

Divine Delays

Mark 5:21-43

Introduction

When we are experiencing a delay, we need to realize that it is a divine delay because God has designed it. No matter what you are waiting for or waiting on, the sovereign hand of God is behind it all.

We have been studying the sovereignty of Christ. We need to put that word into our vocabulary. If nothing else comes from this study, add the word “sovereignty” to your vocabulary list. We hear it less and less. In fact, it is a passing attribute of Jesus Christ.

“Sovereignty” means, simply enough, “total control”. Jesus Christ is in total control. So, add that word to your vocabulary and then, live by it.

Christ’s Sovereignty Over Disease and Death

Let us take a look at the way Christ’s sovereignty is involved in the lives of the individuals in our text today. Turn to Mark, chapter 5.

The request of Jairus for Christ

Look at Mark 5:22-23.

One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.”

Now, we need to be introduced to Jairus. He is an official, verse 22 says, of the synagogue. The synagogues in that day, were governed by a board of

these rulers or elders, as it is sometimes translated. The official then, would be an overseer of the entire service. This does not mean that Jairus necessarily did anything in the service, but that he oversaw all of the proceedings of the time of worship and the reading of the Law or the Torah.

So, Jairus was a very religious man. However, as I read this passage, it became very obvious that Jairus forgot a couple of things – by the fact that he came to Jesus.

1. First, Jairus forgot his prejudice.

Understand that by this time in the ministry of Jesus Christ, the synagogues have closed doors to Him.

You may remember that in the beginning, Jesus would walk into a synagogue, go to the front rostrum, and teach. Not anymore. The officials of the synagogues were dead set against the ministry of Christ. Yet, Jairus is an official of a synagogue who is coming to Jesus. So, he must have forgotten his prejudice.

2. Secondly, Jairus must have also forgotten his pride.

Luke 8:48 adds that Jairus came and literally, fell prostrate at the dusty feet of this roving preacher. He simply forgot about his pride. So, robed in his dignity, Jairus, official of the synagogue, fell before this itinerant preacher.

Why in the world would Jairus forget his prejudice and his pride to come to the person of Christ? I think he tells us in verse 23 of the text as he says,

. . . *“My little daughter is at the point of death . . .”*

Luke 8:42 adds that this is Jairus’ one and only daughter. Luke also adds, in the same verse, that she is around twelve years of age. It was the custom of this day that when a little girl turned twelve years of age plus one day, she was then, a woman.

Now, we need to get into this setting and look at it realistically. Here is a man who is about to lose his one and only daughter. She is at the age that she is becoming a woman and is bringing more joy into his life than at any other time. All of the training is coming to an end and, as one man said, it is turning into coaching. The rewards are beginning to come. I would imagine this young girl, who is entering womanhood, is the pride of Jairus’ heart. He says,

. . . *“My little daughter [my one and only daughter] is at the point of death . . .”*

Now, Jesus responds, and it is assumed that He says, “I will go with you.”

Look at Mark 5:24.

And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.

So evidently, Jesus said, “Sure, I’ll come along. I’ll heal her.”

The beginning of a delay – A woman’s simple faith in the face of a hopeless condition

At this moment, however, there comes a delay in the life of Jairus. Jesus Christ, and that large band of people, are walking with Jairus to his home. We need to stop there because now, introduced into his life, is a tragic delay.

When we read a passage of scripture; when we read one phrase; when we look at one simple verse, it only takes a moment of time. However, it represents, in the life of Jairus, an eternity.

A woman, with an issue of blood, will interrupt Jairus’ plan and create a problem for him. I imagine, as Jesus deals with this woman, that Jairus is kind of shuffled into the background. Think of him, probably shuffling his feet, thinking, “Good night, woman, why can’t you leave Him alone? He’s coming with me. My daughter is dying.”

Interrupting Jairus’ life is a delay.

Now, let me introduce this delay to you. Look at Mark 5:25.

