

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a Bishop and Pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, I would see Jesus.”

JESUS RAISES A GIRL FROM THE DEAD

Gospel – Mark 5

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.



Fact or opinion? “O say, can you see?” “We the people.” “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” “Don’t tread on me.” “Shall not be infringed.” “God bless our native land.” I think we have an idea what to say as the 4th of July approaches.

A new study, however, suggests that Americans have lost the ability to tell the difference between fact and opinion. Just 26% of the adults surveyed correctly identified five factual statements as factual; and just 35% identified five opinion statements as opinion. They also found that participants “were more likely to classify both factual and opinion statements as factual when they appealed most to their side.”

How much more ill-equipped are Americans when it comes to fact and opinion about life and death? *To say or not to say ...* and what? What is true and what is trite? What is deep and what is shallow? What is opinion and what is fact? What should NOT be said?

Jesus knows what is factual and what to say at a time like this. Through His Son, God has words that can last past the opinions of this world, of sin and death, and of the devil himself. Let me show you what I mean in these ...

1. Sola fide

After calming a storm on the sea, Jesus performed a storm of miracles before a large crowd. At that time, Jesus was so popular that He couldn't get away from them. Among the crowd, Jesus was met by a man who was on a board to help manage the services and affairs of the synagogue. The man's daughter was dying, so he asked Jesus to hold her and heal her. He asked Jesus to prevent her death.

On the way, Jesus was interrupted to perform another miracle. Then, before the words left His lips, He was interrupted again by the synagogue ruler's servant. "Don't bother the teacher anymore. Your daughter is dead."

There was certainly nothing to fear about interrupting the Lord. Our interrupted Savior was not too busy to be bothered and to be asked to help. In fact, if you've ever been too busy and too impatient to help someone else out, it's nice to know this was not true for our steady-going Savior, Jesus. In this way He covered over and even forgives our sins of impatience and being self-occupied; He once was like us, yet He listened and He helped.

But Jesus, our steady-going Savior, also knows that not everyone else is so steady-going. He knew that this earthly father would be surrounded by a world of grief and fear. That's what has happened since sin brought death into the world: parents have feared the loss of children; children have feared the loss of parents and grandparents; friends have feared the loss of one another to death. Jesus knew that severe fear and that this father would be in an apprehensive state. He decided to not only walk with the man to his house, but to encourage him with the words, "*Don't be afraid; only believe.*"

This was in sharp contrast to all the noise. When they arrived at the house, that was the welcome they had—noise. We are told "*Jesus saw a commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly.*" The word "commotion" could be excitement or uproar, the milling-about of a throng of mourners. The "weeping" was a common word used for Peter's bitter weeping, for the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and for the mothers in Bethlehem when wicked King Herod had their 2-year-old-and-younger sons murdered. The "wailing loudly" is like a clanging cymbal without love in 1 Corinthians 13. We get the impression that the death is very real, but that the crowd is a shallow bunch of actors. Dr. Luke even writes that "*they knew she was dead.*" That's why they laughed when Jesus said, "*She is only sleeping.*" So Jesus was not denying reality. Nor was this a time for ridicule.

The fear of death does not win relief. Terror does not earn comfort. Sorrow does not pay for it. A good sense of humor may battle against the fear, but is still really ignoring it. Only faith, only belief in the Son of God can really get a human being past the prospect of death. In the same way, we cannot work off the fear of death. We cannot hide from it. *Only believe* in the Son of God, and the sinner has more than a fighting chance against the fear of death. *Only believe* in the Son of God, and the sinner has victory.

What does "only believe" have to say about the fear of death? Is it to say that the solution is just so simple? Is it easy to believe through the loss of a child, and then fear and grief suddenly go away? No, Jesus doesn't mean that faith is such a simple thing. Instead, Jesus is rather expressing that to *only believe* is the only way to receive God's blessings.

How similar this is to a refrain of Martin Luther and Christians since his influence: *sola fide!* Jesus says to *only believe*; much later Martin Luther discovered righteousness *by faith alone*, or, memorably put, *sola fide*. Where some accused Luther of adding the word "*sola*," or "*alone*," to the word "faith," and debate rages about whether that was helpful or not, Jesus himself here says to *ONLY believe*. More than once does Jesus tell those whom He heals, "Your faith has saved you." St. Paul corroborates the universality of salvation by faith alone with many other passages: It is by grace you

have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). We know that a man is not justified by observing the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). You received the Spirit not by observing the Law but by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2).

