

The telephone rang at about 5 in the morning. It was just one week after Andrew had been born in 1978. I picked up the receiver sleepy and alarmed. "Rev. Atkinson... this is Sharon. I'm in the hospital. My baby is very sick. Could you come into the hospital right away?" I was instantly awake, I was dressed and out the door in a matter of minutes. When I entered her room in the hospital she broke down in tears. "My baby is dead. My little boy is dead." The baby was only hours old. It was her first-born son. A nurse entered the room and asked, "Sharon, would you like to see your baby before we take him down for the autopsy?" With the composure that comes from shock, Sharon nodded, "Yes". The nurse left and quickly returned with the little bundle wrapped in blankets which had been her little boy for several short hours. He was just the same weight as Andrew with blond hair. The mother and I both gazed upon that lifeless little boy and then it happened. I went to pieces. I broke down in uncontrollable weeping and sobbing. The grief stricken mother became my comforter. There are few experiences in life as devastating as the death of a child or the threat of the death of your child. I think that experienced^d helped me to understand a little bit better what Jairus felt when he came to Jesus, pleading for him to come to the bedside of his dying little girl.

The first and most important thing that this passage tells us is that Jesus is Lord of life and death and that he cares about us in our grief and loss. Jesus Christ is not some disembodied spirit floating around somplase in outer space. He is living and sitting on the right hand of his father in heaven. He is still a man. He is God but he is still fully human and is able to sympathise with us in our grief. In the words of the Shorter Catechism, "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever." On the right hand of the Majesty on high there sits a man whose heart is filled with love and compassion for those who are grieving for sons and daughters and loved ones who have died ^{physically or who are} ~~who are physically alive but~~ spiritually dead.

When Jesus lived on earth some two thousand years ago in the land of Palestine He did things which give us a preview of what he will do when he comes again to judge the living and the dead. When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus or the son of the widow of Nain, or his friend Lazarus he was giving us a preview of what is going to happen to all of us when Christ returns in power and glory to judge and to save.

When He raised the dead he was telling us, "I have power over life and death. Death is not the end. There will be a day of resurrection." The daughter of Jairus heard the voice of Jesus say to her, "Arise." But there is coming a day, our Lord tells us, when "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

This is, of course, a supernatural way of thinking which runs directly contrary to secular or naturalistic thinking about the end of the world. Dr. Donald Miller, former President of Pittsburgh Seminary, was talking to a philosopher in Budapest. The Communist scholar told him that he had a young son who one day asked him, "Daddy, what will happen to me when I die?" The father replied, "You will be buried." "Then what?" asked the boy. "Your body disintegrates and becomes part of the earth," replied his father. "Then what will happen?" persisted the lad. The father said, "Oh, you become a butterfly and fly around among flowers and in sunshine." He then said to Dr. Miller, "I felt so ashamed to tell my son that, but I didn't have the courage to tell him there is nothing beyond a decomposed body in the ground." Here is the difference between despair and the gospel.

God does not want us to believe blindly in something after death. In the life of Jesus he shows us that Christ is Lord of life and death. His miracles of raising the dead as well as his own resurrection are open to scientific investigation. God is assuring us that this life is not all there is. That all eternity lies before us. We invite the honest seeker to investigate the life and miracles of Jesus of Nazareth. We do not ask that you take a blind existential leap of faith into the dark. We invite the honest seeker to suspend disbelief for the sake of honestly investigating the claims of Christ. Jesus raised the dead little daughter of Jairus because he had compassion on her father but also in order to give us a glimpse into the future of that general resurrection at the last day when the graves will give up their dead and "the dead, small and great, stand before God; and books" are "opened... and the dead" are judged "out of those things which" are "written in the books, according to their works."

Our Scripture Lesson teaches us a second thing as well. It shows us how the love of Jairus for his daughter coupled with his faith in Christ led to his daughter's revival or resurrection. By application it is our love for our friends and relatives coupled with our faith in Christ as the Lord of the living and the dead which may lead to their spiritual

awakening. Our love and our faith are ~~the~~ ~~means~~ means which God uses to bring those who are spiritually dead to life. The daughter of Jairus was saved. She was raised to new life because of the faith of her father who "fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house."

Now don't mistake what I'm saying. I am not saying that your loved ones may be saved by your faith apart from their faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. You and I cannot believe in Christ for another. Apart from faith... our own personal faith... it is impossible to please God. Yet I'm afraid that many people feel that their entrance into heaven is assured by a father or an uncle who was a Christian. How often someone tells me "My grandfather was a Presbyterian minister" as though that ^{should} settle all doubts about one's own spiritual condition. If we ourselves have no faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour the faith of our friends and relatives will not do us much good. As Jesus said to the woman in our Scripture Lesson, "Daughter, be of godd comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole." ~~the whole~~

Yet there is a sense in which we can say that God saves men and women through the means of friends and relatives who

have loved them so much that they have come to Jesus and have fallen down at his feet, and besought him that he would come to their house and give new life to a son or daughter, husband or wife. So there is a sense in which we can say that God's elect are saved only because someone has loved them enough to go to Jesus pleading for Him to speak to them saying, "Arise!. Wake up!" ~~Respond to my voice and be revived!~~

When we love someone very much as Christians we must be concerned for their eternal destiny. We cannot really love someone and not be concerned if they are dying spiritually. Love leaves us no choice. What are you doing to show your love for those who don't know Jesus? Can you imagine having a dying son or daughter, a dying husband or father you love, a dying wife or mother and yet not seek help from a doctor? If your husband was lying, dying on the living floor from a heart-attack wouldn't you rush to the phone and call an ambulance? The daughter of Jairus was so bad off he couldn't bring her to Jesus, he had to go and fall at the feet of Jesus and plead Him to go to her. Perhaps your loved one will not respond to your pleas for him or her to go to Christ... but have you gone to Christ and fallen at his feet pleading him to come to your house with salvation? If we love someone and believe that Jesus is the Lord whose voice can

awaken your loved one to new life then will we not go to Christ in prayer and join with fellow Christians pleading for Christ to visit our homes with salvation.

