

## Conference Call Service 1045 210627 – MESSAGE

How is it for you when you are interrupted?

When you're in the middle of something and out of the blue you're asked to stop what you're doing and do something else?

Or when you're trying to think something through and somebody or something distracts you?

Or when you're in the middle of telling a story, in full flow and you're stopped in your tracks by somebody drowning you out, or even worse, stealing your thunder and coming in with the punchline you'd been so skilfully leading up to?

I'm not sure that I was ever any good at dealing with such interruptions.

But I am certain that with advancing years, I'm a lot less good at handling such situations.

The two stories Mark tells us in this morning's reading have a lot to do with interruptions and how Jesus, the haemorrhaging woman with no recorded name and Jairus dealt with them?

Even the way Mark records them has the one story interrupting the other.

But first I'd like us to think about sandwiches.

I love bread.

We mainly buy ours from one of three places – two in Langport, The Bridge Canteen at the bottom of Bow Street down by the River Parrett or The Little Bakery on the corner of Bow Street and Parrett Close in the town centre and Bakery Roy-Al in Martock.

They're proper bakeries, each making a range of different breads and each making them deliciously.

Good enough to eat just as it comes – sliced at home or even hand-picked, chunk-by-chunk on the way home.

But a chunk or slice of bread gets even more interesting, irresistible, and delicious when put together with something between them – even if it's just butter.

The filling further enlivens the bread, and the bread gives life to the filling.

Together, they're so much more interesting and exciting than apart.

In this morning's reading, Mark makes a sandwich of the two stories he wants to tell.

They're both great stories but putting one between the beginning and the end of the other adds to both. It brings both more fully to life, makes both more interesting.

It draws attention to the one in the middle and brings a tangible tension to the one which has been interrupted which amplifies the tension within the story itself.

So, on to the stories themselves.

They begin as Jesus climbs out of the boat that has brought him from the other side of the lake where having healed a demon-possessed man he is urged to leave by those who are frightened and unsettled by all that has happened.

Given the circumstances of his departure, I think we can imagine that Jesus might have been unsettled by events and might have felt in need of some time for himself. Time to think things over, reflect on what had passed and to prepare himself for what might happen next.

But no sooner had he reached dry land than his progress is interrupted by a man whose little daughter is seriously ill and who wants Jesus to come and heal her.

Jairus, the father, is an official from a local synagogue.

It can't have been easy for him to come and seek help from Jesus, for Jesus was hardly a favourite of the religious establishment and in seeking Jesus out, Jairus might well have been putting his loyalty, reputation and livelihood on the line.

And also his pride, something so important to the head of Jewish families, which he casts aside as he falls, begging at the feet of this wandering teacher.

But parents, as we well know, will go to extraordinary lengths to, protect and save their children.

And Jairus risk-taking bears fruit.

However inconvenient such interruption might have been, Jesus responds positively without hesitation, and he, Jairus and a gathering crowd set off to meet the little girl.

Imagine the relief that must be flooding through Jairus' whole being.

Help was at hand for his daughter – the focus of all his thoughts and hopes and actions.

Imagine then how he must have felt when out of nowhere something happens to interrupt this vital, life-saving mission.

His daughter is now at even greater risk, all because someone had touched Jesus' robe and despite the crowd and the noise Jesus had felt the touch and turned back to look.

A second person, in desperate need falling at Jesus feet.

A woman, whose name we are not given.

A woman telling her story.

A woman who has also cast aside all feelings of pride and in desperation, come to believe that Jesus could cure the illness that had emptied her pockets, blighted her life and led to her being ostracised from her community.

Jesus is once more interrupted and once more he puts the need of others before his own needs and plans.

Not only this – through her persistent bleeding this woman is deemed unclean in Jewish law.

In touching, even associating with such a woman, Jesus himself would be deemed unclean – Jesus is openly flouting the laws and conventions of his time and culture.

Flouting them because the woman's need is greater, the person more important than deemed by conventional wisdom.

This woman had been waiting 12 years for help; her belief and courage compels her to interrupt and her life is changed beyond recognition and forever.

While all this is happening, the tension in Jairus must have been increasing exponentially.

How could this be happening!

Didn't Jesus realise just how ill his daughter was!

Didn't he realise the risk involved in taking time to talk to this woman!

Wasn't it clear how much more important his daughter's life was!

And then everything did fall apart.

The wheels came off his whole project.

His life was shattered.

Word came that it was all too late, his daughter was already dead.

Just imagine how Jairus must have felt.

Put yourselves in his shoes – imagine for a second how you would be feeling.

“Don't be afraid; just believe.”

Would those words be enough for you?

Would not all the built-up tension and frustration, anger at the woman and at Jesus, utter desolation and distress, would not all this explode within you, had you been wearing Jairus shoes?

“Don't be afraid; just believe.”

Would those words have been enough for you?

I doubt that I would have responded like Jairus, because Jairus gathered himself together.

Jairus retained the belief in Jesus that had brought him begging in the first place.

And with Jesus, he retraced his steps to his daughter's bedroom, to hear the words, “*Talitha koum.*” – “Time to get up little girl.”

and to see his daughter walking once more

In entering that little girl's bedroom Jesus is once more flouting convention and received wisdom. Just as the haemorrhaging woman was deemed unclean so too was a dead body and anyone approaching and touching a corpse would become unclean also.

In both these miracle stories we see action which is not just divine and spiritual but is also political. Jesus is leading a movement to usher in the kingdom of God, a movement which is to turn worldly values up-side-down.

A kingdom described beautifully but challengingly by R S Thomas in this poem.

***THE KINGDOM***

*It's a long way off but inside it  
there are quite different things going on:  
festivals at which the poor man  
is king and the consumptive is  
healed; mirrors in which the blind look  
at themselves and love looks at them  
back; and industry is for mending  
the bent bones and the minds fractured  
by life. It's a long way off, but to get  
there takes no time and admission  
is free, if you will purge yourself  
of desire, and present yourself with  
your need only and the simple offering  
of your faith, green as a leaf.*

On his journey ushering in the kingdom and showing us how life was made to be lived, Jesus responded positively to interruptions.

Because of the interruption of the haemorrhaging woman two miracles, not one happened on that day.

Think about it.

Rather than getting annoyed by interruptions why don't we try to find the time to pay attention:

when were interrupted by others,  
even when were interrupted by God trying to get through to us when were hell-  
bent on doing our own thing in our own time and in our own way.

This, for myself but also for you, I pray.

Who knows we may even help bring the kingdom here on earth just that little bit closer!

**Amen .**