

The Pace of Jesus

Mark 5:21-43 | Jonathan K. Dodson | February 13, 2014

Jesus moves at an interesting pace. In the Gospel of Mark, the word “immediately” appears over and over again to describe Jesus’ movement, moving urgently in and out of scenes in haste. He preaches and withdraws, teaches and then moves on, sails away and then sails right back into the thick of things. There’s a lot of jerky camera work in Mark, and as we focus in on our passage, we see Jesus step out a boat, and as his sandal hits the wet beach, he is met by a throng of people, and Jarius, *whose daughter is dying*. He wants Jesus to heal her. Jesus goes with him, but then, on his way, Jesus allows a no-name woman to stall him, leading to the daughter’s death! Back and forth, interruptions, maybe you can relate to this, to the frustration of erratic pace, interruptions at work, at home with the kids? Why allow a no-name woman interrupt important work? Let’s examine the pace of Jesus.

The Jesus Delay

Synagogues are like satellites to the temple in Jerusalem. They are places where people could gather in public worship. Jarius, one of the rulers of a local synagogue, was responsible for oversight of the synagogue, including building maintenance, getting scrolls for Scripture readings, and arranging the whole flow of Sabbath service. He ordered Scripture readers, prayers, and preachers. He was in control of a lot and accordingly, he would have been a man of considerable religious and social stature. Here we find this upstanding man, throwing himself down at the feet of Jesus. In desperation, he describes his suffering: his sweet, little twelve year-old girl is barely hanging onto life. She’s facing death. Social standing is out the window, his knees in dirt, hands overhead, and he’s pleading with Jesus to heal her. **Jarius can order the synagogue, but he can’t order his daughters health.** The situation is beyond his control. When’s the last time you faced similar circumstances, where things are, frustratingly, out of your control? Things spin out of control at work, you’ve done everything right, but the client, the product, the process just doesn’t cooperate? Your email breaks down, stops sending emails, right in the middle of the day, which prevents other work. You’ve set aside a day to get stuff done at home, but the kids explode, generating an inconceivable, disproportionate number of issues and fires you have to put out. You look up and your day is gone. You find yourself in desperation, praying in hope, wishing someone would just come along and whisk away your kids, just an hour, or replace your computer entirely. You can’t control it, you spin out of control, desperate. *Desperation can put you on the edge of hope.* Here we have the bleeding heart of a loving **father**, out there, exposed for all to see. There’s nothing like a threat to our children to make a parent lose it. When I found out that there was a possibility my daughter had been abused, I lost it. There was nothing I could do. Helpless, I cried out. Driving down the road I dialed my mom, tears like a hard rain, I couldn’t see, so I had to pull off of MoPac and park, but my heaving was so heavy my mother couldn’t understand what I was saying. I cried out to God, “Lord, please don’t let it be true, please, please.” *Desperation can put you on the edge of hope.* But it can also lead to blind resignation. Often, when we encounter difficulty, we intellectually resign ourselves to the notion that God is sovereign (I’ve heard it a thousand times, “God is sovereign” but little engagement with God, yes, but he’s also personal and present). Yet when circumstances arise that are out of our control, we remain spiritually

disengaged with what God is doing; we aren't following his pace. We just want the storm to blow over. We just the computer to be replaced, the kids to be calm, we want it *not* to be true. But God is up to more. For Jarius, it looks like he's got his circumstantial fix. Jesus is coming to heal his daughter. In a note of warmth, Mark tells us "[And Jesus went with him.](#)" He is with you. Jesus dignifies our struggles by going with us. But then, on the way, a great crowd gathers about him and he invites a delay. What?! Is there anything more important than my predicament, my time, my job, my daughter, my house, my baby, my record deal? His daughter's life is on the line, for crying out loud, *but Jesus wants more*. The pace of Jesus can be flustering.

Jesus Wants More

As Jesus makes his way to Jarius' home, the crowd presses in. A woman with a hemorrhaging condition is in the crowd, fumbling for Jesus. She has seen many doctors but they only made her problem worse. She tried medicine, but science didn't work. On top of that, her condition makes her unclean. The law requires anyone with bodily discharges to remain outside the community for seven days to keep the community sanitary. Anyone who came into contact with them would be considered ritually unclean. This woman has had this condition for *twelve* years. For *twelve years* she has been avoided, pushed to the side, a victim of disease. Mark uses a specific word to describe her predicament in verse 29, her "disease" is a *mastix*, a graphic expression meaning "whip, lash, scourge, or torment" (Acts 22:24; Heb 11:36). It combines physical suffering with *shame*, like Jesus' beatings. What happened to her produced not just physical pain but tremendous, internal shame. Shame compounds the pain. Unlike Jarius, she is a woman of disrepute. She's tried religion and science, but now on the edge of desperation, she reaches out. Desperate for healing, she silently reaches out for Jesus. If I can just touch his garment, perhaps his healing power will rid me of this disease and I can slip away unnoticed. Mark is showing us this woman's condition is just as dire as Jarius' daughter, **but it's hidden from plain sight**. Do you have a hidden issue? Something you've been carrying around for years? Emotional, physical, mental, sexual wound? You've tried everything and you just want to reach out and be healed, for it to go away, to never think about it again? She does, and so she touches Jesus and immediately power goes out from him and she is healed in an instant. Finally, what she's been longing for, *but Jesus wants more*.