A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years,

Perhaps this woman had some uterine disorder that caused a continuous flow of blood. Notice that she is compared to Jairus because of the length of time she has had this disease – twelve years. So, there is the contrast of tremendous joy that is about to end, with tremendous despair.

Let me point out several things about this woman with this kind of disease that will help to emotionally understand her. She is ostracized from society. She is considered unclean. She is excommunicated from the temple. She cannot worship. For twelve years, she has been alone. For twelve long years, she has perhaps, prayed to God to heal her and the heavens are made of brass. For every year of joy that Jairus has had with his daughter, she has had a year of agony.

If she was married, the rabbis declared that her husband must divorce her. If she had children, she would watch her children grow from a distance. She was unable to embrace them, as anything she touched was unclean.

Can you imagine the agony of this woman? It says, in verse 26, that she,

. . . *had endured much at the hands of many physicians, . . .*

I have to stop at this point. It says that she “had endured much at the hands of many physicians”. Let us take a look at this woman emotionally, after twelve years of this circle of despair.

If you asked me to list a hundred places that I do not like to be – heading the list would be a doctor’s office. Is there anyone who likes that? This lady was evidently, sent to one doctor after another. Each doctor would experiment, and in that day, medicine was *so* primitive.

I, in fact, looked up the word “physician,” and had to go to the encyclopedia to find what that meant in the day in which this woman lived. Let me tell some of the things I discovered.

Babylonian medicine was so primitive. In fact, Herodotus wrote that every Babylonian was an amateur physician, since it was the custom to lay the sick on the sides of the street so that anyone passing by might offer advice. Imagine laying on the side of

the street and everyone coming by is giving advice on what to do – “You need to starve that one.” “No, you need to feed that one.”

It was not better to be a doctor because, according to Babylonian law, if a doctor caused a patient to die in surgery, the doctor’s hands were cut off. I would not have wanted to be a doctor either.

In the Greek and Roman days, medicine was no better. In fact, magic, myth, and medicine were all rolled into one. There were a lot of superstitions. Let me tell of one of them.

Aesculapius, the god of medicine, was worshiped in hundreds of temples throughout Greece. Many sick persons came to these temples for the healing ritual known as incubation, or temple sleep. They would go into the temple and lie down in the “abaton,” or the temple dormitory. Then, during the night, Aesculapius was supposed to visit and give advice. The next morning, they left with the cure, or at least with the advice to put the cure into practice.

Some of the Greek islands today, in fact, still follow the practice. If someone is sick, they go to some church or mosque or whatever, and lay there throughout the night in hopes that the next morning they will be cured.

The *Talmud*, which was the religious writings of that day, did not offer much hope either. They had so many superstitions, it was unbelievable. I read many of them, so let me tell of one of the more outrageous ones.

If you had the particular disease that this woman had, you were supposed to buy an ostrich egg, put it in a linen sack, and carry it around with you. In the summertime, you were to replace the linen sack with a cotton sack. That was the cure. Can you imagine walking around with a rotten egg for days?

These were the kinds of cures that this woman had been given. When one did not work, that doctor would send her to someone else. The next particular cure would not work, until finally, the woman is financially broke. She is physically exhausted and emotionally drained, as well. I do not think there is a lonelier person than this woman who enters this scene.

Notice, however, the simple faith of this woman in verse 27. Much is implied in the very first phrase.

After hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak.

The word “cloak” is “kraspedon”. Any devout Jew would wear an outer garment that had two tassels on the front. He would sling it over his shoulder, and there would be two tassels on the back, called the “kraspedon”. Jesus, obviously being a devout Jew; a follower of God, wore a “kraspedon”. This woman came up behind Jesus and literally, did not touch it, but grasped the “kraspedon”.

Now this was a superstitious reach because in that day, they believed that the aura or the power of a person was transferred through his clothes. If you could simply touch the clothing, you could be healed.

