

There Are Powers Beyond Us

July 2, 2006

Rev. Nathaniel R. Elliot, Jr

Dr. Carl Jung, sometime ago, writing, perhaps, out of the pain of his own life, and, or, the pain he witnessed in the lives of his patients, said: *There are powers beyond us for healing. They are the powers we call upon us to save us.*

Jairus and his un-named wife are undergoing an experience for which there can be no greater anguish: the fatal illness of a child. Could there possibly be a time when someone would be any more open to those *powers beyond us for healing* than the moment this couple was enduring? As any parent would do in a similar situation, they are willing to exhaust any and all possible avenues of treatment. There were physicians in those days to be sure, but they were few and far between, and their knowledge of medicine was very limited. There was no pediatric ICU to which the Medevac helicopter could take the comatose child. No 911 to call, but there was an unconventional Rabbi

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who had worked wonders in Capernaum, and to whom Jairus went.

Being a synagogue elder, Jairus more than likely was on hand to hear Jesus teach and then to see him heal the demon possessed man in the synagogue (Mk. 1:21-27). He had almost certainly heard of, or witnessed, Jesus' healing the paralyzed man in Capernaum, along with hearing of the *blasphemy* of forgiving the man's sins (Mk. 2:1-12). He must have either seen or heard of Jesus violating the Sabbath by healing the man with the withered hand (Mk. 3:1-6), or plucking the heads of grain on the Sabbath, another flagrant violation.

Jairus would also have been aware of the potential damage it would do to his good standing in the community to *fall at the feet of Jesus*, an act of submission and supplication, seeking help for his daughter. He knew the Scribes from Jerusalem had come down and confronted Jesus as being a sorcerer

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in league with Beelzebub (Mk. 3:20-22). Given the fact that prestige was one of the most important values in Palestinian society and that people fed on the honor and respect which others gave them, it was truly a courageous act on the part of Jairus.

My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands upon her, so that she may be made well and live (V. 23), Jairus tells Jesus and Jesus goes with him. It's interesting to note here that Jesus heals people on the way to do something else. He is not out *stalking* people to heal. He has no interest in being known as a *healer*, in fact, he repeatedly tries to discourage such notoriety, as he does in this incident.

So, what happens in the Gospels is that either the people who are ill, or the ones who love them, seek out Jesus. They don't wait passively to be found by him. Their faith is *initiating*. It is an *active, importunate, risk-taking* faith that is *not* inhibited by

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religious or cultural propriety as could have well been the case with Jairus. He could have hung back and sat on his faith, but instead he seeks out Jesus in the expectant trust that he *can* and *will* heal his daughter.

It is also worth noting in the story that there is no mention of the little girl having any faith at all. It's hard, sometimes, for people who are ill to have or sustain a faith, just as it is for those who are very close to them. Sometimes, it just hits to close to home. *That* is where and when the faith of the community comes in, and it is the essence of intercessory prayer. When the faith of one member of the fellowship seems to falter, there are those present to intercede on his or her behalf. And what do these intercessors do? They simply carry the person to the healing Lord in prayer and say to Jesus, *one whom you love is ill; come and touch them and they will be made well.*

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There *are* those of a certain mind-set who will say, *Oh, if only you had more faith.* If Jesus says anything about faith, it is that you don't need much of it. A mustard seed, need we be reminded, is the tiniest of seeds, and faith of equal size can move mountains into the sea (Mt. 17:20b) Jesus told his disciples.

In the story of Jairus and his daughter, there is another resuscitation which takes place besides that of the girl, that of Jairus himself. Jairus moves from having a faith to having a *living* faith.

What if Jairus had not taken this leap of faith? What if he had held back? We don't know for sure, but I have to wonder if something in Jairus would have died just as his daughter would have died. Would he himself have perished, not in the physical sense, but would he have experienced a *near life existence*, where his actual death would only have meant the closing of the door?

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Parishes, too, live and die and live again. The raising of the daughter of Jairus can symbolically be likened to the raising of a Parish from death. What would the spiritual landscape of the Christian world resemble if we as individuals, or parishes or dioceses, went after Jesus with the same intensity, and readiness and sense of immediacy as Jairus carried with him. What would *our own* lives resemble? I wonder about that.

And I wonder, too, when he got up to get his revived daughter a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, his hands quivering with joy, his mind reeling with disbelief, I wonder that Jairus must have known *the power beyond us, the mysterium tremendum* of which Paul would later write (I Cor. 15:22): *As in Adam all die, so all will be made alive in Christ.*

AMEN.