

Now there may be some here who do not want to experience Christ in that way. Perhaps you are willing to settle for knowing Jesus as simply a great man, a teacher, and a healer. If that's all you want, you can easily stand apart from Him and pay your respects from a distance. But to see Jesus in the fullness of His glory, you have to have the kind of faith that Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] had. You have to walk with Him past the nay-sayers and continue to believe in the face of apparent hopelessness. You have to be willing to lose your job and your standing in society, maybe even your life, in order to demonstrate your faith.

But one thing you do not have to do is to keep the messianic secret, because now the secret is out.

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St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
Orange, Virginia

July 2, 2006

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Holy Communion for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, according to the Revised Three-Year Common Lectionary, Year B, 2006.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxviii (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 13:1, 2, 17-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. Mark 5:21-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> St. Mark 5:42-43 (RSV).

## SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER The Second Sunday after Easter<sup>1</sup> (Year II)

The Rev. Warren E. Shaw,<sup>2</sup> Supply Priest

### Lessons:<sup>3</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirteenth Chapter of the Fourth Book of Moses, called Numbers.<sup>4</sup>

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan [**KAY-nunn**], which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. ...

“And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan [**KAY-nunn**], and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes.

“So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob [**REE-hobb**], as men come to Hamath [**HAY-math**]. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman [uh-**HIGH-mun**], Sheshai [**SHEE-shy**], and Talmai [**TAHL-my**], the children of Anak [**AY-nack**], were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) And they came unto the brook of Eshcol [**ESH-kol**], and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol [**ESH-kol**], because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

“And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran [**PAY-runn**], to Kadesh [**KAH-desh**]; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed [**SHOWD**] them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak [**AY-nack**] there. The Amalekites [**AMM-uh-leck-ights**] dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites [**DGEB-you-sights**], and the Amorites [**AMM-uh-rights**], dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites [**KAY-nunn-ights**] dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak [**AY-nack**], which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the twenty-first Verse of the fifth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark.<sup>5</sup>

“... And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus [**DGEYE-russ**] by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall

our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” That, ladies and gentlemen, is faith.

Faith, you see, involves action. Faith involves commitment. Faith involves taking risks. And sometimes faith involves paying a very high price. It is much more than intellectual assent to an unproven proposition. Faith is an act of will, often in opposition to the intellect. And it is the only way to the knowledge of God.

As I was writing this sermon, a Latin phrase kept running through my head, and I could not for the life of me recall who originally said it. The phrase is “*Credo ut intelligam*”, which means “I believe in order to understand.” I looked through the few theology books that I saved when I retired and could not find the author of that phrase. But I did find this: St. Augustine agrees with it, Thomas Aquinas agrees with it, Søren Kierkegaard agrees with it. Karl Barth agrees with it.

And the author of Hebrews in the Bible agrees with it also. He talks about how Abraham by faith left his home, not even knowing where he was to go. He talks about how Moses by faith spurned his adoption by the daughter of the pharaoh and led the people out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. The writer goes through the role of patriarchs, prophets, kings and martyrs as examples of faith. And St. James also agrees when he writes that faith without works is dead. So I am in very good company when I say that faith is not an act of the intellect, but an act of will.

The messiahship of Jesus is a secret still today from those who do not believe. Still today, you cannot know Jesus as Messiah until you have committed yourself to Him. Only by faith can you know Him as Savior, Healer, Redeemer, Liberator, Giver of New Life, “the one ordained by God,” as St. Peter says, “to be judge of the living and the dead.” Only by faith can you understand who He really is.

So Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**], and presumably his wife, as well as the three disciples, believed in Jesus at least as a holy man and a prophet. But that was only the beginning. As the party approached the house, a group of people came to meet them with the news that the child had died. Even if Jesus was healer and a prophet, there was nothing He could do about that. But Jesus turned to Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] and said, “Keep on having faith.”

Now Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] could have given up at that point. He could have said, “It’s no use. I’m going to go and join the mourners.” Had he done so, he would probably have limited the damage to his reputation. But instead, he continued to believe in Jesus. Did he believe that Jesus could actually raise someone from the dead? Did he believe that Jesus was more than just a healer and a prophet? We cannot be sure, and I suspect that Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] himself was not really sure of what he was expecting when he walked past the mourners and went with Jesus into the house. But he knew that he still trusted Jesus.

His reward was two-fold. Not only did he receive his daughter back from the dead, he also came to a new and deeper understanding of who Jesus really was. His faith, in other words, led to understanding and not the other way around.

We in the Western world, children of the Enlightenment, heirs of rationalism, tend to think that understanding precedes and produces faith. But really, it is faith that leads to understanding, particularly when it comes to understanding God. Today’s Second Lesson is an illustration of that.

In the United States, on the Fourth of July, we celebrate another illustration of faith as an act of the will rather than an act of the intellect. The Declaration of Independence closes with these words: “With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives,

live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith [**SETH**] unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith [**SETH**] unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi (**TAHL-ih-thuh KOO-me**); which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “[I]mmediately the girl got up and walked (she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this....”<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Homily:**

There were many people in Biblical times who could heal the sick. But there was only One who could raise the dead. The raising of the dead is a function of the Messiah, and in today’s Second Lesson, Jesus performs that function. He performs it, however, in secret, which is consistent with St. Mark’s acceptance of what is called “the messianic secret.”

All through St. Mark’s Gospel, Jesus goes about doing messianic work but telling people not to tell anyone about it. He does that, apparently, because the popular understanding of messiahship was very different from His own. So when Jesus goes in to restore this little girl to life, He allows only five people to witness it. Everyone else is kept outside.

Jesus has already said that the child was not really dead but merely in a deep sleep, perhaps in a comma, as we might say today. In that case, to bring her to consciousness and restore her motor functions would be a great act of healing. As far as most of the people were concerned, that’s what had happened.

Only the five people who were allowed inside knew what had really happened, and Jesus told them not to tell. Of the five people who are permitted to witness the raising of the daughter of Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**], three are disciples; the other two are Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] and his wife.

Now why do you suppose the messianic secret was revealed to those five people and not to anyone else? The answer, in my judgment, is faith. These five people, as opposed to all the others, had demonstrated faith in Jesus. The three disciples had demonstrated faith by leaving behind their careers and following Jesus on His mission of preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus must have recognized greater faith in them than in the other disciples, because on more than one occasion he selected them to accompany him when the others were left behind.

Peter, it turned out, was the first to declare that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. James was the first of the Apostles to be martyred for his faith. John was the one who stood at the foot of the Cross when the others had fled. But what about Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] and his wife? Well, let’s look at that for a minute.

Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] was a prominent and respected man in his community, a ruler of the synagogue, in charge of the religious life of the village. The religious authorities in Jerusalem had nothing but contempt for this peasant rabbi, Jesus, who was, in their opinion, corrupting the people. The Sadducees saw him as a threat to their position in the power structure. The Pharisees said He was in league with the devil, and had not only criticized him but were beginning to plot against Him. But if Jesus was really a healer and a holy man, maybe even a prophet, He was worthy of honor and respect at the very least. So for Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] to recognize Jesus as a healer and a holy man took a lot of courage.

By coming to Jesus, falling at his feet and asking for his help, Jarius [**DGEYE-russ**] was challenging the leadership of the ecclesiastical structure of which he was a part and thereby jeopardizing his own position in it. That was a price that he was willing to pay in return for the life of his daughter.