

Literary comparisons and contrasts in Mark 5:21–43

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This article examines a number of comparisons and contrasts in Mark 5:21–43, stories of two different kinds of healing that took place one morning when Jesus returned to Capernaum from the region of the Gerasenes (Mk 5:1, 21). The interlocking stories of the woman with the constant issue of haemorrhage and the restoration to life of the gravely ill and then dead daughter of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, invite literary and canonical examinations. The article also briefly discusses the significance of the unnamed groups of characters in the stories and compares the complementary versions of the stories amongst Matthew, Mark and Luke. The two miracles exhibit different aspects of Jesus' amazing power and contribute to the ongoing portrayal of Jesus in Mark as the Son of God (Mk 1:1).

Literêre vergelykings en kontraste in Markus 5:21–43. Hierdie artikel ondersoek 'n aantal vergelykings sowel as verskille in Markus 5:21–43 soos blyk uit die verhale van twee verskillende gevalle van genesing wat een oggend tydens Jesus se terugkeer uit die gebied van die Geraseners na Kapernaum plaasgevind het (Mark 5:1, 21). Die onderlinge verhale van die vrou wat aan bloedvloeiing gely het en van die genesing van die ernstige siek en later afgestorwe dogtertjie van Jairo, een van die raadslede van die sinagoge, leen dit tot 'n literêre en kanonieke ondersoek. Die artikel bespreek ook kortliks die beduidende betekenis van die ongeïdentifiseerde groepe mense in albei verhale. Die verskillende weergawes van die verhale soos in Matteus, Markus en Lukas opgeteken, word ook bespreek. Hierdie twee wonderwerke openbaar die verskillende aspekte van Jesus se verstommende mag en dra by tot die volgehoue uitbeelding van Hom in Markus as die Seun van God (Mark 1:1).

Introduction

This article continues my earlier work on Mark 5:21–43, a passage in which Jesus recognises that faith draws power from him when the woman in the crowd with the ongoing discharge of blood touches him. Shortly thereafter, he demonstrates his power over death and his ability to command life to return to a little girl (Branch 2013). Both healings are miracles.¹ Both add to the documentation that Mark provides in his gospel's opening statement that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1; Branch 2013:1). Miracles dominate the first half of Mark, and the Passion Story prevails in the second half of that gospel (Spivey, Smith & Black 2007:86). The restoration of life to Jairus' daughter serves as a transition to the raising of Jesus from the dead.

This article employs literary and canonical methodologies. A literary approach involves looking at character, conflict, diction, point of view, setting and time and plot (see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008). This article primarily looks at elements of character in the interlocking stories. Mark 5:21–43 begins with the desperate request of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, to Jesus to come and lay hands on his daughter who is dying. Jesus agrees, but is interrupted on the way by a woman who touches him from behind and is healed. She likewise is desperate. This interruption – a story within a story – is called an intercalation.²

1. Other doublets are not examined in this article, but also provide interesting comparisons. Mack (1988:216) sees a structure of doublets in miracles in Mark. Consider these examples:

Stilling the storm (4:35–41)	Walking on the sea (6:45–51)
Healing the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20)	Healing the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22–26)
Healing of Jairus' daughter (5:21–43)	Healing of the Syrophenician's daughter (7:24b–30)
Healing of the woman with haemorrhage (5:25–34)	Healing of the deaf-mute (7:32–37)
Feeding of the 5000 (6:34–44)	Feeding of the 4000 (8:1–10)

2. Mark seems to enjoy this sandwiching of stories and uses the technique frequently (e.g. see Mark 3:22–30; 6:7–30; 11:21–25; 13:5–27; 14:1–11; 14:18–25; 14:53–72; Boring & Craddock 2004:112). Similarly, Matthew's and Luke's accounts (Mt 9:18–26; Lk 8:41–56) are intercalations.

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In these interlocking stories, Jesus fulfils the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4: 'He took our infirmities' (see Spivey *et al.* 2007:55). The miracle stories in Mark focus on faith – whether it is the faith of one individual for herself or the faith of another individual for someone else (Powell 2009:89; see Mk 5:34; 10:52; 2:5; 7:29; 9:23). The object of faith in the New Testament is Jesus. Jairus' action expresses faith that Jesus can heal his gravely ill daughter, and the action of the woman in the crowd expresses faith that, by merely touching a part of Jesus' clothes, she can be healed. Her action draws healing from Jesus. Her healing differs on several levels from others in the biblical text, for example, Jesus did not initiate the encounter, Jesus and the woman did not face each other until after the healing and the healing occurred because it drew power from Jesus.³

In a canonical approach, a pericope is considered in its final (i.e. canonical) form. Furthermore, the community of faith to which a text is addressed, or under whose aegis it took shape, is recognised (cf. Hill & Walton 2000:575). Scholarship generally agrees that the Gospel of Mark was written to the churches in Rome and to a Gentile world (Barker 1995:1489).⁴ On two individual levels, the stories illustrate the results of faith directed toward Jesus.

