

# "Jesus - Lord of Life"

<b><u>Occasion</u></b>	Evening Service at Therfield Chapel
<b><u>Day, Date &amp; Time</u></b>	Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
<b><u>Basis</u></b>	Mark 5:21-43
<b><u>Reading</u></b>	Mark 5:21-43,
<b><u>Songs</u></b>	from Mission Praise:
<b><u>Author/Speaker</u></b>	Paul Rydon

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If you are sick,  
    where do you turn for healing?  
    If you die,  
        where can you find new life?

Whilst the world we live in teems with life,  
    it is marred by sickness and death.  
Honey bees are depleted by a virus,  
    Lions survive only by bloody killings  
        and Humans suffer from dreadful diseases and epidemics.  
As Darwin studied the world around him  
    he found that the advancement of life  
        was always at the expense of death elsewhere.  
    The strong survived at the expense of the weak.  
In our modern world,  
    we try to mask the fact that even our everyday food  
        necessitates the death of another.  
If we are meat eaters, it will be an animal,  
    and if we are vegetarians, it will be a plant.

Death is, you might say, a part of life  
    and is around us everywhere.  
Only a few days ago, in Bristol,  
    a ten year-old boy was on his way home from his church youth club  
        with a group of friends,  
            when a car mounted the pavement and he died.  
Sam was the son of Martin and Rachel Ridall,  
    who are workers for Agape,  
        a Christian movement dedicated to evangelizing students.

Last Tuesday's newspaper carried a single page of reports of deaths.

A family in Scotland were out on a riverside walk,

when their two dogs entered the river and got into difficulties.  
The mother went in after them and also struggled,  
so her partner tried to rescue her.  
In the event, both dogs and both adults drowned,  
leaving a seven-month old baby without her parents  
and three other children fatherless.

On the same page,  
two men died from fumes on a fish-farm barge off Oban  
and a 39 year-old father of four  
was battered to death by a group of drunken youths  
outside his house near Sheffield.

When we are ill we go to a doctor,  
but there are other alternatives.  
Many Christians resort to prayer and Christian healing.  
Spiritualists do the same only they go to a spiritualist healer.  
Some advocate what we call alternative medicine;  
a term which covers everything from Osteopathy through Homeopathy,  
herbal remedies and natural cures  
to Reflexology and Acupuncture.  
It seems that in our society there are so many ways in which to be healed,  
yet physical sickness and mental illness  
are as prevalent today as they have ever been.  
Yet at the end of it all,  
we die.

We go to extraordinary lengths to preserve our bodies,  
yet in spite of enormous progress in organ transplants,  
stem cell research,  
and many other amazing technical advances  
the utopia of everlasting life on earth evades the human race.  
The secular world traces the origins of life  
back to a time when the environment on earth could have spawned life.  
There are many theories as to how this might have happened,  
but they are very diverse and none has been proven.

The Biblical writers see it from God's perspective.  
In the beginning,  
God created man and woman  
and he breathed into them the breath of life  
and when he had done he pronounced it good.  
Yet within a short while,  
man disobeyed God's only restriction  
and the curse of death was laid upon all mankind.

In the fullness of time,  
God sent his only Son into the world  
to redeem his people back to himself.

Mark's gospel is his record of that story  
and it seems that his purpose as he writes is twofold  
One to demonstrate who Jesus is.  
The other is to see how individuals respond to Him.

The events of our passage today are part of a flow of incidents  
which demonstrate the power of God in Jesus.

In Chapter 4, Jesus and his disciples set out across the Sea of Galilee  
and as they went a furious squall blew up of such intensity  
that even the experienced fishermen were afraid for their lives.  
Jesus demonstrates his power over the forces of nature  
by calming the wind  
and stilling the waves.

In the beginning of this chapter,  
Jesus confronts the demons possessing the man called Legion  
and allows them to enter a herd of pigs,  
who rushed down the hillside into the sea and drowned.  
We leave the man,  
clothed and in his right mind,  
travelling the region  
telling all who would hear, what Jesus had done for him.  
Jesus demonstrates in that incident his power over the demonic forces  
and his authority in supernatural realms.

Here in this portion we see Jesus demonstrate his power  
over sickness and death in his creation.