So, somehow this weak woman came up behind Jesus. She could have touched all kinds of people and defiled them. Perhaps they made room for her, when they saw her coming. She reached out and in desperation, grabbed His cloak for just a second, and then let go. Notice what happens, in verse 29.

Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

Immediately, she was healed of her affliction, or her “scourge,” which is a Greek word that implies that this was a punishment from God. That is the way she viewed it. She thought, “Since God has not heard me for twelve years, He must not want me. He’s given me the scourge.”

However, she knew that it was immediately healed. Continue to verse 30.

Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?”

The word “power” is the Greek word “dunamis,” or “dynamic”.

Understand the ridiculousness of this question. His disciples are probably a little embarrassed for the Lord. Perhaps they are going to look for a shade tree or a glass of water for Him because He says, “Who touched Me?”

All of these people are around Jesus, and he immediately stops and says, “Hey, who touched Me?”

Verse 31 tells us, and this is probably spoken by Peter,

And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”

Notice, in verse 32, Jesus ignores that statement,

And He looked around to see the woman who had done this.

Jesus Christ is not just interested in healing this woman, He is interested in saving this woman. Jesus is interested in giving her hope. So He brings her to the fore; He brings her to center stage. I imagine, when she came forth trembling, that everyone just kind of shrunk back and gasped, “She’s not supposed to touch anybody. She’s defiling Jesus!”

The crowd is there and the woman is on the ground trembling. Notice what Jesus says, in verse 34,

And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”

The tense of “be healed of your affliction” indicates she is permanently healed.

Why did Jesus call this woman up? Why did He not just let her go back into the crowd – healed, excited, rejoicing? I think He called her up because He wanted to do three things for her.

1. First, I think Jesus wanted to correct this woman’s thinking.

Notice that Jesus says,

. . . your faith has made you well . . .

In other words, “It wasn’t that superstitious touch that healed you. It wasn’t My clothing. It wasn’t any kind of magic about Me.”

However, the people did not hear Him because Mark tells us, in chapter 9, that people were now, always coming to Jesus to try to touch His clothes. The people are pressing and just trying to touch Him. They did not get the message.

It was not Jesus’ clothes that healed, it was the woman’s *faith*; it was the object in her touch. And, even though her faith was so small and so mingled with superstition, Jesus Christ still honored her faith. He wanted to correct her thinking.

2. Secondly, Jesus wanted to declare this woman clean.

Before this woman could enter society; before she could go back into the city to live and walk and work and touch and go to the temple and all of that, she had to go to a priest and be declared clean by the priest. So Jesus Christ, *the Priest*, said to her, “Daughter, you are cleansed.”

Jesus takes the place of a priest, as the eternal Priest, and declares this woman healed.

3. Thirdly, I think Jesus wanted to encourage this woman’s heart.

Jesus says,

. . . go in peace . . .

You should underline the name that He calls her, in verse 34,

. . . Daughter . . .

This is the only time, recorded in the gospels, that Jesus ever called a woman “daughter”. I think, in that little compassionate word, there is so much said. We cannot get into all of it, but I think, Jesus is telling this woman, “Listen, I know that your family has ostracized you. I know that the world has cast you aside. I know that you’re lonely. However, I want you to understand, you are My daughter. There’s a place in My family for you. You belong to Me.”

We are not sure that this woman was immediately accepted back into society. She was probably not. If she had been divorced, perhaps her husband had remarried. Perhaps her children had already been raised by another woman. Perhaps all of these things had added to her continued agony. We do not know, but she could be encouraged that Jesus Christ called her “daughter”.

That is the end of the delay. This woman now, goes back to her life.

The end of the delay – The reliance of Jairus on Christ

Now, notice what happens. Look at Mark 5:35.

While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?”

How cruel they were to just to walk up and say, “Hey, Jairus, your daughter is dead. Don’t bother Jesus anymore.”

