

**Jesus Overcomes Even Your Worst Nightmare**  
**Sermon on Mark 5: 21-23, 35-43**  
**Weekend of March 4, 2007**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**

**Introduction: What Is Your Worst Nightmare?**

Jesus quiets even our most dire fears, when he says: *Because I live, you also will live.* Amen!

Dear fellow Christians—whose minds Satan haunts with all sorts of evil that could happen:

What is your worst nightmare? ...Where to begin, eh?! But consider that for a moment. ...What's your worst nightmare?

Well, I have some nominations for you.... Flunking completely out of school—that would be pretty bad, wouldn't it? Or how about walking into work tomorrow morning, and being fired, right then and there? Bankruptcy – to the point of losing even your vehicle or your home – that would be nightmarish. Or how about getting accused of something really awful, losing all your friends, and maybe even ending up in serious legal trouble? Or some of the scariest words to you might be “terminal cancer”, or in a little more expanded form, “I'd give you, maybe, three to six months to live.”

Any of those things would be nightmarish. And I know, some of you have undergone them, and I sympathize with you. God's Word to us today contains another of this life's nightmarish propositions. But this Word from God also presents beautifully the one who resolves every one of our nightmares....

**Part One: Jesus Confronts Your Worst Nightmares**

God's Word to us today comes from Mark, chapter five. The specific verses are on the first inside page of your bulletin. Before we get there, though: just a little bit of background....

It's the middle part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is spending time in the northern district of Israel, in Galilee, especially in the area around the Galilean Lake. In fact, he has just crossed that lake to heal the man possessed by a legion of demons—remember that from a few weeks back?

And now we read—and this is God's Word to us today: ***Jesus again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake***—this time: southeast to northwest, some fifteen miles. And: ***a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.*** I mean: he could hardly get ashore without a crowd of what must have been many hundreds bunching up around him.

***Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there.*** Back then the local churches, the *synagogues*, had a man or a small group of men in charge of them. They really didn't have pastors. These men were more like small church councils. *Jairus* was one of the good men who served on one of those. His name, “Jairus”, means “he will enlighten” or “he will awaken”, and that's exactly what Jesus was going to do for one of *Jairus'* family members.

***Seeing Jesus, Jairus fell at his feet*** – begging! – ***and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."*** Later on in this account, we'll find out that *Jairus'* little daughter is twelve years old—old enough that her family had loved her for a dozen years, young enough she was not yet on her own—and maybe “out of sight and out of mind”. Luke's account tells us that this was also, tragically, *Jairus'* only daughter....

Now in the interest of being complete, I have to tell you: eleven verses of Scripture intervene here.... There's this woman who, for the same dozen years the little girl had been alive, was subject to bleeding. She crowded up to Jesus, touched his cloak, and got healed. When Jesus discovered her, he blessed her for her confidence in him and affirmed it. It all reminds us that Jesus was one busy fellow....

Anyway: While Jesus was still speaking with that woman, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. And Jairus experienced his worst nightmare. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "It's over. She's beyond recovery." And then the natural question: "Why bother the teacher any more?" since only God would be strong enough to do anything about death such as this....

What's your worst nightmare? ...Well, I have one last nomination for you. How about the words, "Your child has died"?—like what Jairus heard here. I know that no few of you have heard those words. I myself think that would probably be any parent's worst nightmare of all.

But that points up something.... Death: whether that of a cherished loved one, or our own death—death has to be the worst and final nightmare. Anything else—you know: you live to fight another day. But death, like this, is the end. Death is, at least, the final nightmare. And it has to rank as the worst....

## **Part Two: Jesus Overcomes Your Worst Nightmares**

Of course, that means that: if we could only conquer death, then really any other nightmare would also disappear easily enough. Let's see if the rest of this account gives us any hope toward that....

