

Literary Sandwiches: The Face of Christ

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References: **Mark 5**, Mark 5:21-43; Genesis 3:8; Exodus 33:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

Introduction: The Literary Sandwich

Good morning. Good morning. Let's go to the Book of Mark, Chapter 5, please. Mark.

In 1762, the sandwich was invented. And since then, it has become a very **popular** kind of food. And understandably so. It has a number of advantages. You can hold it in one hand. It doesn't require utensils. And you can even have one while you're surfing the internet.

There's a Gospel writer who liked sandwiches. And his name is Mark. One scholar has counted eight, nine sandwiches in this Gospel. And I'm not talking about the ham and cheese kind of sandwich. I'm talking about literary sandwiches. And some scholars call it inclusions. And it's when one story gets stuck into the middle of another story. So Mark starts with story A. Then he introduces story B. And then he returns and completes story A.

So story A gets chopped in two pieces, like two pieces of bread. And story B, like a slice of ham, it's stuck in the middle. And you find this all through the Book of Mark. And the best part of a sandwich is the part in the middle. Isn't that right? That's the part we like the best. And in a literary sandwich, it heightens the **tension**. And it does more than that. It provides the key to the interpretation, the theological meaning of this, the whole sandwich. And the theological understanding is found in the part that's inserted between the two halves.

So when you read the Gospel of June, look out for the sandwiches. As a matter of fact, we're going to eat one this morning. Well, we're going to read it. It's in chapter 5 of Mark, verse 21.

The Plea of Jairus

So here we have the Lord on the shores of Lake Galilee. And a large crowd of people is gathered listening to him. And then the leader of the synagogue shows up. And look what he does.

[Mark 5:22-23 NKJV]

²² And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet ²³ and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."

The gentleman comes and bows down before Jesus. Not a posture you would expect from a dignified member of the community. But his daughter's life is hanging by a thread and he is **anxious** to get help for her. So he says, "Please come quickly." And Jesus says, "Let's go." Verse 24.

[Mark 5:24 NKJV]

²⁴ So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

The life of Jairus' daughter was at risk. He turns to Christ and now the Lord is on his way to the man's house. A very large crowd is there.

The Interruption: A Woman in Need

And then abruptly, Mark changes gears and he does this sandwich then. Verse 25.

[Mark 5:25 NKJV]

²⁵ Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years,

The girl was 12 years old. And this woman had a 12-year episode with hemorrhage and had suffered many things from many physicians.

[Mark 5:26 NKJV]

²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.

The Lord is on his way to the home of Jairus to heal or raise his daughter. And now this woman comes along. The daughter is about to die. And this woman comes. She's not actually

dead, but she probably wished that she was. She had been bleeding for 12 years. She had been losing not only her blood, but also her money. She had gone to see every doctor in the area. She had tried the best medications available. She paid money but got no help. And she used the word suffered. Mark uses the word **suffered** to describe what had happened. She had been ripped off and she only got worse. But this was not just a health issue. It was a lot worse than that.

Women in this condition under the Mosaic law were considered ceremoniously unclean, ritually unclean. And if she touched anyone, they became unclean. According to the Old Testament law, a woman in this condition had to wear a special garment to let everyone know that she was in an unclean state. And if anyone accidentally had contact with her, they also would be unclean. They would have to go through a ritual cleansing ceremony.

So this woman was permanently unclean, like it's been 12 years. Nobody would want to marry a woman like this. Neighbors would not darken her door. She was excluded from the synagogue. No one would want to have contact with her. She was an **untouchable**. The social impact of her condition would have been devastating. Verse 27.

[Mark 5:27-28 NKJV]

²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

So here's this woman who is hemorrhaging physically, emotionally, spiritually, even financially. And then she hears of Jesus. Would a man of God want to see someone like her? Probably not. So she comes up with a plan. She decides to go **incognito**, slip through the crowd, approach from behind. She thinks, if I can only touch him, I could be made well. She wants to **download** some healing and then get on with her life. So she sneaks up behind Jesus as he walks down the road. There's people all around him. And she gets close enough to bend down and to touch the hem of his robe. Verse 29.