The outcome of sola fide, or faith alone in Jesus Christ, in this instance is ...

2. “Talitha koum.”

This is another memorable utterance Christians have held dear from this account of Jesus’ raising a dead girl. Now it’s not just in defiance of death of an actual real dead girl that people love this. It isn’t only the meaning, “Little girl, I say to you, ‘get up.’” It’s not just that when Jesus said these words, the girl’s soul returned to her body and animated her so that she stood up and walked around. It wasn’t even how astonished the crowd was, those who had laughed at the Lord of life, the apparent maniac who was now in point of fact the proved Miracle-worker.

The striking power, the memorable factor, of these words is that they aren’t Greek. St. Mark, the writer of this gospel, put these words down in their original Aramaic, “*Talitha koum*,” “*Little girl, I say to you, ‘get up.*” So memorable this was, so impressed on the mind and heart. Jesus decided He would speak in the intonation of the girl’s native language. He does not speak to the Enemy, “Let go of her.” He does not speak to sin, death, or the devil. It isn’t a rebuke. He does not treat her as her sins deserve or repay her according to her iniquity. By the mercies of the Lord she was not consumed, for His compassions never fail. He raises her to life with words that seem to pretend. Yet there she was, getting up, breathing, alive.

Jesus speaks life into deaf ears and dead bodies. This is only the first time in the New Testament that it happens, but it’s certainly not the last: the young man at the village of Nain; His friend and relative, Lazarus; Himself. Speaking life into deaf ears and dead bodies persists into the New Testament church, because death is still the enemy this side of eternity. We imagine that the worst has happened in death, which is not altogether unwarranted imagining. After all, death was brought into being by the dark forces of sin and the devil. The first death came from sin, and the separation from God has made us His natural-born enemies. But in the New Testament church, there is no ear so dead under the Law, by the rules of this world, that the Gospel cannot open it. There is no body so dead that the Word of God cannot raise it.

We imagine, for instance, that little infant ears cannot really understand the words of baptism into God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, we know from research that babies dream already 8 weeks in the womb. They are thinking. Sleeping believers still believe, coma victims can remember words that are spoken while they were afflicted. The power of *talitha koum* is already present in the promises to a little child as well as the aging adult. I’m not so sure what makes an adult so much better at hearing the Gospel than a small child anyway, when Jesus requires faith like that of a child.

I would also add that, while many focus on the words *talitha koum*, there is also power behind the word that follows, the Greek word *aneste*. Many of you have heard it before. On Easter, we share the greeting, “Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!” which in Greek sounds like, “*CHristos aneste, alethws aneste.*” “He is risen,” *aneste*. Well, the very word translated here as “stood up” as in “immediately the girl stood up” is *aneste*. He is risen; she is risen. This just demonstrates for us just from where the power to stand over death might come. Her *aneste* wasn’t empowered by her ability to stand. It was empowered by the *aneste*, the standing over death, of Jesus. Just as Job would stand upon the earth and in his own eyes see his Redeemer, so this little girl stood in triumph over death. But how? Jesus is the Restorer of life. When others rose to bear false witness about Him, when the High Priest would rise to condemn Him, this little girl rose in obedience to Him. This is because a dead Jesus would not stay dead. He was delivered over to death for our transgressions and he was raised to life for our

justification (Romans 4:25). We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Ours is not the God of the dead but of the living (Matthew 22:32). Those whom the Father draws to the Son He will raise up on the Last Day (John 6:44). So then, wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you (Ephesians 5:14)!

Martin Luther, being the translator he once was, once noted that it seems as if God writes on our lives in Hebrew. Hebrew letters are strange to our Western eyes, and the sentences start backwards. It's a completely different language. The ways of God in our life really are like a Hebrew book. God writes a new chapter in our life and we're all mixed up about it. We can't figure it out, it's completely backwards to us, and it doesn't go the way we would have written it. When we get to the end, when He shows us how His purposes are accomplished through it, then it makes sense. The Hebrew God writes on our lives.

If only this report of the power of Jesus Christ the Restorer of life would go out into all the world. By that, I mean "go into" the hearts of all, so that all would believe that the Son of God is such a Restorer of life that considers us dead men to be living ones who will be awakened from sleep. Then we would joyfully scorn death, certain that Jesus does not lie but will awaken us, for though to ourselves we seem dead ... *sola fide!* *Talitha kum!* With words like this, we are only sleeping.

Amen.

Votum: The God of all peace

Soli Deo Gloria!

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