

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 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.' So he went with him.

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

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?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' 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. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This year Ash Wednesday has come too soon. Of course there are years when it is even earlier. But what I mean is that I'm just not ready for Lent. I wonder whether you feel the same?

The early part of 2023 feels as though it has been punctuated by challenge and, indeed, heartache. From the local to the international, the news has been full of tragedy, not to mention that the war in the Ukraine is now entering its second year. Having emerged from the uncertainties caused by a global pandemic, we find ourselves facing different uncertainties – this time, rising prices, industrial action and even supply chain issues. When I think about Lenten disciplines, I often want to find myself in a spacious place where I can read, pray, reflect and meditate. This year, I have more the feeling of constant uncertainty. Day to day, it certainly feels as though there is plenty to worry about!

It's at times like these that I find myself turning to the scriptures in order to find friends who understand what I'm going through, or inspire me in various ways. I realise that the passage I have quoted from Mark's gospel is quite long, but these two stories, of Jairus's daughter and the woman with the haemorrhages really speak to me.

First and foremost they are a reminder that it's ok not to be ready for Lent. The scriptures are full of people who weren't ready for the things that happened. Think of Mary when she was visited by an angel. Did she really know what she was saying yes to? As a young girl I imagine it was probably the last thing she expected to happen at that moment. And it changed everything.

In the two stories quoted, we have people caught up in events not of their choosing. Jairus isn't ready for his daughter to die. He's a leader of the synagogue. He is probably used to people turning to him at times of tragedy. And facing tragedy himself he turns immediately to Jesus. Not only that, he falls at Jesus' feet and begs. It's not what we would expect

someone of his stature to do. And yet he's desperate.

And we can only imagine the scale of his distress when Jesus gets distracted. Having thought he had secured the help he needed, he has to wait. He can't choose the timing.

I wonder what was going through his head and heart during those moments when Jesus engaged with the woman. We don't hear that he tried to get Jesus's attention. Perhaps he simply couldn't believe what was happening. A woman distracting Jesus from someone of his status. Or perhaps he found himself genuinely caught up in the exchange between Jesus and the woman. We can't know, but the next time we see him, he is being approached by people who have been at his house, and tell him that his daughter has died.

It's impossible to imagine the devastation of that news. And yet Jesus remains calm. I wonder how Jairus felt. What he was thinking. Could people really have got it so wrong? Was his daughter really still alive? Or had he put his faith in entirely the wrong place?

In the end his faith is justified. And we are left to ask ourselves how Jairus's life was transformed.

And what of the woman? She had been ready to find a treatment for years. She probably couldn't remember what life was like before she became ill. And of course her condition meant that she will have been an outcast, considered unclean by society. She had done everything in her power to find a cure. And yet she still believed that Jesus might be able to do what all the physicians had failed to do.

Was she really ready for that transformation to take place on that day? We don't hear anything about her life thereafter. But she knew she was healed instantly. And she was brave enough to admit it.

Throughout our lives we probably find that things happen that we aren't really ready for. Sometimes they are relatively unimportant, and sometimes they are utterly transformational.

If you're not ready for Lent this year, you're not the only one. Take heart. And see if you can find some friends in the scripture – or indeed in the community – who aren't ready either. And yet remain committed to finding signs of God's transforming love at work in the world.

March Services and Events

Wednesday 1	10.00	Lent Course 1 in the Cuddington Hall
Saturday 4	08.30	Men's Breakfast at Horton Golf Park
Sunday 5	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Monday 6	19.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
	19.30	Lent Course 2 on Zoom
Wednesday 8	10.00	Lent Course 2 in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 12	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
	10.30	Homemade Sunday in the Cuddington Hall
	18.00	Evening Service
Monday 13	19.30	Lent Course 3 on Zoom
Wednesday 15	10.00	Lent Course 3 in the Cuddington Hall
	20.00	PCC Meeting in the Cuddington Hall
Thursday 16	14.30	Afternoon Club Garden Centre Visit
Saturday 18	10.00	Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 19	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Mothering Sunday Parade Service
Monday 20	19.30	Lent Course 4 on Zoom
Wednesday 22	10.00	Lent Course 4 in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 26	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion with Baptism
Wednesday 29	19.00	Men's Carvery at the Hogsmill

Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am

Everyone is very welcome