

The Way of Ministry
Mark 5:21-43

And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered about him, and he stayed on the seashore (5:21).

We at times dismiss the multitudes that come our way through the pages of Scripture. It's easy to understand that sort of attitude. No one is ever really identified; no names are given. You could easily liken these masses of people to lava flows; gigantic ocean waves; blustering winds. No names, no faces, no particular identities...

But for Jesus, a multitude represented untold numbers of names and faces and needs. Their interest in Jesus was not fleeting...Jesus had more than a passing interest in them...Their needs were not insignificant... They were not cookie-cutter people...

Every one in those crowds was
 uniquely created...
 uniquely gifted...
 uniquely significant...
 and, like us, much in need...

And if Jesus had taken a poll, I would guarantee you there were those in the crowds who:
 had recently experienced a death in the family...
 were sick themselves, even to the point of dying...
 had not experienced the love of Jesus...
 were looking for something to give meaning to their lives...

We read about the woman at the well. It's by no means a stretch of the imagination to say there were scores of such women in those crowds that came to Jesus. We read about Nicodemus. The crowds held any number of such characters...coming not under cover of darkness, but rather lost in the crowd. And not every Zaccheus had a tree conveniently located to climb so as to catch Jesus' eye. Most just did the best they could to catch a glimpse...a word...a touch from Jesus.

And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered about him, and he stayed on the seashore (5:21).

There's no way of knowing how many left at the end of that day whom Jesus did not get a chance to see; whom Jesus did not get a chance to touch; whom Jesus did not get a chance to heal; whom Jesus did not get a chance to speak with. And if people then were like people now, there's no way of knowing how many left that day saying to someone or thinking to themselves or both, "*What's all this talk about Jesus. He didn't do anything for me!*"

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...the way of ministry calls us to choose. Not to choose favorites, but still, to choose. Woodland is a church with remarkable talent and remarkable potential. Woodland has, in years gone by, and will, in the years to come, continue making a difference in lives. Woodland is being called upon to choose. In the midst of the multitude of needs that surround this church, which needs will become the focus and the passion of this congregation's ministry? That...is a question yet to be answered. It is THE WAY OF MINISTRY.

And one of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and upon seeing Him, fell at His feet... "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay your hands on her, that she may get well and live." And he went off with him; and a great multitude was following him and pressing in on him (Mark 5:22-24).

It must have been the equivalent of winning the Palestinian lottery; Jairus, a synagogue leader, had a twelve year old daughter who was at the point of death. He needed a physician, and he needed a physician now. Not only did he find Jesus that day, he actually got to Jesus. And then, when he got to Jesus through the crowd he fell at his feet and he was able to speak to Jesus...and Jesus heard his plea for his little girl...and Jesus actually went off with Jairus. Hallelujah, her life would be saved!

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...with the world at the door, those who minister have to make decisions every day about what to do...whom to see; One person's choice will not necessarily be another person's choice. On this day, Jesus chose to respond to Jairus in particular, a synagogue official.

The clock was ticking, but Jairus was on top of the world. How relieved he must have been. But wait. What's that? Jesus had been moving along at a fairly healthy pace; he has stopped. Jairus' little girl is about to die, and Jesus has stopped. Jesus can't stop now. There's a deadline to meet. Oh, no! Someone is coming up to Jesus and has fallen down before him, much the same way as Jairus had fallen down at Jesus' feet. Only this was no synagogue official. This was no decent human being. This was...a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years...she had suffered from this religiously and socially isolating condition for as long as Jairus' little girl had been alive. When will she just give up, crawl on a garbage heap, and die?

“Jesus, you can't stop for this trash-woman; she's worthless. The little girl? Her daddy is a religious man; she attends Sabbath school and Pentateuch school and sings in the choir and plays the piano and volunteers down at the Salvation Army every other Saturday. She is worth saving; not this woman. Jesus, the more time you spend with her, the less likely the brave little girl is going to live.”

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...interruptions occur all the time. Some would say “Forget that; get on with this.” Others would say, “This can wait for a while; dedicate some time to that.”

And Jesus healed this woman of her affliction. No one else would come near her, so she took the bull by the horns and went and touched Jesus' garment, and my goodness, she was healed!

THE WAY OF MINISTRY... “Well, I guess Jesus knew what he was doing; now can we just get on with the agenda at hand!?”

But wait a minute. Someone just came from Jairus' house and told them it was too late; the little girl had died. There was no need to trouble the Teacher any more. Let him go on his way, and let's prepare for a burial.

THE WAY OF MINISTRY... “Jesus, if you'd just listened to me. But no, you had to take time for someone else. And now look; what a lousy trade. We've lost this gifted, beautiful person in exchange for... What were you thinking!?”

And we continue reading: *But ignoring what they said (Why trouble the Teacher any further?), Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe” (Mark 5:36).* And he continued on to the house of the synagogue ruler...

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...

Jesus' ministry is always our ministry...

Don't know that the reverse is the case...

We dare not ignore Jesus...

Thank goodness Jesus at times chooses to ignore us...

When Jesus arrived at the house, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly (Mark 5:38).

The Bible says that when Jesus showed up, he witnessed a tumult. That word, “tumult”, can also be translated: confusion; disturbance; riot...

Interesting word: tumult/riot. We read the very same word, (*tho'robus*), over in Matthew 27:24 as Jesus is about to be handed over and crucified: *So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot (tho'robus) was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.*

THE WAY OF MINISTRY... As we examine the ministry of Jesus, it should come as no surprise that at times it led him into riotous places where his power and love could quiet the storm.. As we examine the ministry of Jesus, it should come as no surprise that at times it lead him into riotous places where his power and love had not so much of an impact. Ministry drew Jesus...and ministry draws us...into some very disturbing places. The immediate return on that ministry may go unnoticed...the earthly return on that ministry may go unnoticed.

Ultimately, the ministry of Jesus Christ...and the ministry that Jesus Christ calls us to...that ministry will ultimately overcome confusion...disturbances...even riots.

As Jesus entered Jairus' home, the Bible says those in those caught up in the *tho'robus* there laughed at him (Mark 5:40). Who is to say for sure what it was that generated the laughter?

Some laughed because they had little regard for Jesus. “Oh, he's a nice guy. He's had his shining moments. But this...is not one of them.”

Some laughed because they were convinced that no matter one's capacity for love or deeds of power, death is the ultimate victor.

Some laughed simply because they saw others laughing, and they joined in because they didn't know any better.

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...is not always well-received.

In the context of Jesus' ministry on that day, we know how this riot ended. *Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi”; which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” And immediately the girl got up and walked...* (Mark 5:41-42).

THE WAY OF MINISTRY...it is impossible to please everyone. THE WAY OF MINISTRY... it's not about choosing favorites, but it is about choosing. THE WAY OF MINISTRY...it is not about reaching out to the most worthy...it is about reaching out through the leadership of God's Spirit. THE WAY OF MINISTRY... It must find the appropriate response to the words and attitudes that speak: “Well that was a lousy choice.”... or... “That's a silly idea.” THE WAY OF MINISTRY... It can lead into disturbing places. THE WAY OF MINISTRY...ultimately, it has the potential to bring life and to renew life. THE WAY OF MINISTRY...Woodland has some decisions to make, and the Lord will lead this congregation in the way it is to go.

Hear Paul's words to leaders from the church at Ephesus, found in Acts 20:32: “...I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”