

THE CONFIDENCE TRAP 8 – A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF MARK
MARK 5:21-43
November 6, 2016

I want to tell you a story today about two people in very different stages of life. Two people who are completely dissimilar, yet they share something in common. It's the story of Emmett and Erling, a 3 year old and 89 year old pair of neighbors who became best buddies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlcaKMZv1jc>

They couldn't be any more different but they have something in common. One is starting life and one is towards the end of it. One has the world in front of him. One is running out of options. One draws all of the attention and the other rarely gets it. Their lives really couldn't be any more different, but they have one thing in common. They both have strange priorities. Seemingly, Emmett should be focused on playing with other three year olds, those who look and play like him. Erling should be focused on his own health and enjoying retirement reading a book on the porch and drinking tea, but their priorities don't look like everyone else's. They're kind of inverted. Strange. Different.

The question today is how do such disparate lives come together? How did they decide to allow their priorities to stray so far from most of what their peers were doing? What do these two really have in common?

I want to show you a similar story today with the same question. Jesus is going to interact with two different people today and they really couldn't be more different. One is a young girl with her whole life in front of her. She is a favored daughter of a respected religious city leader. The other is an ostracized woman who has been shunned. She is poor, lowly and completely out of options. These two really couldn't be any more different, but they have one thing in common. Let's read.

Mark 5: 21-24

Jesus has just returned. This man has been frantically looking around and he hears Jesus has gone to the other side and sees a boat returning and hears the murmurs that it is Jesus. He is watching the boat return and every second is feeling like an eternity. You notice that Jairus says, "My daughter is dying." He doesn't say she is really sick. She is in the final moments. She was sick a month ago, and she was very sick two weeks ago. Today she is dying, and this man is waiting on Jesus. As soon as Jesus becomes clear, he fights through the crowds and begins to earnestly plead with Jesus. It says this man "polla parakaleo" out to Jesus. Parakaleo means to urge or exhort. It already has a strong level of compulsion to it but it says polla (much) parakaleo. The picture here is clear. This man is frantic, speaking quickly, loudly and repeatedly. This man knew time was of the essence and he was putting himself out there.

This picture is all the more potent because this man was a synagogue leader. This man was not a Pharisee. He was a man that even today, we would say, "Jesus should help that man." Synagogue leaders were respected lay leaders who had great responsibility. They might roughly be the equivalent of our Elders. The priests would do their job praying, teaching, sacrificing, etc. and these synagogue leaders would do everything else. Synagogue leaders were usually successful people who helped lead the congregation and helped carry out the logistics and programming of the worship service. This was a successful, respected, godly man who gave his time for the sake of his church and his family, and he is pleading for his little girl. The phrase here for little girl is one of affection, "thugatir." Here it is in its diminutive form, my little daughter, my precious one. "My little princess needs you." You can almost here him frantically pleading in front of Jesus.

Jesus should have clearly prioritized this man. He was a worthy man. He had a problem that could not wait.

Then Jairus' pleading was answered. Jesus agrees to go with him. His plan was working. Now the only issue was their race against the clock. His daughter was minutes away from

death. He is probably grabbing Jesus by the arm, half to show him the way and half to quicken his pace. Time was of the essence. Everyone could feel it. Then the story continues.

Mark 5:24-34

The large crowd is pressing in and you have to imagine that Jesus is being pulled along by Jairus who is frantically pushing against the crowd. Then a woman who has had an issue of bleeding for 12 years reaches out to touch Jesus' cloak. This isn't an act of faith in the cloak but the one wearing it. This woman's issue isn't fully described, but most people believe this had something to do with problematic/continuous menstrual bleeding. This is an important detail. Jewish law declared menstruating women as unclean during the time of their cycle. These women were to withdraw from society while they were on their cycle and when it was complete, the woman would ceremonially wash herself and return to the community. This woman with continuous bleeding was continuously unclean. It says she has had this problem for 12 years and she had spent all of her money on doctors looking for a cure but nothing had worked.