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."—probably a little more literally: *Don't ever be fearing; just keep trusting me!*

Now, Jesus did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. This was the first time Jesus singled out those three leaders among the Twelve. The next time would be his Transfiguration. And the final time would be in Gethsemane. And all of that ranks this account as a pretty important account in the life of Jesus. It also reminds us it's no sin to have an inner circle of leaders or friends, as he did....

Anyway: When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. And all of this is understandable. A twelve year old girl, the only daughter of her parents, had just died! Matthew's account tells us that flute players were there, which was customary—and it serves to emphasize again: the little girl really was dead.

Surprisingly, though, Jesus went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. They knew *dead*, when they saw it and heard it and felt it. But Jesus, of course, was underlining the truth that for a Christian death is like *sleep*—it is temporary; you wake up eventually; that makes death even pleasant for a Christian.

But were Jesus' words really true? I mean: how could he prove that death – finally, anyone's death – was only a temporary thing, like sleep? Well: After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.

And then: He took her by the hand – by the cold hand, by the motionless hand, by the lifeless hand. And said to her, "Talitha koum!"—in the original Aramaic: because these words are important, and this is an eyewitness account, and it really did happen. By the way, the words mean: "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"

And: **Immediately** – because Jesus’ words are so powerful they don’t have to take awhile to work! – **the girl stood up** – because her life had returned completely! – **and** she **walked around** – because she was now completely, entirely healthy!

So, what’s your worst nightmare? ...Well, either it’s not as bad – and final! – as death. Or your worst nightmare is death—your own, and that of your loved ones.

But that, of course, is not the biggest question of the day. The more important question is this: Who is going to help you with your greatest nightmare? Who is capable of keeping you coping with the death of a loved one? Who is capable of making you overcome your own death?

And there is no variety of answers to those questions. Jesus! ... is the only one who answers them all. It is Jesus with whom you will spend eternity in that place where, as the Bible says, *there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain*. It is Jesus whose voice will wake you to dwell in your heavenly home; as Scripture says: *A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out*. It is Jesus whom you confess when you say: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me*.

And that’s because it is Jesus who went face to face with death, and Jesus who went face to face with hell—which is the result of death, and Jesus who went face to face with sin—which is the cause of death, and he beat them all for you and for me!

And then we might even go on to ask: Would a Savior so grand – so good! – desert you ...midst flunking grades? ...or while unemployed? ...or when bankrupt? ...or when accused? ...or in pain? – Of course not!

### **Part Three: Jesus Inspires You to Overcome Your Worst Nightmares**

So, how are we going to react? Well, how did Jairus and family react? It says: **At this** – their daughter’s return to life after death! – **they were completely astonished**.

And aren’t we also? Isn’t this astonishing love—love that has the power to win your heart forever? Isn’t it astonishing love that God – the Almighty God himself! – cared about you to such a degree that he – Jesus! – entered your world to overcome your worst nightmares, so that you could always sleep peacefully in him?

Finally, rather surprisingly, we read: Jesus **gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat**. Why the *strict orders* not to tell? ...Well, news was bound to spread. After all, there was a whole crowd that found a little girl dead, but then saw that she had been restored to life. The news was going to spread. But Jesus didn’t seek to sensationalize the situation. He’d rather have had everyone listening to his message that he was the Savior.

And it’s still that message that he wants to get out. And whatever the reason he gave strict orders back then not to tell, he now gives us even greater encouragement to go and tell—to go and tell others that he is an astonishing Savior! So, let’s get busy doing it!

...Your kids – more than they need your hollering to keep them in line, more than they need your interest in their sports – they need this message about Jesus. Tell them! ...Your lapsed relatives – more than they need your niceness, and more than they need peace with you – they need this message about Jesus. Tell them! ...Your pagan coworkers and friends – more than they need your friendship, and more than they need your tolerance for their sins – they need this message about Jesus. Tell them!

After all, they’re going to die, too. And no one can rescue them from that – and no one can rescue you from that – besides our blessed Savior Jesus. Amen!

Jesus assures us: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Amen!*