**Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43 21When Jesus had again crossed over in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him near the sea. 22Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet 23and repeatedly pleaded with him, “My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.” 24Jesus went with him…35While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue ruler’s house arrived, saying, “Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore?” 36But when Jesus heard this report, he told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” 37He did not allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. 38They went into the house of the synagogue ruler, and Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. 39When he entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” 40They laughed at him. But after he put everyone out, he took the father of the child, her mother, and those who were with him and went in where the child was. 41Grasping the hand of the child, he said to her, *“Talitha, koum!”* (When translated, that means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!”) 42Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) They were completely and utterly amazed. 43Then he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and he told them to give her something to eat.**

Don’t be Afraid. Only Believe

The number one reason for following Jesus is that we live in a world of sickness, sadness, and sin. Here’s an example. A little girl had a fever and frequently was going in and out of delirium. In one of her coherent moments which were becoming scarcer, she asked, “Daddy, does the doctor think I’m going to die?” With a sad but honest heart, her father choked out, “My baby, the doctor believes you won’t live.” His little girl grew quiet. She knew what death was. She had been to the funeral of her grandmother and remembered the dark grave. Her eye filled with tears, she said, “I don’t want to be buried alone. Won’t you go into the grave with me?” Although he would have done anything he could for his daughter, the father told her he couldn’t join her in the grave until it was his time to die. Afraid to go alone, she asked, “Can Mommy go with me?” It was more than the father could bear, as he broke completely down in front of his dying daughter, he admitted that as much as her mother, her mother couldn’t go with her either. The poor child would have to go alone. She turned her face to the wall and wept. That is what it is like to be without Jesus. Without Jesus, that is the sad end.

That’s a hard story to hear. If you think that story is too overemotional, then I will only tell you that you have never been at the bedside of a father and mother who, in helplessness, watch their child die. If, you have never been to such a bedside, allow St. Mark to take you there. Meet Jairus, the father. He is a respected leader of the synagogue. He lives a comfortable life. Although such a position would take a fair amount of his time, currently his mind and energy are completely elsewhere. At this moment, he’s all about his 12-year-old daughter. No doubt Jairus has followed a topical pattern. If there has been time, the synagogue has been praying for her and the best available medical help has been consulted. Yet, there is no improvement. Indeed, her helpless father can do nothing but watch his girl slipping away. His mind races, searching for something or someone who can help in this emergency. Jairus, like so many fathers since that day, remembers the name—Jesus.

We don’t know how Jairus got introduced to Jesus. He might have been there when Jesus preached in the synagogue. If not, someone could have shared with Jairus Jesus’ message. It’s also possible that Jairus had seen or maybe heard about how this Jesus had healed Peter’s mother-in-law and a paralytic. Of course, this isn’t long after Jesus had calmed a windstorm at sea. After the doctors concluded that death was his daughter’s path, Jairus anxiously worked his way through the crowd, one thought on his mind: he had to speak with Jesus and beg him to heal his daughter.

**When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and repeatedly pleaded with him, “My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.”** Such a sad prayer from the aching heart of this father. It’s a strong prayer. The father’s sincerity can’t be doubted. Jesus immediately answers by going with him. The disciples and a large crowd of onlookers trail behind.

Progress is slowed. The crowd hinders them as everyone wants to see Jesus or has something they urgently want to ask him. A woman wishing to be healed from her own malady touches Jesus’ robe and he stops to talk to her. Likely it only took a moment but it must have felt like much longer for Jairus. His daughter is dying and time is precious. But then the coldest of messages comes to Jairus: **While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue ruler’s house arrived, saying, “Your daughter is dead.** (Pause) **Why bother the Teacher anymore?”**

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* What would have made the news of his daughter’s death especially hard for Jairus?