There is almost a suspicious element in this. It is as if they did not want Jesus at the house anyway. In other words, “Jairus, we’re trying to protect you. You shouldn’t have gone to Jesus anyway. And don’t bother Him because He doesn’t need to come anymore. She’s dead.”

I do not know what Jairus did. Perhaps you have experienced the death of a loved one. It has been said

that when someone very close to you dies, the first step is denial. There is almost a rage; an anger. I would imagine that when Jairus heard the news, he may have clenched his fists and immediately, looked at Jesus as if to say, “Why did you wait? Why did you stop? You could have healed this woman later. You could have put her on hold.”

Anticipating that thought, Jesus quickly says to Jairus, in verse 36,

. . . “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.”

The tense is such that this is saying, “Do not be afraid, just keep on believing.”

Here is the delay; here is your dilemma, “Don’t lose hope, keep on believing.”

Are you in a delay? Are you facing a dilemma? Do not lose hope, but keep on believing.

For the woman, it took twelve years. For Jairus, it took perhaps, less than an hour.

Notice verse 37.

And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing.

“Commotion” is an interesting word, meaning, “chaos”.

In this day, if a person in the family died, it was customary to hire professional mourners. These mourners could not care less about your situation. In fact, the mourning of these people could turn to laughter in an instant. They were paid to mourn.

This is a tragic scene. I tried to imagine it. These mourners would lay on the body of the deceased and would beg a response from the lips of the dead person. They would wail the repeated sound, “Ah la la. Ah la la. Ah la la.” They would wail this at the top of their lungs, rip their clothing, and pull out their hair. It was a tragic scene.

Flutists would be hired, as well. In fact, the playing of the reed flute, with its wailing sound, was part of every burial service.

Now, Jesus enters the scene. There are mourners wailing and crying and screaming and ripping their clothing and pulling their hair, as well as flutists playing morbid music. Jesus says, in verse 39,

. . . “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.”

In other words, “What’s all the noise about? She’s not dead, she’s sleeping.”

We read their response in verse 40a,

They began laughing at Him. . . .

The tense indicates they kept coming back at Him in waves of mocking laughter. Oh, their tears dried up. This should be good news; this should offer hope! They should respond with, “Really? Are You sure?”

Instead, they say, “You’re out of Your mind.”

So, in verse 40b,

. . . But putting them all out, He took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions and entered the room where the child was.

Jesus takes only His closest disciples and the child’s mom and dad. Then, in verse 41,

Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).

This is an Aramaic phrase of deep emotion, translated, “Little lamb, get up.”

I would have loved to have seen that. Mom and Dad have tears in their eyes. They believe they have lost their only child. Then, Jesus, this itinerant; this evangelist; this preacher comes into the room, takes this little girl by the hand, and says, “Little lamb.”

We read in verse 42,

Immediately the girl got up and began to walk . . .

The Lord says, “Why are you so shocked?”

He then tells them, in verse 43b,

. . . something should be given her to eat.

Giving the girl something to eat proved that she was not only well, but that she was able to continue functioning – she was able to eat.

Verse 42b tells us,

. . . they were completely astounded.

The Greek word translated “astounded” is “ekstasis,” meaning, “ecstatic”. They were ecstatic! Wouldn’t you be?! They felt a great ecstasy.

Then, Jesus gives them an instruction. Look at verse 43a.

And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this . . .

Application – Why Are There Delays In Our Lives?

When I study a passage like this, it is so easy to apply. However, by way of application, let me ask a question.

Why did Jesus Christ put these individuals through utter agony? Why? Why did He make them wait?

Why did the woman with the issue of blood have to wait *twelve* years? If God was going to heal her, why did He not just scoot it up about eleven and a half years? Why did He wait?

Why did Jesus interrupt the procession so that Jairus' daughter dies and they have to go through the agony of bereavement? Why?

I honestly believe that Jesus had them wait for the same reason He has you and me wait. Let me give two reasons.

