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Title: Unsung Heroes: Jairus

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Scripture: [Mark 5:21-24, 35-43](#)

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The story of Jairus and his daughter is a story for those of us who don't have it all together. Which means, of course, that is a story for everyone. Except, maybe we aren't quite willing to admit it. It is too scary or maybe we just aren't quite ready to be that vulnerable yet, to admit that we don't have it all figured out. Perhaps we think that that

is an unacceptable option to the people around us, to admit our vulnerability.

Or perhaps life has thrown us into a situation where we have no choice but to be vulnerable. When our youngest Ava was a toddler, she had issues with croup, with that horrible coughing sound and restricted breathing. Hers was bad enough that we had to go to the emergency room. When your child is not feeling well and you are on your way to the emergency room, and I know many of you have been in that same place, you would do just about anything to make it go away and to make your child well. There is a feeling of helplessness or perhaps said another way, a feeling of vulnerability in that matter.

This is where we find today's Unsung hero, Jairus, and his daughter. In a fragile, vulnerable place.

"Jesus crossed the lake again, and on the other side a large crowd gathered around him on the shore." Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came forward. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded with him. "My daughter is about to die. Please, comes and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live." Mark 5:21-23

This is a scary moment for Jairus and his young daughter. Jairus is a synagogue leader. It's important to remember that all of Jesus' disciples are Jewish and most likely most of his early followers. We can suspect that while many of the synagogue leaders found Jesus' message attractive, not all of them did, and while we don't know how Jairus felt, we know he is a leader. He is one who is supposed to have it all together, to be competent all the time, to have answers. And yet, here he is, in front of a large crowd,

pleading at Jesus' feet for his daughter to be healed. It's about as vulnerable as it gets.

What do we do with these moments?

I've heard the story of a small art studio in New Orleans where the paintings cost either \$20 or \$1500. As you can imagine, people will often ask the artist, "why are some of these paintings \$20, and some of these paintings \$1500.?" The artist tells people that the \$20 paintings were painted by him, whereas the \$1500 paintings were finished by God." You can imagine the reactions this answer gets, with some people asking if God literally stepped in with a paintbrush and started painting. Here is what he says: "When a storm hit New Orleans, the Lord said to take the picture out into the storm. Take that picture, place it on the ground and allow the rain to beat against the canvas and new colors will be created when you take the picture into the storm." The artist stated, "The tears of God literally brings out new colors and hues as a result of being in a storm."

It's in our most vulnerable moments that the tears of God find their way to the canvas of our souls, so that a new picture, one painted by God, will be evident in our spirits and in our lives.

I believe that it is often in the moments when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable when we give up the pretense of having it all together or all figured out, or right. that God does God's best work. When our Unsung Hero for the day, Jairus, falls at the feet of Jesus, with the tears flowing, this is when God does God's best work. It's moments like this when we actually let God in, when we give God a place, we aren't always willing to give.

This continues to be a time of reflection and in many ways, a time of reckoning in our nation. In some ways, many in our nation are finally willing to fall at the feet of God and admit the sin of systemic and individual racism in our midst. We are taking a long look in the mirror, acknowledging that there is much work to do.

For too long, when it came to issues of race, those of us with privilege, including those in the church, had sought to either deny there was an issue, or we simply ignored it because it was simply too difficult to deal with. We didn't want to admit we had a problem. As Robin DiAngelo points out in her book, *White Fragility*, "*Individual whites may be against racism, but they still benefit from a system of that privileges white as a group. These advantages are referred to as white privilege, a concept referring to advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarity enjoyed by people of color in the same context.*"

But I sense something is different. Collectively, more and more people are willing to be vulnerable, to fall at the feet of Jesus, and to plead with him that something must change. We might just be willing to let God in when it comes to issues of race.

You may have heard the parable of a town that was situated right on the river. One day they noticed a person drowning in the river and they were lucky to be able to pull this person out of the river. They started to notice that every so often people would drift down the river and be drowning and the townspeople would have to go in and pull people out. After a while, the number of people coming down the river increased and soon they were busy desperately trying to pull people out of the river. Finally, someone shouts from below, maybe we should go up the river to see what is causing all of these people to drown in the river?" and then on cue, someone shouts, we are too busy pulling all of these people out of the river to leave."

Friends, it is long past time, on issues of race and many other issues, for people of faith to go up the river. That is the work of God's justice. To engage with and to struggle with the systems we have in our world.

I've been thinking about something Dan Heath wrote in his book *Upstream*, that ***every system is perfectly designed to get the results in gets.***"

Here is an example: We do a lot of great work collecting for food pantries. You are so generous and faithful with your gifts of food to the food insecure in this area. It is estimated that there are over 28,000 food insecure people in Hamilton County. Going upstream is not just bringing in food for food pantries but asking the question of why and how, in a community with the resources of this one, why that many people are food insecure.

We cannot have God's justice unless we address the systems that have caused the injustice in the first place.

To do so, we must become vulnerable enough to fall at the feet of Jesus. To let our guard down and to let the holy into our lives and the world. This is when God does God's best work.

We can't know if Jairus knew this or not, that in his own vulnerability, he was letting God in. You've probably figured this out, but the story of Jairus and his daughter is ultimately a resurrection story.

"...messengers came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?" But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid, just keep trusting."... Taking her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which

means young woman, get up." Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. Mark 5:35b-36, Mark 5:41-42a

Are you willing to fall at the feet of Jesus? To become vulnerable enough to do so.

God knows you. Perhaps when we look in the mirror and admit that we ourselves need to change, that the systems that have benefited us need to change, perhaps that is not the end of the world, rather it's just to end of the world that we have constructed for ourselves or the end of the world we have had forced upon us.

This is the moment when we can really let God in. And as Jairus shows us, when we let God in, when we fall at the feet of Jesus, that's when true life begins.

Will you pray with me?