Thirdly, I would like to draw your attention to a number of characteristics that Jairus had which were instrumental in his daughter's salvation. ~~W~~ Jairus recognised how desperate the condition of his daughter was. "She lay dying." What do you think will be the eternal destiny of your loved ones? What if they don't know Jesus? What if they have never be spiritually awakened? I was once talking with someone whose relationship to Jesus Christ I was concerned about. I wanted to ask her about her relationship to Jesus Christ but fear and reticence held me back. I was afraid I might offend or embarass. Then I thought, "Do you really believe that God has called you as a minister to be a shepher~~d~~ over this flock? Do you really believe what Christ says about heaven and hell or are you just religious?" "Do you really believe that apart from faith in Christ a person is in a desperate condition?" "Yes, I do believe." And with that I summoned up courage to speak with the woman about her relationship to Christ. We must really believe that the condition of our loved ones is terribly desperate

as long as they do know Christ. And if we really believe that they are dying we will go to Christ. Like Jairus we will come to Christ and fall at his feet and plead with him on behalf of our loved one.

We must also be willing to humble ourselves in the eyes of others. Jairus "was a ruler of the synagogue and he fell down at Jesus' feet." He was a man of dignity. He was highly respected. He held one of the most highly respected positions in his town. Can you imagine how humiliating it would be for such a person to fall down at the feet of another before all his friends and neighbors. Presbyterians love to keep their composure. Everything should be done decently and in order. But when you really love someone who is dying dignity and composure goes down the drain. How many of us are like the multitudes who thronged Jesus. They have always been multitudes who have been interested in Jesus. They throng to him. They come for entertainment, for cultural stimulation, out of curiosity but none of them seem to recognize a need in their lives that only Christ could meet. None of them except for the woman with the issue of blood and Jairus humbled themselves at the feet of Jesus. James wrote, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." But our whole culture tells us not to

let anybody know your weaknesses and needs. If we want our loved ones to come to know Christ we must be willing to humble ourselves before Christ and others.

Then again we must wait patiently for Christ to come and raise our loved ones to new life. Imagine how anguished Jairus must have felt when the progress of Jesus was interrupted by this woman who had had the problem for 12 years. Why couldn't she wait another day? Why, when his daughter was in such a desperate condition, does Jesus not rush to the bedside of the little girl. Sometimes it seems that our prayers for loved ones go unanswered for years. It seems that Christ is saving others but not the one we really love. Sometimes we must wait many years to see our prayers answered. Only a patient Christian will continue in prayer... will continue to wait upon the Lord. *When Kenneth MacRae was 48 years old* ~~In the diary of Kenneth MacRae he~~ *he wrote in his diary.* ~~wrote when he was 48 years old.~~

"Would that my own daughter were persuaded to come (to Christ)! It troubles me very much to see her give no evidence of concern. Lord, bring her!" Ten long years later he wrote in his diary, "Today got the best news in the world-- that Mary made public profession of Christ at the Communion... last Sabbath. This is what I have been praying for for many a day, and now that the Lord has answered me my heart is filled with gratitude and praise." *we must wait patiently for Christ to answer our prayers.*

Still another characteristic of a Christian who wants to see his loved ones come to have eternal life is expectant faith. Jairus had expectant faith. While he and Jesus were still on the way someone came with the sad news, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." When all others had given up hope Jairus continued to have expectant faith. *No believed Jesus*
 when Jesus said to him, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole." When others have given up hope on our loved ones do you keep on keeping on... praying and expecting God to answer your prayers for his or her salvation? Unfortunately many of us are actually surprised when God answers our prayers and uses our witness to bring someone to Christ. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "So pray... that, if there are no conversions, you will be astonished, amazed, and broken-hearted. Look for the salvation of your (loved ones) as much as the angel who will sound the last trump will look for the waking of the dead. Believe your own doctrine! Believe your own Saviour! Believe in the Holy Ghost who dwells in you! For thus shall you see your hearts' desire, and God shall be glorified."

But you may be saying that you cannot identify with Jairus. You can not identify with his faith in Christ. And as you think about this narrative it begins to dawn on you

that the person you most identify with... and the person you are most like in this story is the daughter. You do not believe in Christ. You feel lifeless and spiritually dead. You can't see Christ. You have no feelings for him. You are not seeking him. Your eyes are closed to him. This story contains good news for you. Christ can give you life. Very likely there is someone who has gone to Jesus and fallen at his feet pleading with Christ to come to you and give you life. You know that they love you. They have humbled themselves in your eyes because of their concern for your spiritual welfare. And now, because of their love for you and their faith in Christ, you lie before him like the daughter of Jairus in the state of spiritual death. He stands there gazing upon you with love and compassion. You can't see him because your eyes are closed to him. You feel nothing for him but he loves you. Your friends, perhaps, have written you off as a hopeless case. They say to your mother or father who have prayed so many years for you, "Thy daughter is dead. Thy son is dead. Hopeless! Trouble not the Master." But they know nothing of the power of Christ to raise the dead. And as Jesus said to that little dead girl, "Arise."... so I, in the name of life, command you to arise. Wake up. Open your eyes to Christ. He says, "I am come that you might have life, and that

you might have it more abundantly." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Today if ye hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

AMEN