Leaving the gentile lands,  
he and his disciples re-cross the lake to the Jewish and Galilean side,  
back we can assume to Capernaum where he had made his home.  
He was greeted by a large crowd curious to hear him  
and see him.

Hardly had he walked off the quayside,  
when he was met by the ruler of the synagogue.  
I understand that this figure would be a layman,  
not a priest.  
His job was to look after the synagogue and see that it was maintained as a  
place of worship  
where the Rabbis and the priests would come to teach  
and perform their rituals.

Jairus falls down at Jesus' feet and pleads for him to come  
and heal his daughter who is dying.  
He asks Jesus to come and lay those healing hands on the little girl  
and save her life.  
Having a daughter of my own,  
I would have done the same.

Jesus agrees to go to the man's home.

But his progress is immediately interrupted by someone else in the crowd  
whose needs are also very great.

A woman who had suffered persistent bleeding for twelve years  
and who had spent all that she had on doctors fees  
without avail,  
sees an opportunity not to be missed.

This despised and unclean woman,  
unable to come to Jesus openly as Jairus had,  
somehow, in her desperation, manages to touch Jesus' cloak.

At this touch, the world seems to stop.

The power of God flows  
and she is healed in an instant.

She knows and He knows.

Desperately she hides amongst the crowd,  
but Jesus feeling the healing power flow,  
needs to meet her  
and she needs to meet him.

"Who touched me?" he asks.

The disciples know nothing.

"Everyone is touching you", they say.

But Jesus is insistent.

"Someone touched me".

Self-consciously the woman emerges from the crowd.

Unable to hide from the master,  
she falls at his feet,  
trembling with fear,  
and blurts out her story of suffering.

Jesus is not someone you can pick up and put down again.

He is not a plaything that you can enjoy when you need him  
and discard when you don't.

He is not a machine that you can use for your own benefit  
and then put away in a cupboard.

I don't think this woman saw him like that at all,  
but her fear of exposure caused her to want to hide away.

No, Jesus is real.

And an encounter with him changes your life.

It certainly changed hers.

The power of God had passed between them and she would never be the same again.

When she had finished, Jesus merely said,

"Daughter, your faith has healed you.

Go in peace and be freed from your suffering".

Many years ago, in our early years here, Don Double came to town.  
He pitched his tent on the heath and invited all the churches around to support his mission.

The theme-song was "Expect a miracle every day ....."  
His mission was evangelism and Christian healing.  
At the end of one meeting, my father who was crippled with arthritis  
and walked with the aid of crutches  
went up to be healed.  
After being prayed over with much energy by Don Double,  
my father put his crutches aside  
and attempted to step down from the platform,  
and my throat contacted as I saw him fall.  
My father was a believer  
and he was sure that he would have been healed.

Not many years later, our pastor's wife, Sonia contracted Multiple Sclerosis.  
This is a nasty disease which slowly destroys the nervous system of the body  
and kills it from within.

As the disease became more noticeable,  
many people prayed over her,  
including the elders,  
asking God to heal her.

It was the beginning of the charismatic revival in Britain at the time  
and healing was very fashionable,  
with many claiming or wanting the gift.

As it became clear that none of these prayers had resulted in miraculous healing,  
the critics moved in.

On more than one occasion  
Allon and Sonia were accused of not having enough faith.  
Otherwise she would have been healed.  
After all, didn't Jesus say to the woman,  
"Your faith has made you whole"?

Faith is a strange and versatile thing.

In life we put our faith in many things and many people.  
You cannot live without faith.

The atheist puts his faith in his belief that there is no God,  
therefore he need have no concern for the future.

What does their slogan say on the nation's buses?  
"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life".

The woman was commended by Jesus  
because she trusted him to heal her.

She had exhausted her own reserves.  
She was desperate.  
She had nowhere else to turn.

So she put her trust in him.

Just a touch would be enough  
And it was.

