

Be Still and Know.

Text: 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 (Series B. 5th Sunday after Pentecost) Ps.130

Mark 5:39-42

They arrived at Jairus' house, where Jesus saw the confusion and heard all the loud crying and wailing..... He took her by the hand and said to her, ("Talitha, koum,") which means, "Little girl, I tell you to get up!" She got up at once and started walking around. (She was twelve years old.)

Prayer:

There is an Eastern legend about a Hindu woman whose only child died. Her grief and sorrow overwhelmed her to the point that she could do nothing but mourn the loss of her only child. So, she went to a holy man to ask for her child back. The holy man told her to go and obtain a handful of rice from a house into which death had not come.

If she could obtain just one handful of rice in this way, he promised that her child would be returned to her. She set off on her journey going from house to house, asking the question, *"Is all your family here around the table - father, mother, children - none missing?"*

But always the answer came back that there were empty chairs around each table where family members had once sat. As she continued on, her grief and sorrow softened as she found the cold finger of death had touched every family and that she was not the only one to grieve the loss of a loved one, death is universal.

I hardly need to say this with the recent heart rending news of children been killed by their own fathers. I hardly need to mention how the parents and family members felt as they heard the news that the life of a child had suddenly come to an end.

I think that most parents believe that they will leave this life before their children, and they hope they will never have to stand at the grave of one of their children. It comes as a shock when this doesn't happen. We have gathered on a number of occasions to say farewell to friends and members of St Ansgar's.

In the reading from Mark's Gospel today, we hear of a 12 year old girl, just beginning life with all the hopes of becoming a young woman, the wife of a loving husband, and a mother of her own children, suddenly stricken with some kind of incurable and fatal disease.

Her father, Jairus, is faced with the loss of his beloved little daughter. What can he do to defend her against the sting of death? What can he do to prevent the ache in his heart, as well as that of his wife, that comes with the death of someone so loved? With whom do you most identify in the Gospel reading today. There are plenty characters who have been stung by death.

There are the little girl's parents, Jairus and his wife, who would go to any length to see their little girl well again. There is a little girl whose life had been cut short. There are the confused disciples. There is the crowd wailing in Jairus' front yard. They don't know what to make of the comment that the little girl is not dead - only sleeping.

There is always a deep felt sorrow when someone young dies and the deepest feelings for the grieving family. One of the largest gatherings I have ever had was at the funeral of young person taken early in life. This occasion was no exception.

And of course, there is Jesus. In amongst all this sadness, the aching hearts, the loud crying and wailing, the tear soaked hankies comes Jesus speaking firmly and strongly – "*Talitha koum*" – "*Little girl, I tell you to get up!*" I asked which of these people do you relate to the most? I think that many of us relate to several of these characters in this divine drama.

- Maybe Jairus and his wife – death has stolen from you someone dear.
- Maybe you have begged God to help the sick and dying person as Jairus begged Jesus.
- Maybe you have felt the hopelessness and despair in the face of inevitable as the parents of this little girl.
- Maybe you can relate to the crowd gathered to support and help someone in their grief.

- Maybe you can relate to the relief and inner peace that comes from knowing that death does not have the last say, that as far as Jesus is concerned our departed loved one is only asleep.

Death is no more permanent than sleep is permanent. This is my belief. All who believe and trust in Jesus will wake to a bright new morning in heavenly Father just as we wait to a new day every morning only this time the new day will be something so good and so perfect beyond our widest dream.

Jesus took the little girl's hand and said, "*Talitha koum*". She opened her eyes and she stood up. He says to us when we close our eyes in death, "Old woman, old man, young man, little child, newly born infant, sinners, and not so sinners all who have left life on this earth, *"I tell you to get up"*. One day he will say that to us after we have closed our eyelids in death – *"I tell you to get up – arise to your first day in my heavenly kingdom."*

Death is an enemy. It isn't part of God's original plan that we have to face death. That came about as the result of sin. But Jesus came to put an end to the awesome power that death has to draw the curtain at the end of our life as if that is the end of us forever.

Jesus has assured us that we have forgiveness for our death-dealing-sinfulness and promised us a place in eternity. That is what encourages us as we say farewell to loved family members and friends. That's what helps us face our own death.

That's what helps us when death interrupts our lives, wrecks our happiness and fills our life with grief. We know that Jesus is waiting to take us by the hand and say to us, *"I tell you to get up" Be still and know the best is yet to come."*

A family on holidays was driving along in their car, windows rolled down, enjoying the warm summer breeze of the sunny day. All of a sudden a bee got through the window and starts buzzing around inside the car. A little girl, highly allergic to bee stings, cringes in the back seat. If she is stung, she could die within an hour.

"Daddy, daddy," she cries in terror, *"it's a bee! It's going to sting me!"* The father quickly pulls the car over to a stop, and reaches back to try to catch the bee. Buzzing towards him, the bee bumps against the front windscreen and the father traps it in his hand.

Holding it in his closed hand, the father waits for the inevitable sting. The bee stings the father's hand and in pain, the father lets go of the bee. The bee is loose in the car again. The little girl again panics, "Daddy, it's going to sting me!" The father gently says, "No Rebacca, it can't sting you anymore. Look at my hand." The bee's stinger is there in his hand.

Paul talked about the sting of death being removed in 1 Corinthians (15:55). He rejoices in the fact that the power of death to destroy us has been broken. *"Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?"*

Like the father in that story, Jesus says to us, "Look at my hands." There we see the mark of the nails - the sting of death and the sting of sin. On our behalf, Jesus took all the pain that death brings. He reduced death to a bee that has lost its stinger. That's the victory that Jesus won for us!

Someone said to me again just this past week that they doubted that they have been good enough to go to heaven. If ever that thought enters your heads, remind yourself of your baptism.

God made a promise to us that he will be with us through thick and thin, and has a place ready for us when the day comes us to leave this life. There can be no doubt about it, in my mind. The celebration of Eucharist is a prime reminder to us all be still and know God is with us.

Finally, here is a good story to finish with. A woman was diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. As she was getting her house in order, she called her pastor and asked him to come to her house to discuss some of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at her funeral service, what Scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in.

As the pastor prepared to leave, the woman suddenly remembered something else. "There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" said the pastor. "This is important?" the woman said. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The woman explained. "In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably say, "**Keep your fork.**"

It was my favourite part of the meal because I knew something better was coming – like smooth chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. "So, when people see me in that casket with a fork in my hand and they ask, "What's with the fork?" I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork. *The best is yet to come.*

In hope of eternal life be still and know,

The best is yet to come.

Amen.

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