Have you ever had to share tragic news? Did you pick softer words? Are there even softer words to bring such news? **Your daughter is dead.** Those words are so cold and have such a ring of finality to them. The girl gone. Her future gone. Hope for this is gone. Life is gone. If you haven’t lost a child, you can’t fully understand the impact of those words. It takes the breath right out of parents. They want to scream and run as far as they can from that room. They think they are stuck in a nightmare. The tears pour out, uncontrollable for days, weeks, years. When a child dies, part of the parents dies as well. Jairus had lost his little girl, the race he had against time. He heard the words: **Your daughter is dead.** (Pause) **Why bother the Teacher anymore?**

Tragedy tempts to question God. In the face of his loss, Jairus’ grieving heart may have questioned what he knew about God. *The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him* (Lamentations 3:25). Did Jairus wonder if God really was good? Although we can’t peer into Jairus’ mind and heart, Jesus could. And the Lord of life ignored the message of mortality. **When Jesus heard this report, he told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.”** Jairus, let your belief push aside the words of grief and tragedy. Let your belief settle you nerves and fears. **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.**

Listen again to the rest of the story: **He did not allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. They went into the house of the synagogue ruler, and Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. When he entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” They laughed at him. But after he put everyone out, he took the father of the child, her mother, and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Grasping the hand of the child, he said to her, *“Talitha, koum!”* (When translated, that means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!”) Immediately the little girl stood up and began to walk around. (She was twelve years old.) They were completely and utterly amazed. Then he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and he told them to give her something to eat.**

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Do you think this history of Jesus raising Jairus’ daughter would be helpful when talking to someone who had a child die? Why or why not?

Jesus took the girl’s hand and summoned her soul back from the grave. Just believe. Believe that in his wisdom, God knows how much joy and sorrow, how much pleasure and pain, how much prosperity and poverty is proper for each of us. Jairus was to believe that God knows the correct balance of happiness and sadness, the precise mixture off dark and light we need. Just believe Jesus.

That’s what Jesus says to us today: **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.** Realize that this miracle of life over death is not a quaint story designed to amuse Sunday school children. This story is written so that you may know that Jesus Christ has power over death. Jesus says, **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.** believe that the same Savior who gave his life on the cross so that you might be rescued from death, the same Savior who spent his life fulfilling the Law so you might be freed from the curse it brought upon you, he is the same Savior who is with you. **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.** Ask of him. Call upon him in every trouble. Trust in him. Put aside the messages that others bring you of depression, destruction, death, and discouragement. The Lord Jesus has the power over all of them. **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.**

As your pastor, I am close to many of you. I know some who have been let go from their jobs. I know some who have no life or health insurance. Some of you have had to say good-bye to your life partner and face the rest of your life alone. Some of you have seen the love of your spouse become cold and you cannot sleep for fear of what tomorrow will bring. Some of you have had your children grow disrespectful. The list of heartache and woe never ends. Some of you teens feel alone and only your best friend, on a good day, understands your uncertainty. We need not list every one of your problems and pains for you to know that Jesus speaks to you today. Compare your difficulties to the sorrow of Jairus. Can any one of us say, “My problems are greater than watching a 12-year-old daughter die”? But we can believe, with confidence, the power of Jesus’ words: **Don’t be afraid. Only believe.**

What does Jesus ask you to believe? His destruction of death at the home of Jairus shows that he is the mighty Master of mortality. Have you said good-bye to a loved one? Do you feel the same helplessness as Jairus? Jesus says, “Death is not the end.” What should you believe? Believe that death isn’t the end. Believe that the Lord who gave his life on Calvary can’t be conquered by death or the grave. Believe that he will take our hands in his and speak to us as he did to this girl, **Arise!** Then we shall rise. If you have never been at the bedside with parents who, in helpless horror, watched their child die, let me take you there.

A terminally ill little boy asked what it was like to die. His Christian mother had already had may talks with her believing son. This time, she said: Do you remember when you were a little boy, and how you used to play so hard all day? Do you remember that when evening came, you were too tired to go to your bedroom and change to go to sleep? You would just fall asleep, wherever you wished. It didn’t make any difference. In the morning, you woke up and found yourself in your own bed in your own room. You were there because someone loved you and took care of you. Your father had come and with his big strong arms carried you to where you belonged. My boy, death is just like that. In this world we get tired and fall asleep. We can fall asleep anywhere. Then we wake up to find ourselves in the other room, our own room, where we belong. Jesus takes believes to where they belong

The boy’s trusting face looking up into hers told her that he understood. More importantly, his fear was gone. Most importantly, the boy believed it. Two weeks later, Jesus did take him home. That is why we should not afraid but believe. This, my brothers and sisters in Christ, you must not fear. Only believe. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* List all the reasons, at least four, we can have sure hope since Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter back to life.
* What does Jesus raising Jairus’ daughter add to your personal definition of “the Kingdom of God”?