Here is what we know and what we can infer about this woman. This woman was poor. She was a living/breathing beacon of uncleanness. Because she had been treated by several doctors, the news and rumors of her condition were probably widely known. Because of this, she was untouchable and people viewed her as cursed by God. On top of all this, she was probably single because a high value was on procreation in this culture, and this problem meant that she could not have a child so no one probably sought to marry her. This woman was a fringe person. She was a person that people would avoid and generally believed it was a waste of time to interact with her. On top of all of this, this woman shows extreme boldness and faith in reaching out to Jesus because the prevailing religious sentiment was that her uncleanness was transmittable. If she touched the Rabbi, she would be making him unclean.

This is a story about priorities and this woman wasn't one. She was a fringe person with no influence, no wealth and nothing to offer, and she has had this problem for 12 years. What is one more day?

This woman is instantly healed and Jesus realizes that something has happened. Here is where the story gets interesting. Jesus says, "Who touched my cloak?" Keep in mind, this was the fully divine Son of God, who although limited was able to see the hearts of men and had a special level of wisdom, insight and vision that no one before or after has had. All of that to say, he knows who touched him. This is not dissimilar to the story in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and they hid from God, and God asks Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" In that moment, God was not asking a geographical question. He was asking a spiritual question. Where are you? Adam and Eve had just sinned, they realized they were naked and they had sewn fig leaves together to cover their own nakedness. The problem of sin was now apparent as they suffered shame and they made a quick fix solution that made human sense then they hid. In a similar fashion, this woman knows Jesus has been healing people and she reaches out to touch him. She tries to not involve Jesus in her healing. She thinks, "If I can just touch his cloak. If I can do the work, then I will be healed." Then she hides. And Jesus says, "Where are you?" This isn't a geographical question, this is a spiritual question.

Returning to the story and his fast paced action, Jesus' disciples are shocked by his question. They cry out, "There are people everywhere. Everyone is touching you. Why would you ask, "Who touched me?" I think the disciples are not giving Jesus a lesson in common sense. I think this retort comes from the sense of urgency they feel on Jairus' behalf.

You have been in some version of this situation before. You are rushing to make it to a dinner party, or a recital or the airport, and your spouse is lagging. They have been all day. You have been anxiously corralling and cajoling them and now you finally have them at the door with one foot over the threshold when they say, "I would like to bring a snack for the car. Do you think I should go with an apple or an orange?" In that moment, you cry out,

“Apple or an orange? It doesn’t matter. If you need one, get one.” In that moment the elevated nature of your voice might make it sound like you hate apples and oranges, but you are responding to the overall urgency and it is manifesting in your response.

“Who touched your cloak?” It could have been anyone. Beneath that statement is the urgent feeling that precious seconds are ticking away. Then Jesus does something interesting. He keeps looking. I think the disciples half expected Jesus to be like, “Oh yeah, the little girl...” and then snap out of his odd question. Instead, he keeps looking. Time is of the essence. This important, successful man, who is well loved and respected, has a daughter in great need and Jesus stops for this poor, untouchable, unclean woman. What in the world is going on here?

God’s priorities rarely look like ours.

In this moment, time is of the essence for Jairus. Each second that passes is evaporating so quickly he can feel it. The pressure could not be any higher. His daughter is in the final moments of her life and it appears there is still a glimmer of hope. He has found Jesus and together they are quickly moving towards his daughter. Then Jesus does the unthinkable. He stops. He takes a detour. He doesn’t conform to the priorities in this man’s head.

Mark 5:35-38

Jesus didn’t make it on time. There was hope for a moment, but everything just didn’t work out. The little girl had died. In fact, the story said, while he was telling the poor, untouchable, unclean woman that she was well, it is announced that the little girl had died. Keeping her alive was Jairus’ top priority, and seemingly that wasn’t a priority for Jesus.

Mark 5:39-43

The human understanding of priorities had expired. This girl was dead, but Jesus brought her back to life. He swooped in and changed the whole paradigm. By stopping for the fringe

woman and tending to her soul, Jesus made a bold statement about values. While it would have been economically and socially valuable to rush to Jairus' daughter and save her at the last moment, Jesus instead tarries with a fringe nobody.