[Mark 5:29 NKJV]

²⁹ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.

Instant healing. One touch. And the illness is gone forever. Now keep in mind, this is a very complicated health issue. None of the doctors had been able to help. All the medicine that

she tried had no effect. Every remedy failed. And Jesus was not actually healing at this moment. He was on the road. He was going to attend to an emergency in Jairus' house. He was not even paying attention to her. He's not saying, "Look, this woman's problem is very complex. I'm going to have to focus. I will have to concentrate. This is going to require some earnest prayer." None of that. The Lord is not even looking at her. The lady comes behind, from behind, touches him, and she's better. That's it. No more was required. What **incredible power** the Lord had to heal people. Miracles happened **effortlessly**. One touch, and that was enough. He solves the most difficult, complex problems as if there were nothing to it. His grace abounds. It runs over. His power to heal knows no limits. He is **utterly amazing**. Isn't it great to know a Christ like that? A Christ that can save the worst cases? How wonderful to know and to belong him.

From the Back to the Face

And then the Lord asks a rather strange question. Verse 30.

[Mark 5:30 NKJV]

³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"

But his disciples said to him,

[Mark 5:31 NKJV]

³¹ But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

That doesn't make any sense. And the Lord says, "I need to know who touched me." And his disciples are thinking, "Are you kidding? Who touched you? Everybody's touching you. We're all around you. What are you talking about?"

[Mark 5:32 NKJV]

³² And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.

Now, what's poor Jairus doing? His daughter is dying and Jesus is delaying—every second counts. And the Lord is getting sidetracked here. Jairus is biting his nails. This is a race against the clock. And he's thinking, "Lord, please, we don't have time for this. My daughter is at death's door and you're wasting time. Why are we doing this?"

Now, only Mark records in this part: the Lord turned and looked around. He looks at the people who are all around him. Poor Jairus is freaking out. His daughter is dying. And there's Jesus scanning the crowd. He wants to find the person who got a blessing from his back. Because he doesn't just want them to see his back. He wants them to see his **face**. He wants a personal encounter. Jairus nervously looks at his watch. Did they have watches in that day? Maybe not. But this is an emergency. And Jesus won't let it go. "Which one of you was it that touched me?"

The Lord is looking around and the woman is hiding in the background. She's trying to make sure she doesn't get spotted. She does not want to be discovered. She had dared to touch a rabbi. And that would make him unclean and she would be in trouble. So she's hiding. Well, this is not the first time that we have people in the Bible hiding from God. That started in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve hid in the bushes.

[Genesis 3:8 NKJV]

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

And we often hide because our minds are confused about God. And we think he's against us. And he's out to get us. And this woman hides. She doesn't identify herself. She had violated the law. She touched a rabbi when she was unclean. She's terrified. And she is convinced that the Lord will be very angry with her. "He will be upset. He will reject me. I will be in big trouble." And she hides. How many people stay away from God because they think he will nail them to the wall, rake them over the coals? How many Christians are unwilling to come back because they blew it and they think it's going to be condemnation and judgment? They will be rejected when, in fact, the opposite is true. The Lord keeps looking around. There is a needy person in the crowd that he wants to find. And he wants to reveal to her the **love of God**. He doesn't just want her to see his back. He wants her to see his **face**.

In the Old Testament, Moses went up on Mount Sinai and he had a request. He said,

[Exodus 33:18 NKJV]

¹⁸ And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

"Lord, I've seen some amazing stuff. We've seen what happened in Egypt, the plagues and what you did there. I saw the miracles. I saw your power. But I would like to see your glory." And God said, "Moses, that's impossible. You could never withstand it. It would be too overpowering. You would be toast. But I will let you see my back."

[Exodus 33:20 NKJV]

²⁰ But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

[Exodus 33:23 NKJV]

²³ Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

And Moses hid behind a rock and looked through a crack. And he didn't see God's face. He only saw the back of God, whatever that means. That's what was going on in the Old Testament. People were viewing God from behind. A limited, restricted, partial view of God. They could only see his back.

