

Thomas R. Cook  
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota  
8:00 and 10:00 a.m. Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist  
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost; July 1, 2018

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## “Love – Not Fame”

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Scripture: Mark 5:21-43; 6 Pentecost B (Proper 8B) RCL

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There are parts of this story from Mark's gospel that are really hopeful but also very... confusing and difficult, and I guess I might say it best like this: I can tell you where singer Jennifer Lopez and former New York Yankee 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman Alex Rodriguez had lunch in New York City last Friday (it was at Casa Lever on Park Avenue). I can tell you that the numbers tattooed on Angelina Jolie's upper left arm indicate the latitude and longitude of the birthplaces of her children (Cambodia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Namibia, and France) and also her estranged husband, Brad Pitt (Oklahoma). I can tell you that Donald Trump was born in the Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in New York City on June 14, 1946 and that his middle name is “John.” I can tell you that. I can tell you so much stuff that might really matter to you or it might not matter at all. But, according to Jesus, I am not supposed to tell you... that he raised a little girl from the dead.

It didn't work though, did it? Jesus command, I mean. Even though Jesus “strictly ordered” that relieved family of one lucky little girl that no one should know

what had happened to bring her back around, it didn't work, because here we are two thousand years later still talking about it in church this morning like its one of the most natural things in the world. *'Hey, did you hear what went down at Jairus' house when his little girl nearly died? Somebody even said she did die. And that Jesus guy showed up, and she came out and sat down for lunch like nothing had ever happened.'*

Don't tell anybody about what happened that day? You might as well ask People Magazine not to publish the latest photos of Kim Kardashian. You might as well ask the New York Times to stop reporting on the President. How can you ask people not to talk about someone raised them from the dead? My goodness, enterprising TV preachers have been cashing in on that sort of stuff for decades now, spreading it out all over the airwaves coast to coast and around the globe for any and everybody to see. How could Jesus even ask that no one be told of such a miraculous event?

Well, perhaps it is because the miracle worker isn't looking for a boost in his image. Perhaps it's because the well-being of the family and that little girl was really what was at the heart of the matter. Perhaps Jesus strictly ordered that no one should know exactly what happened, because he didn't want People Magazine or the New York Times in his face or in theirs.

You know, I feel for Jairus. Those who have been given the privilege and burden of parenthood often find they play the fool because of love. From the time our children come into the world, we confront the possibility that they can leave it before we do, that illness and accidents happen, that we might fail in our responsibilities, that “happily ever after” is usually reserved for fairy tales and Disney films. But when we are well and our children are not, we would do anything to make it different. That’s why Jairus comes to Jesus in the first place. He has no other business doing so. Jairus is a leader of the synagogue, an important Jew, not likely to care much for Jesus, who, for all Jairus knows, really is just a wandering preacher and trouble-maker, probably trying to make a name for himself. But then his daughter grows ill, and he has heard the rumors of Jesus’ ability to heal. So in hope, in love for his daughter, and probably in desperation as well, he gives himself over to the possibility that Jesus may be more than some religious wannabe. Any help at this point... he’ll take it. So Jairus risks public exposure, ridicule, loss of standing in his religious community, all in the hope that Jesus can help. And Jesus does. And his daughter is made well; even, some say, she is raised from the dead.

Why didn’t Jesus bring the girl out before the adoring public and have his fifteen minutes of fame? Why not tell the story to everyone who would listen? Why not get on the first century version of the evening news and let all the countryside see what had been done? I have to believe it is because Jesus was moved first and

foremost by love: a father's love for his daughter, and his own love for us, for people. Jesus often asked people to remain quiet about these miraculous events because they weren't first intended as... "miraculous events". They were intimate moments in the real lives of real people with real burdens and real feelings. We hear these stories for the hundredth time and too easily forget the deep emotions, the hope and hopelessness, the elation, even the fear that surround them. A girl has died, and her father is beside himself in grief.

Yet Jesus didn't go to Jairus' home to gain status as a miracle worker. He is there to do what he has done all along: to somehow, some way reveal that the power of God is not absent from a troubled world, but present, coming into the world in ordinary times and places, not always as we might wish, but present just the same. Jesus healed Jairus' daughter for the sake of love, but even then there were so many other children, so many other hurting people. With so many others to whom he could not go, others he could not heal... really, would he seek to make a spectacle of love?

I'll tell you what I believe is worth telling in this story. It isn't that Jesus takes away all our troubles. And think about it... even Jairus' daughter had to grow up and eventually face all the challenges of living... and dying. The message can't be that Jesus will keep us from confronting illness and death, if only we have enough faith.

People of faith are confronted all the time by the realities of life's limits. It isn't that Jesus works for some people and fails others. I believe the message is this: Live faithfully. Look for God's power coming into the world; ask for God's help. Take advantage of the time given to us. Love those we have been given to love. Don't hold too tightly to life, for life is precious and vulnerable. Rather live and love now... in all the moments we are given. Live in faith and in hope that God is working to make all things well, even though not all things may be as we might hope. Still... hold to hope and to love.

Yes, for a time Jairus had his daughter again, but we know not what challenges confronted this family even a few days down life's road after Jesus had gone. We do know that, for a time, they saw the power of God at work in the world, not just through a momentary miracle, but through the eternity that is love. That is a good reason to still tell the story... to get some glimpse at Jesus and the eternity that is love.