

## **Do Not Be Afraid, Only Believe**

This is a scary world we live in! People rush around at an ever faster, indeed maddening, pace. More people are killed every year on our roads than in all of the Viet Nam war. Birth defects, childhood injuries, Swine Flu and deaths continue. Despite much progress, old diseases, such as cancer, continue. New and even more terrifying disease appear, seemingly from no where. The same technology that allows us to live longer also allows people to linger in hospitals and nursing homes. Alcohol and drugs tear at the very social fabric of our lives, as individuals, families, churches, towns, and a nation. The list goes on and on. Where are we to turn? This IS a scary world we live in!

The Gospel according to Mark tells us about Jairus, the synagogue administrator, who comes to Jesus to save his dying daughter. This proud ruler of the synagogue, a member of the Jewish "establishment", falls at the feet of a poor, dusty, wandering rabbi. For the sake of his daughter, Jairus is willing to risk not only religious ridicule and public embarrassment but also his position in the synagogue. His faith is far from perfect. But he is desperate. "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." Jairus' despair creates an opportunity for God. And Jesus DOES go with him. Even when Jairus is told that his daughter has died, Jesus continues with him. In fact, Jesus says a most extraordinary thing. "Do not be afraid, only believe."

Could it be that not even after death is it too late for hope? Here is Jairus who has JUST enough belief to come to Jesus AT ALL, and Jesus is telling him to cling to that little bit of faith. In spite of an apparently impossible situation, they continue on to Jairus' house. And Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. "Do not be afraid, only believe."

"Do not be afraid, only believe." But it is hard to believe! When life is most terrifying, God can seem so far away. Our faith seems so small. It is at these times we must remember that Jesus did not ask that Jairus' faith be perfect. Here was a proud ruler of a synagogue, who came to Jesus only out of despair. But belief is often born of desperation.

Jairus was desperate, but, because of that, he came to Jesus. That is all God asks of us, that we turn to Him, that we have faith the size of a mustard seed.

But we need to affirm here that our God is our GOD. He does NOT do everything we ask or tell Him to. Our God is loving beyond our wildest imagination. He answers every prayer we pray. But, as we all know, not every prayer we pray is answered the way we ask. Many times we can see that our prayers ARE answered, especially if we look in hindsight. And many times our prayers are answered in a different, but better, way. But we all know of too many times when we CAN NOT see our loving God at work, even after our most fervent prayers and years of hindsight. Indeed, things happen in our lives that are so painful that it is hard to find God in them. We do not understand. But He IS there. He is HERE. He is with us, even in the midst of our pain and terror, when we can not feel Him. At those times, he says to us "Do not be afraid, only believe." He knows that we all have our doubts at times and that they can be the greatest in times when fear and desperation are the greatest. All that he asks is that we turn to Him in our weakness.

"Do not be afraid, only believe."

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