And many people today are struggling with impoverished and distorted view of God. They think, "I can't live up to God's commandments. I'm not faithful enough. I'm not holy enough. I don't obey enough. I don't go to church enough. I never will measure up—what's the use." And they picture God as someone who is very frustrated and upset with them. A God who is fuming and angry because of their failures. A God who is saying, "What is wrong with you?"

I am afraid that many, like those of the Old Testament, only see God from behind. In the New Testament, there's a passion in the heart of God to reveal his face to us. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, 6, that the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shone in our heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Where? In the face of Jesus Christ.

[2 Corinthians 4:6 NKJV]

⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In Christ, God shows us his face. And it's the Lord Jesus who shows us how **wonderful** and how extraordinarily **beautiful** God really is. God became a man so that we could see his face. God living, breathing, walking among us, bringing joy and goodness and hope. Lord Jesus is the human life of God. Jesus is the human face of God. That's a remarkable statement, isn't it? He came not just to redeem. He came to reveal who God really is. He came to reveal the truth about God. And for three years, he walks among us to show us the beauty, the goodness of the character of God.

Jesus Christ is the revelation of God. He is, as Paul says, the image of God. We can't see God. But now we have an image, not a statue, but a living, breathing human being who becomes the one who shows us, who reveals to us the heart and character of God. We have a **Christ-like God**, and in him there is no un-Christ-likeness at all. Did you get that? We have a **Christ-like God**, and in him there is no un-Christ-likeness at all. The world has never, ever seen anyone as wonderful as Christ. And if God is like him, that's the best news we've heard on planet Earth. That's the best news.

Daughter: A Restoration of Status

Look what happens here. The woman realized that she is not going to get away unnoticed. The master is not going anywhere until he locates her. She just wanted to touch quickly, get healed, and get out of there as quickly as possible. So with fear and trembling, she finally identifies herself. Verse 33.

[Mark 5:33 NKJV]

³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

She is shaking. She is scared. The poor lady, she really doesn't know what Jesus is like, does she? She thinks, "I've broken the law. I'm unclean. I've contaminated the rabbi by touching him. He's going to rebuke me. He's going to publicly embarrass me and reject me." You

know, there's something that we need to understand. Yes, we have offended God a million times. But he's a God who seeks not to condemn, but to save. He's not out to humiliate us. Think of how many times in the Bible God appears and what do people immediately do? They are overcome with fear. They hit the floor. And what does God say every time? "**Do not be afraid.**"

So if you fall on your face and God doesn't say, "Do not be afraid," maybe it's not the voice of God. You're hearing the God who revealed himself in Christ. It's a God who comes with mercy. A God who comes to save and to heal and to lift up. This woman had lived her whole life under the burdensome laws and customs of Judaism. And now the Lord comes to reveal to this woman who God really is. She's looking down at the ground. She doesn't want to make eye contact. She's unclean. She's broken the law. She feels full of shame. People are looking on thinking, "How did this woman have the audacity to do that?" And the Lord looks her in the face. He says something that she was not expecting.

[Mark 5:34 NKJV]

³⁴ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

Daughter. The people called her unclean. They looked down on her. He calls her daughter. Why would he call her daughter? Daughter is a family term. The Lord doesn't simply want followers hanging on to his coattails. He wants daughters. He wants sons. He wants a **relationship**. Doesn't just want to dispense salvation. He wants a relationship.

She expected something like, "Woman, what did you do?" Instead, the Lord, with great tenderness and with a smile on his face, says, "Daughter," which is to say, **welcome into my family**. Daughter is acceptance language, isn't it? It's a language of tenderness and affection. The Lord is ministering to her heart. She is getting more than she bargained for. Your faith has made you well.

The poor woman must have been crippled with shame. And Jesus is ministering to her need. He is restoring her status in the community because she would not have been welcome in the synagogue. She needed more than physical healing. She needed to be lifted out of that place of rejection and shame. And the Lord was helping everyone around him to know that she was healed and she would be welcomed back into the synagogue. As a matter of fact, the ruler of the synagogue was standing right there. He needed to know that this woman standing in the community had just been restored. And he was also discovering that when

people come into contact with Christ, unclean people become clean. Guilty people get forgiven. Shame-ridden people find freedom and joy. People do not remain the same.

