

Lamentations 3:22-33
2 Corinthians 8:1-9,13-14
Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

Mark 5:21-24a,35-43

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²²Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³and 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." ²⁴So he went with him. ³⁵While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶But overhearing[□] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰And 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. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This morning's gospel lesson is a story of life against death. It is interesting to note which one makes more noise. There is much to be learned in comparing the quiet unshakable faith with which Jesus proclaims life against the noisy turmoil of the people who are so eager to announce the arrival of death.

A fellow named Jairus came to Jesus. He said, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." Death was coming and this man turned to Jesus and asked for life. Some people brought Jairus a bleak message from his house, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?" Death has had its say. It is a waste of time to bother Jesus any further. These men came as representatives of all who measure God by human standards. They set their own limits in advance to what is possible for God. By contrast, Jesus would not allow even death to be an insurmountable obstacle to faith. The Gospel reads: "Ignoring what they said..." All of Jesus' miracles are built on the foundation of Jesus refusing to be limited by people's despair. Jesus will not limit himself to the certainty of those who know death so well.

Against the shattering word of the child's death, Jesus has his own word. "Don't be afraid. Just believe." And in those words faith and hope are alive.

They got close to Jairus' home and there was a great public display of mourning death. People "crying and wailing loudly". A great deal of noise was being made about death. Of course it is appropriate to mourn the loss of someone who is loved. But these people would only think of death - and ignored the words of life coming from Jesus himself. Jesus asked, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."

"They laughed at him."

Death is what we know. We seem certain that death is the final word. And Jesus, with his denial of death, Jesus is the object of scorn. They laughed at Jesus and shouted death all the louder. So, Jesus put them outside. Jesus closed a door between those outside who were overwhelmed by the anguish of death and those inside who heard the quiet assurance of his words of faith.

Only a select few were to witness the miracle. This was no noisy public spectacle.

The final verse reads; "He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this...". Compare the great public display of death with Jesus' quietness regarding life.

Words of death are dramatic. They sound best when they are said loudly. When we speak of death in the world around us we can punctuate our observations with news accounts. Murders, wars, kidnappings, storms, it's all true. It is obvious that there is a lot of death around.

And when we look into our own lives, there is a lot of death there, too. We can see hatred. People proclaim anger loudly. And, caught up in the noise and excitement of anger and broken relationships, we might turn our backs on the quiet words of Jesus saying, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

There is death in the world and death in the way we live. The temptation remains to say the same thing we have been saying all along, "Death is here, why bother the teacher any more?"

There is death here. We can see it clearly. Now that death has had its say, we think we can forget about Jesus. If Jesus has nothing to say about death then the noisy demonstration is right. Death has come. We should give up and mourn. "Don't bother Jesus anymore."

Jesus says different.

Jesus says, "Don't be afraid; just believe." When we see our lives overcome by hatred. When we are hurt. When we can't talk to people - people we were meant to love. When we can't muster the courage to sacrifice for what we know is right. It is not the time to say, "Death has come; why bother Jesus anymore?"

Or when people stand at the house, loudly proclaiming death, it is against the words of life that Jesus continues to assert. Perhaps people make noisy condemnations against whatever they have decided are unforgivable wrongs. Perhaps people exclaim over broken relationships. People proclaim their rightness, against others' wrongness. Perhaps they elaborate how the rift is irreparable. It's over. Don't bother Jesus anymore.

Jesus quietly steps into this celebration of death and asks what he's been asking all along..."Why all this commotion and wailing?" Jesus can overcome death.

Just as he overcame the death of Jairus' daughter in the face of all the mourning and all the public proclamation. Jesus can come into our lives. He can overcome death today.

Headlines scream threats. Businesses make money from war, walls seem to be the only way to security. It can drown out a quiet voice speaking the words of life that call us to work for peace. Let's not equate truth with volume. No matter how loud the voice that says, "Death has spoken, why bother Jesus any more?" We must speak with the quiet voice of faith even while public proclamations of death and despair are being shouted.

Hunger and starvation are shouting from all across the world. Let's bother Jesus anyway. Let's not be afraid. We can believe.

In our own lives we are torn with guilt over things we have done. We are separated by anger over what others have done. The hot emotions of condemnation proclaim death has won. It's over. Let's not bother Jesus anymore. But the quiet voice of Jesus says, "You and I together can forgive. Forgive you. Forgive other people." Quiet words of life.

Yes, there is death. We are surrounded by death. But don't be afraid. Just believe. Jesus can overcome death.

We can live our lives in God's love through Jesus Christ.

The scene from this morning's Gospel lesson has been repeated many times over the years. Remember the gathering that finally passed through the noisy proclamation of death? It is a picture of the church. First it was Jairus and his wife. They were touched by death as their daughter laid there out of their reach. Then there were the disciples. The followers of Jesus Christ who are entrusted with his message of faith. Sometimes in the church we will find ourselves in the position of Mr. & Mrs. Jairus. Hurt, seeking, looking for meaning in the face of death. Sometimes in the church we will find ourselves in the position of the disciples. We have been entrusted with the message of faith like they were. We are expected to reach out to our fellow creatures of God, encouraging them. Telling them about God who is with us at all times in all things.

There were Jairus and his wife. There were the disciples. And, as always, there was Christ himself. This is a good picture of the church. Jesus, gathering the mourners and the workers together in the face of death. And Jesus overcomes death.

Where is death in us? In uncertainty? In loneliness? In anger? In self-righteousness? Wherever it is, we know it is death.

The temptation is strong to shrug and say, "It's too much. It's too late. Death has come. Why bother Jesus anymore?"

Don't be afraid; just believe. Live in a faith that is not broken by death but goes on believing in God's power to conquer death and give us the new life of the resurrection.

The message may not be noisy, but it is clear. Jesus Christ is stronger than death. And Jesus is with you in your life.