More than You Can Imagine

Aware that power went out from him, Jesus scans the crowd for her. He asks who touched me, which is absurd if you think about it because people have been pressing in upon him. But this person was different. She touched in faith. He is not content to dispatch a miracle; he wants to deal with the person (Edwards). Given the shame associated with her hidden pain, can you imagine what she felt like? She probably wanted to run away and hide, but she comes to Jesus "[in fear and trembling and fell down before him.](#)" She's undone, like Jarius, and "tells him the whole truth, the whole story," right there in front of everyone, everyone she has contaminated, anyone who may have judged her with a sneer; she's out in the open now. **Jesus is going to take more than she asked for**. She just wanted a silent healing, and who could blame her, but Jesus drags her out in public. Why? *Jesus draws her out, in front of everyone, in order to draw her in*. She is out on the fringe, healed but full of

shame. He wants to draw her in and remove her shame, to complete the healing. He wants to reinstate her socially, but that's not all. He doesn't want her disease to define her, her past to rule her. So he redefines her by replacing her name, woman becomes **daughter**, unclean to clean, shamed to absolved, outside the community and into his circle of perfect love. Jesus wants to do the same with your hidden pain. But it will cost you. You have to bring it forward, to share it with him, and maybe even others, so that it doesn't define you, trap you, keep you on the fringe, nameless and unloved. You need the redefining hope of Christ, to exchange your shameful status with his loving, adopting, adoring status—daughter! You see, **Jesus will take more than we give, but he gives more than we ask.**¹ She just wants a silent healing, but Jesus insists spiritual restoration, deep healing, change that lasts. But he uses a terrifying, temporary, social moment, filled with anxiety and fear, to relieve her of 12 years of shame *forever*. *The pace of Jesus*. He slows down when we want to go fast, he brings things out when we would keep them in, and he gives more than we can imagine. The pace of Jesus is filled with purpose. **Breaking in on the scene**, people from Jarius' house bring dreaded news—his daughter is dead. She didn't survive. "Don't bother the teacher," they say. *They are oblivious to the pace of Jesus*. They can't see beyond the natural. They throw up their hands in resignation, "God's sovereign but it sucks." But Jesus says to Jarius, "**Do not fear, only believe**" (36). Believe? How audacious! My daughter is dead, but okay, ill go along with it. Blind resignation. Jesus enters his home with three disciples, clears the room of the paid grievors with a comment about the daughter being asleep, and takes the father and mother to himself. You can feel the warmth of Jesus' love. Next, He extends his hand to the unclean corpse, and taking the daughter by her hand, he calls for her to rise. He uses the phrase "little girl", which translates to "Sweetie, get up." He makes sure she is given food to stabilize. Everyone is amazed. **Jesus will take more than we give and give more than we ask.** *Jarius just wanted his daughter healed, but he it cost him more to come to Jesus. It cost him his daughter's life. What is it costing you? A little frustration, a lack of comfort? Now, what did he get in return? Resurrection, a daughter back from the dead, but Jarius could have had his daughter back if Jesus had just healed her. Jesus wants to give us more. Jarius got faith.* "Do not fear, only believe." But didn't he have faith in Jesus to heal his daughter? Exactly, faith to heal not faith in the healer. He had to lose what was precious to gain the greater treasure of Christ. He had to give up more, to see, how much more there is in Christ, to be amazed. **He learned to trust the person and the pace of Jesus.** You see, if he'd gotten what he wanted—healing before death—he wouldn't have received life in Christ. God appoints trials, not for blind resignation, but for perceptive faith. Jarius wanted a simple healing, but Jesus insisted on deep healing in his relationship with God. **He insisted that Jarius give up control in order to trust God's control, give up his daughter to become his son.** And now he has more than he could imagine. Just think, if Jesus had not delayed, Jarius would have gotten his miracle but not Jesus, and the woman wouldn't have received her restoration. When life is crazy, when circumstances are hard, when things seem to fall apart, *remember the pace of Jesus*. He's doing something beyond your imagination. It's deliberate, its deep, its redemptive. He wants to accomplish more than you are aware of. When we get around Jesus, **it will cost us more than we give**

¹ Although the wording is mine, I owe this particular insight to Tim Keller, *Jesus the King*, loc. 1084. He writes: "Be aware that when you go to Jesus for help, you will both give to and get from him far more than you bargained for. Be patient, because the deal often doesn't work out the way you expected."

(public shame, death of a daughter), but he'll give us more than we can imagine, if we'll have faith in him, trust his timing, bank on his promises. I'm learning to trust his timing with my daughter. I cannot imagine a good providence in her being harmed, but I choose to trust the all knowing, redemptive, pace of Jesus. It couldn't have looked good to the disciples, Jesus getting nailed to a cross. They lost their teacher, their best friend, their political messiah, but letting go, they got more back than they could have imagined. They got the risen Lord and forgiving savior. He asks for more but gives beyond what we can dream. I'm choosing to trust the savior who takes my daughter by the hand, and offers her what I cannot. Deep healing and peace. He is in control, and we do best when we follow at his pace. Not out in front, way behind, or in a different circle. Will you trust the pace of Jesus?