1. First, delays deepen our understanding of Christ's sovereignty.

The woman was sick and had been sick for years. If God – listen to this carefully – had answered her prayer eleven and a half years earlier, she may have never met Jesus Christ. If she had been able to be healed by some other earthly physician, she would have never met the Great Physician. And, even more than that, He brings her into His family. She understands, not only is He a healer, He is a Savior, as well. This delay created the opportunity for Jesus Christ to reveal to this woman that He is much more than some healer; much more than some magician – He is the sovereign Lord.

We could also ask why Jesus allowed Jairus to go through that agony? Why did Jesus have Jairus and his wife experience such pain? Because the Lord wanted Jairus to know that He was much more than a healer. All that Jairus thought Jesus could do was heal his daughter. He did not have any conception that Jesus had power over the grave. If Jesus had gone immediately, He would have just raised her from her sickness, which He had been doing many, many times. However, Jesus chose to teach Jairus and his wife that He is not only a healer, He is not only a Savior, but He is the Sovereign over the grave.

These delays deepen their understanding of who Jesus Christ is. This is also the way that God wants to work in your life and mine. What is your perception of Jesus Christ today? Who is He to you?

You might say, "Well, He's a giver of good gifts."

That is great. He is. However, when Jesus turns the gifts off, He then makes a way whereby He can teach you that He is something else as well.

I believe our conceptions of Jesus are so trite; so small. One of His objectives is to deepen our understanding of all of His character; all of His characteristics; all of His attributes. Then, when you go through a delay, He reveals to you that He is everywhere; that He is all-powerful; that He is all-knowing. He acts that out on the stage that we consider delays and interruptions.

Delays deepen our understanding of Christ's sovereignty.

2. Secondly, delays develop our trust in Christ's sovereignty.

The Lord said to Jairus, "Look, don't throw in the towel now, just keep on believing."

Delays deepen our trust.

When one of my sons was younger, I did what every young father has to do at some point in his fatherhood. I put my child in the kind of situation in which he had to trust me. You may have done that too. Perhaps you put them on the edge of the bed and said, "Now, jump."

Your ego is on the line, too. If they do not trust you, you feel like a failure, right?

At the time, we had a tree in the corner of our yard. We lived at an intersection and the tree was right by the street. One of my boys loved to hang on things and could hold himself up, if he could just find a branch small enough. So, on this particular day, I thought, "Now is the time to put all of what I've been doing for the last year and a half or so on the line. Does he really trust me?"

It is a scary thought. You know that he is going to hang there until you let him drop of sheer exhaustion. So, I found a limb and put him up there. We were playing . . . and I stepped back. He looked down at me, as you can imagine, with his eyes very wide! I said, "Let go. Let go."

He was hanging on and was not about to let go. I noticed two cars had pulled up to the intersection and were not moving. I looked over and the drivers were

watching me. You know that if he does not drop, then every time they drive by my house they are going to say, “There’s the house where the kid lived that doesn’t trust his Dad.”

So my pleas sort of turned to threats.

Finally, I do not know if it was exhaustion or trust, but his eyes got real wide and he kind of let out a whimper and let go. I caught him and we both laughed.

It was wonderful – that sheer second of terror to my son, was to me, a second of sheer delight because he trusted me. What, for him, was a terrifying

experience, to drop from that branch to my arms, was for me, a wonderful experience.

Is it not the same truth with our heavenly Father? At times, we feel like we are literally, out on a limb. All we get from Him is the thought, “Hey, let go.” And we are saying, “No way. I’m hanging on.”

Perhaps you are in the middle of a fall today. When we finally trust the Lord; when we finally trust that He is, in fact, a sovereign God, we let go. Then, what for us is a terrifying experience, is for Him, a wonderful experience. He can say, “That child of mine really trusts Me.”

Delays develop trust in the sovereignty of Christ.

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