

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?”

³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha kum!*” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Dear Friends in Christ,

This time little Amy’s parent’s asked, “Tell us again about the Giant-Killer.” On the pastor’s first visit with their six-year-old, dying because of an inoperable heart defect, the pastor told them about young David’s going out against the giant Goliath. The comparison was obvious. Little Amy was going up against the Goliath named death, but, like David, she would use the Lord’s strength – and win. Now that the end was near, she and her parents needed to hear again about Jesus, the Giant-Killer, in whom believers have the sure victory over death.

This morning our text shows us the Giant-Killer in action again in the life of another parent fearing the outcome of the battle of his little daughter against the greatest enemy we have, death. What Jesus does on that occasion shows us that **Jesus can do what no one else can do**. His miraculous act reminds us of the victory over the giant we too will face, namely, death, unless the end of the world comes first. As we meditate on the familiar story of the raising of Jairus’ daughter this morning we will be reminded first of all that 1) **We will do what everyone else will do – die**, and 2) **He (Jesus) did what no one else can do – raise people from the dead**.

1. We will do what everyone else will do – die

Every death is a tragedy. Some especially so. That’s especially true when a child dies. How tragic when a child doesn’t get to experience adulthood. They aren’t able to be married, have children, raise a family, see them grow and experience grandchildren. They aren’t able to fulfill their dreams, reach their potential and use the gifts God has given them. I have often helped people who have lost loved ones. Losing a child, I think, is one of the toughest trials anyone could ever face.

That was what Jairus was facing when he came to Jesus. You can hear his pain, can’t you? “**My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.**” Our text says that “**He pleaded earnestly.**” The word in the Greek means strongly, insistently. There he was, the chairman of the congregation, falling to his knees, pleading for help. He knew Jesus had helped others. He trusted that Jesus had the power to help his daughter. He believed that Jesus could save his little girl from this terrible giant, death.

Jesus responds in love. He went with him (v.24) But as they were going messengers from Jairus’ house met them with the sad, tragic news. “**Your daughter is dead.**”

Have you ever received news like that? Then you know the shock, the disbelief and the denial that follows. “**It can’t be true.**” You know the feeling of helplessness that follows. “**There must be something I can do.**” You know the deep sadness and grief that follows. You know the doubting of God’s love. “**Does God really care?**” You may have also experienced the anger that sometimes follows especially the death of someone who dies at a young age. “**It’s just not fair.**” In our text, it appears that all reacted with the feeling of hopelessness. “**They said. ‘Why bother the teacher any more.’**” In other words, there is nothing more the Rabbi can do, she’s dead now. You can go back to your work, Jesus. Once a person is dead, no one can help you anymore.

The tragic thing about this story is that the little girl died at such a young age. The fact is, though, that the death rate stayed the same. In fact, it has always been the same. There is one death per person. Death is “**the wages of sin.**” “**All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.**” Therefore as Adam died as a result of his sins, so also do we who inherited Adam’s sinful nature die. All are children of Adam, all die. We, you and I, will also do what everyone else does here on earth, we will die. Not just physically, but eternally, because of our sins we will be separated from God forever.

2. Jesus did what no one else can do – raise people from the dead.

I was with an elderly lady at the hospital when her husband died. It was a sad time of course, but I didn’t expect what was about to happen. The doctor walked into the room and said to the widow. You can take the body away now. When someone dies, that’s all we human beings can do with the remains – take them away. I carried her loved one to the car and helped her take him home. But Jesus can do more!

In our text the funeral of this little girl was already in full swing. As was the custom, professional mourners and flute players were already on the scene making a great commotion. The Greek word here means “riot.” Why the speed? In that climate it was necessary to put the body into the tomb already the same day or the next morning.

But Jesus words indicate that a funeral would not be necessary. “**Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.**” The child was really dead, Luke tells us in his Gospel. And that’s why they laughed, of course. But what Jesus meant was that this little girl was not permanently dead. And even in death, in the presence of God and his power, death is no more than a sleep. This is what Paul is thinking when he writes to the Christians in Thessalonica, “**He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.**” (5:10)

She was dead, but Jesus changed all that. Our text says, “⁴¹ **He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha koum!’ (which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’).** ⁴² **Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old).**” Jesus raised this little girl from the dead. Jesus did what no one else can do. With this miracle he reveals himself to be the Lord of Life and Death. Luke tells us that at His Word and command, “**Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up.**” The reaction of the witnesses Jesus took with him into the room and, also, of course, of those who would see this little girl alive again walking around outside of the home – complete amazement. Jesus did what no one else could do. He brought people back to life after they died. Jesus had power over the Giant Death.

The Apostle Paul tells us what this means for you and me. “**Christ Jesus has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.**” As David brought victory to the Israelites by defeating the Giant Goliath, so also Jesus brings victory to his spiritual Israel, the Church of believers, by being victorious over death. Indeed, Jesus has destroyed death. Jesus didn’t just knock death down like David knocked Goliath down. He wiped death out! He utterly abolished it. He rendered it completely ineffective. With his power over death, his resurrection, Jesus “**has brought life and immortality to light.**” Instead of ugly death breathing down upon us like Goliath breathed down on David, we now have immortal life beckoning us. Hell’s shadows have been brushed aside; heaven’s never ending light breaks before us. Those whom the God of grace has brought out of the darkness of unbelief ‘s spiritual death to faith need not fear physical death anymore. For them it is an escalator that carries them safely to the upper floor of heaven.

How can we be sure of this. We need to know because our dear loved one has died! Paul says we know this “**through the Gospel.**” In the Gospel, God has recorded for you and me and all people the beautiful account of how his Son went up against that giant, death, and wiped him out on Good Friday and Easter. He paid for sins and said, “It is finished!” In the Gospel, We see the risen Jesus standing before us just as if we had been with the disciples that first Easter. In his resurrection we find the assurance that the Father was satisfied with his payment. Through that Gospel the Holy Spirit has opened the eyes of faith in us to see and believe all this. And through that same Gospel he keeps them open.

We face many giants in life, the greatest is death. But Jesus has power over death. He did what no one else could do, he destroyed death. He gives us the victory over death. He is our David, our Giant-Killer. Some day we will see him in heaven, but for now as we deal with the death of loved ones and our own, let’s take Jesus’ words to Jairus to heart, “**Don’t be afraid; just believe.**” Amen.