I thought that perhaps healing had gone out of fashion.  
There was a time when you could open any copy of Christianity  
and find whole page ads for Christian healing meetings,  
but in the last two issues there have been none.  
Yet if you go on the internet you will find a plethora of options.  
The 'Psychics and mediums network' can offer you spiritual healing  
along with experience of God  
and even train you to become a healer.  
The Reverend Janet Driscoll can offer you spiritual healing  
But in her case, without recourse to God.  
The energy comes from within.  
Or you can contact the Christian Healing Mission in Hammersmith  
and see what they can do for you.

Clearly the Bible records many healing miracles,  
and we would be foolish indeed to deny that the power of God can heal.  
Many believe that the gift was only given for the apostolic age,  
and has since been withdrawn,  
but I find that hard to accept.  
Yet I know of no-one who has been dramatically healed in modern times,  
though there are many reports of folk getting better from their ailments,  
as a result of prayer.  
The Bible records many who are sick, but not all are healed.  
Sometimes it is regarded as a means by which God chastens us,  
reminds us of our vulnerability and our need of him.  
Always we need to trust in his goodness and care  
and put our faith in Him.  
Knowing that he loves us, and could heal us if he wills.

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While all this is going on  
Jairus is getting more and more agitated.  
His daughter is dying!!!  
Couldn't this woman have waited?  
She's been like this for twelve years.  
Another couple of hours wouldn't hurt, surely?  
My daughter is dying!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Jesus is still talking to the woman,  
when messengers arrive with the devastating news that the girl has died.  
'Don't bother the teacher any more', they say.  
But little do they know who they have in their midst.

"Don't be afraid," he says to Jairus, "Just believe."  
You can imagine him striding up from the water front to the synagogue house  
where the little girl lay dead  
with his three most trusted disciples in tow.  
Already the mourners had begun to gather,

but Jesus in his haste and determination brushes them aside.  
They just laugh when he says that the child is not dead, but asleep.

This was not the only time Jesus would refer to death as sleep.  
You may recall that later in Jesus ministry, his friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary becomes sick, but Jesus says he is sleeping.

So having got rid of the mourners, Jesus and his 3 disciples, together with the parents of the girl enter her room.

"Little girl", he says, "Get up".

And immediately the 12 year-old stood up and walked about.

Quite amazing!!!

Just as with Lazarus later on,

Jesus lets the child die and then brings her back to life.

Any one of us would have said to the woman,

ok just hang on a minute while I heal this girl and I'll be back.

But as always Jesus has time for the individual.

Maybe there is something we need to see here.

For us,

death is final.

We all know that once someone has died,

there is nothing we can do.

Life on earth is over.

But here we have

walking this earth

One to whom life is more than that.

There is a whole different perspective here

which we need to see and understand.

Death is a curse passed on all men since Adam

and we are all too familiar with it.

But to Jesus,

life is something that can be given and given back.

It's not just that there is life beyond the grave.

We have come to accept that God is in control of what Jesus calls eternal life.

Life in a spiritual realm to which we shall go after we die,

provided that we accept Jesus as Saviour.

But what we have here is a powerful demonstration

that this is the Lord of Life himself

with the power to raise a dead girl back to life again.

She is not restored to *eternal* life,

she is restored back to life on earth.

Both she and the woman he healed on the way will eventually die.

But this man has the power that no other living soul possesses.

The power to restore life.

From our perspective, death is permanent.  
But from his, it is just a passing phase.  
Surely this man can be no other than God himself,  
the creator of the universe and the giver of life.  
No wonder they were amazed.

This then is the first lesson to all of us,  
that he has power over life and death.  
Later on the power will be demonstrated again in an even greater way,  
when Jesus himself is raised back to life by the power of the Father.

Mark writes to get a reaction.  
But how do we react to these stories?  
Many around simply assume that these are mythical stories  
which have no relevance to the modern age.  
Yet what we read here is the eyewitness account of those who were there at the time.

For those with eyes to see,  
here is the Lord of Life himself living amongst his people.  
We cannot ignore this man.  
He demands a response on our part  
just as his presence demanded a response  
from those he met two thousand years ago.

Will you believe in him too?

We may not expect to be healed of all our infirmities today,  
nor to be brought back to life should we die.  
But we can be assured of another life beyond the grave with Him,  
if we accept him as the Lord of our life now.

May we all in His mercy do so.

Amen

Paul Rydon – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2009