Lord is always there for you. Cry out to him in prayer as Jairus did. Listen to him speak to you in his Word as he says (He 13:5), “**Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.**” Or (Matthew 11:28), “**Come to be all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**” Or (Psalm 146:9), “**The LORD .. sustains the fatherless and the widow.**” Or (Isaiah

66:13), “**As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.**” How blessed you are to have a God who cares for you so much.

When Jesus went to a funeral, he showed compassion, but he also did something about the situation. He shared his perspective on death.

#### He shared his perspective on death

From our perspective, death is permanent. Once a person is dead, the doctors can not do anything to bring him back to life. Once someone dies, they stay dead. But when Jesus showed up at the home of Jairus, he said (:39), “**The child is not dead but asleep.**” He was not speaking symbolically. Jesus gives us a different perspective on death that only the Holy Spirit can give us. There is no scientific evidence for life after death. Only through faith, are we able to view death from Jesus’ perspective. Just as someone lays down at night to sleep but wakes up in the morning, because of Jesus, when a believer dies, it’s only a temporary thing. They will wake up. They will come back to life. Death is not the end.

What a somber scene it was. Jairus and his wife could not stop crying. Three disciples awkwardly stood to the side not knowing what to do. And then Jesus stood next to the dead girl coming face to face with the heart-braking consequence of sin. Ever since Adam & Eve ate that forbidden fruit, every human being has been infected with sin which ruined everything in the world. It’s a broken world where people suffer and die. Sin infects our body so that we do, say and think things that we should not and we can’t stop ourselves. Sin also affects our bodies. As we get older, our muscles get weaker. Our joints start to hurt and often need replacing. Our hearing and sight suffer. Death is stalking us every day. Death attacks people of all ages – the elderly, middle aged, millennials, teens, children. It is not that uncommon to hear of someone who died very young. Death has been called the great equalizer. No matter how rich and powerful or how poor and pitiful people may be in this life, they are helpless in the face of death. We do not have power over death. Death has power over us and we do not like it.

Jesus was staring at that the horrible power of death as he looked at Jairus’ dead daughter. He must have thought, “**THIS** is why I came, not just to Jairus’ house, but into this world. I came to destroy the power of death.” Think of death as a mean prison guard who locks people up in a prison cell. Once you die, you are locked up and can not escape. Jesus, however, entered the prison cell on purpose. Jesus knew that his death

was the only way for us to escape death. All of our sins were blamed on Jesus as he carried them to the cross. He offered his life as the sacrifice to pay the penalty for every sin you and I have ever done, said or thought. Your sins are now forgiven. Jesus said, “It is finished.” Then, by dying on the cross, Jesus voluntarily entered the prison cell of death. On Easter morning, though, that cage started rattling. When Jesus rose from the dead, he broke the power of death. He became alive again and since you are connected to Jesus through faith, you also will come back to life. Yes, we will one day end up in the prison cell of death, but because Jesus knocked the lock off of the door, you will come out of the prison cell of death and end up in the happiness of heaven. Because of Jesus, death is not permanent for us. That’s a different perspective on death that the world does not have.

Certainly, Jesus wanted to help the girl’s grieving parents, but he also wanted Jairus and his wife, as well as his disciples, to realize that he was true God. They could trust him for everything, including life after death. He wants you to know that you, also, can trust him for life after death. Jesus approached the girl, took her by the hand and said (:41), “**Talitha koum!**” St. Mark records for us the exact sounds and syllables that Jesus spoke in Aramaic. “**Talitha koum,**” means, “**Little girl, I say to you, get up.**” Her motionless body suddenly inhaled and her eyes opened. Not only did Jesus raise her from the dead, but he instantly cured her of whatever illness laid her flat on her bed. Instantly, she was strong enough to stand up and walk around. Her parents went from overwhelming grief to overwhelming shock and joy. They were thrilled. They were so numb with excitement that Jesus needed to remind them to give her something to eat because she obviously had not eaten in a while.

Because of Jesus, as we sing in one of our hymns, we fear the grave as little as our bed. We are not scared to go to sleep each evening. We look forward to it. We know we’ll wake up in the morning somewhat refreshed. In the same way, because of Jesus, death will be like taking a long nap. When the little girl opened her eyes, the first person she saw was Jesus. Likewise, when you close your eyes in death, you’ll open them again to see Jesus smiling at you and saying, “Welcome home! You made it. You’re in heaven forever.” Amen.