Jesus upends their priorities to remind them of what matters most: loving everyone who God puts in your path. The little girl had lost her life, but this woman had likely lost her soul. She was probably angry with God, distrustful of faith and distant from other believers, so Jesus makes her a priority.

Jesus was rushing along with Jairus, the important, respected person, to heal a helpless little girl when he stops for a poor, untouchable, unclean woman. This woman had lived her life. This little girl was just starting out. All of a person's natural instincts in this moment would have said, "Jesus don't waste your time on this woman." By the world's standards, it was a waste of time. She had no status to help advance Jesus' message. She had no money to contribute to his cause. If anything she would hinder the cause because of her uncleanness before God. By the world's standards, she was a waste of time.

Mark 5:34

I want you to see what Jesus does for this "waste of time." He embraces it. Time is of the essence, Jairus was an important person who could repay Jesus, an important person that might help advance Jesus' cause and he had a sweet sympathetic story of a dying little girl. And Jesus stops for this unclean, untouchable, poor nobody. He calls her "thugatire" the same word for daughter. I want you to be reminded of something that you probably already know. This father was passionately seeking to save his daughter, and at the same time, the Heavenly Father was passionately seeking to save his daughter. This passage reminds us of the precious nature of all those who bear the image of God. They, we are all sons and daughters of the most high king. No matter how poor, unclean or untouchable they are. No matter if they cannot repay you or do you a favor in return. They are God's children.

With that in mind, I want you to see the tie that binds all of these stories together. Jesus values everyone, and he loves who is in front of him. He loves and prioritizes by God's standards and not the world's standards. The world says use your priorities to advance yourself, to benefit yourself and to do things that benefit your situation financially, politically, professionally. God's economy is completely inverted with regard to this, so your priorities are simple, love how God loves and love who he puts in front of you.

This line of thinking is built upon the idea that there are no mistakes in God's economy. There are no serendipitous moments or coincidences. Only divine appointments. He says, "Love how I love and love who is in front of you." It might seem obscure or costly but love who is in front of you. There seemed to be little incentive for Jesus to offer healing to this woman at least by the world's priorities. She couldn't offer influence or cash in return. She was an ostracized nobody on the fringe. But Jesus makes an effort for the daughter of Jairus and the woman with bleeding because they are both daughters. They both have great value.

If that is true, then your only real job is to love who God puts in front of you. Dismissing the world's notions of priorities and goals is built upon that potent statement from Jesus. Toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom and all of these things will be added to you." After a series of counterintuitive statements about the blessedness of weakness and peacemaking and poverty, all the things that do not naturally draw us in, and after telling people not to be consumed by the need for food and clothing, Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom. Stop for little girls who are sick. Stop for marginalized women who are suffering. They are both daughters. They both have supreme value in God's eyes. And everything else will be taken care of."

Who are the overlooked people in your life? Who are the wastes of time? Who are the low priorities? If you want to think about people who are often overlooked, then look no further than the special needs community. Our church does tremendous work loving and incorporating these families. One simple way to serve would be for our next respite event on December 3. For the morning, you get paired off. Buddied up with one of these sons or daughters of God. You run around with them. You make them feel loved and special. Their

families get a break and you get the opportunity of expressing and experiencing God's love in the eyes of one of these treasured kids. There are a million things to do on Saturday mornings. Tons of things you could prioritize, but maybe you are willing to love someone God is putting in front of you. Maybe you can serve in this simple and profound way. This is kingdom work and if you do it, everything else will be added unto you. God will take care of the details.

Jesus knew this. These two daughters knew this, and Emmett and Erling knew this. Their story began two years ago. Emmett moved. Erling moved but they still stay connected. Their story continued this past week as Erling finished his race on this earth. Emmett went to visit Erling just a couple weeks ago, and I want you to see the conclusion of their story.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MfcNjRAUH4>

God's economy is completely different from ours. Which means God's priorities are completely different from ours. Everyone matters. They are sons and daughters who have great value. Regardless of how different or strange the pairing might seem, love how God loves and love who he puts in front of you this week.