The Jews had learned that if an unclean person touched someone, that person also became unclean. But here the Lord flips the narrative. Things now work in reverse. Her uncleanness does not flow into him. His cleanness, his virtue flows into her. And maybe that's why Jesus said, "I feel power go out of me." He is so clean, so holy, so powerful, so beautiful that his wholeness flows into her. His cleanness is more powerful than our uncleanness. His grace is greater than our sin. His light is greater than our darkness. And now the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness is unable to overcome it. Messiah is here. **Hope** has come into the world. Help has come. Salvation has come. Redemption has arrived. A new chapter has been opened in history. And it's wonderful. Daughter, your faith in me changes everything. You are healed, restored, loved, accepted. Your faith has made you well.

Faith. Faith basically means to come to Christ and to trust in him. It's as simple and as profound as that woman. You will never be the same again.

The Resurrection of the Girl

Well, what about poor Jairus? He's running out of fingernails. He's thinking, "Lord, my daughter is dying and you're getting distracted. Every second counts and you seem to be in no hurry at all." The Lord never seems to operate on our time schedule, does he? And then the tragic news arrives. Verse 35.

[Mark 5:35 NKJV]

³⁵ While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any longer? What Jairus had most dreaded, his daughter had died. And surely his servants are right. Why trouble the master any further? It's as though Mark were asking his readers, "Is there any hope for Jairus' daughter now?" And the answer coming from the Lord himself is a resounding yes.

[Mark 5:36 NKJV]

³⁶ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

Are there any impossible situations in your life? Even death does not have the last word when Christ is around. And the Lord makes his way to Jairus' home. And look what happens. Verse 41.

[Mark 5:41-43 NKJV]

⁴¹ Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴² Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. ⁴³ But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

The little girl didn't just get better. She came back to life. Jairus had hoped for it, for healing. He got a resurrection. She got resurrected. A greater miracle than Jairus even thought possible. You know, the Lord always turns out to be bigger and greater and better than we realized. He turns out to be more wonderful than we imagined.

And Mark is setting up an interesting contrast between a pious gentleman and an unclean woman. Apparently, Jairus has the advantage, the religious advantage. But the irony here is that the Lord reverses their roles. And it's the woman who displays the greater faith. And that happens also in the book of Mark, by the way, if you notice. And the religious man is exhorted to have faith. And the woman's faith forms the center of the sandwich. And it's the key to interpreting this story. Faith in Christ can transform fear and despair into hope and salvation. He's bigger than any situation that can come our way. And that's a powerful lesson for all of us.

Conclusion: Three Brief Thoughts

Let me wind it up with three brief thoughts that we can draw from this story.

1. Jesus doesn't always come when we hoped. But he's always **on time**. His plans are a whole lot better than ours.
2. Jesus doesn't always answer the way we expected. He usually has something better in mind. And sooner or later, you will discover that what he had in mind is a whole lot better.
3. It's not the size of our faith that matters. It's the **size of your Christ**.

The woman was healed because of her faith. Jairus' daughter was raised up in spite of the lack of faith. The bottom line is not the size of your faith, but the size of your Christ. Come to

him with your faith. Whether it be great or small, or even if you have none at all, that doesn't really matter. What matters is that you come to one who is **mighty to save**. His grace is greater than our need. And I love what Spurgeon said when he said, "I have a great need for Christ, and I have a great Christ for our need."

Let's pray.

Dear Lord, we're grateful that you don't always answer our prayers the way we expected. Your wisdom is higher than ours. Your goodness is so much better, and your ways are past finding out. We thank you, Lord, that you have made yourself known in the person of your Son, and how wonderful to know that we have a **Christ-like God**. We have never known anyone as wonderful as the Lord Jesus. And to think that the sovereign God is exactly like him is the best news that we have heard. We give you thanks, our God, in the name of Jesus. Amen.