Taking a literary approach, this article acknowledges literary elements like tone, tension, point of view and diction, but it concentrates on plot and character. For instance, the request of Jairus produces tension: Can Jesus heal his daughter, or will he be humiliated publicly? Similarly, the story's tone toward the woman during the confession of her illness and her verification of her sudden healing is favourable because of her humility and truthfulness (Mk 5:33). However, since Mark provides many details about Jairus and the woman, and emphasises their suffering as he tells their stories, this article dwells on characterisation and plot. It looks at their stories and analyses how they add to the continuing character development of Mark's portrayal of Jesus. Because the stories of Jairus and the woman with the haemorrhage interlock, the woman and Jairus⁵ invite a natural literary comparison and present intriguing research possibilities. Firstly, I shall consider some differences and then some similarities.⁶

3.Spivey *et al.* (2007:197–198) likewise note that Jesus did not intend to heal the woman in the crowd, whom they call the woman with the haemorrhage.

4.An investigation of the debate on the date and place of writing of Mark is outside the scope of this article.

5.Scholars debate the meaning of the name Jairus. Cook (1981:232) argues that it means 'he will awake'. This is significant and prophetic, for the daughter is awakened. Additionally, Jesus may be making a pun on Jairus' name when he says the girl is sleeping (Mk 5:39). Another view is that the name Jair was that of a sub-tribe that had settled on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. It may also be a local name (Carrington 1960:119). Translating it as 'he enlightens', Miller (2004:54) sees Jairus' name as describing his struggle as a father between fear and faith regarding his daughter's illness and death.

6.Beavis (2010), in her article, also utilises this approach by providing similarities between Jephthah's daughter and Jairus' daughter.

Similarities and differences between Jairus and the woman in the crowd

Differences

Jairus, a synagogue ruler	The woman in the crowd
Holds a lofty position in society	Portrayed as an outsider
Is easily recognised and known	Probably mingles somewhat disguised; may wear layers of clothing
Ritually clean	Ritually unclean, impure ⁷
As a prominent man he is undoubtedly sought after	As one ritually unclean, she is excluded from society ⁸
Synagogue official	No official position in society
Apparently healthy	Undoubtedly weakened by her chronic condition ⁹
Alive, energetic, mobile	Possibly dying because of her prolonged illness
Male	Female
Named	Unnamed
Speaks	Her thoughts and words are recorded and summarised
Approaches Jesus face to face ¹⁰	Approaches Jesus from behind ¹¹
Urgently seeking healing for the illness, probably sudden, of his daughter	Urgently seeking healing for a prolonged illness in adulthood ¹²
Loves his daughter ¹³	No mention is made of loving relationships
A leader in Capernaum	A person without status
Seeks healing for another	Seeks healing for herself and is the only woman in the New Testament to do so
Someone with a large home	Perhaps homeless
Someone with a family	The text makes no mention of her family
Access to marital relations	Her condition prevents her from having marital relations
Surrounded by family and servants	Apparently friendless and unaccompanied
Asks Jesus to lay hands on the girl	The woman touches Jesus' clothes ¹⁴
Wealthy	Probably penniless ¹⁵
Employs messengers and mourners	Has no attendants

7.Medically speaking, such a chronic condition as an ongoing menstrual flow suggests the woman was anaemic. Her condition requires constant work: she must frequently change her garments and wash them. For the symptoms of anaemia, see National Institutes of Health, (n.d.).

8.Powell (2005:67) correctly notes that the story leaves unaddressed the woman's status as unclean according to the law and any implications it may have on Jesus. It also leaves unaddressed the implications of Jesus' action of touching the dead girl. However, Jesus is never charged with uncleanness, probably primarily because there is no evidence of the conditions of the two when touched: a bloody discharge and death.

9.Diseases and chronic conditions, and the frequent failure of medical science and its practitioners are well-documented in the Bible and in literature of the Greco-Roman world (see *Harper's Bible Dictionary* 1985:222). The Bible, as in the stories of the healing of the woman in the crowd and raising of Jairus' daughter, and the outside accounts in the Greco-Roman world at times, share this pattern: a person has a hopeless condition or an incurable disease that cannot be helped by medical science; this person seeks a healer who accomplishes the healing in the name of a deity; acclamations of astonishment follow (see Achtemeier 1985:222).

10.Levine sees similarities between the centurion and Jairus (Mt 8:5–13; 9:18–28). Both came as supplicants to Jesus to heal a younger and weaker person who could not come (Levine 1996:394–395).

11.Spivey *et al.* (2007:197–198) make these interesting observations: if the miracle of the woman's healing happened without Jesus' intent, there is a sense that it occurred to Jesus as well as to the woman, for indeed Jesus seems surprised and says that he felt power leave him.

12.Powell (2005:70) cites three common remedies prescribed for healing in the ancient Near East: drinking a goblet of wine with a powder, a sudden shock and eating Persian onions cooked in wine.

13.Levine (1996:397) offers this observation, which could be found quite profound: the synagogue ruler has a daughter, and likewise, Jesus is a ruler's son.

14.Employing a skilful play on words, Gaiser (2010:11) observes that healing comes from being in touch with Jesus.

15.The healing story of the woman in the crowd highlights someone 'on the edge of society for whom normal medical practices are ineffective or too expensive' (Gaiser 2010:10).

Approaches Jesus openly	Approaches Jesus surreptitiously
Exits the text completely astonished	Exits the text emotionally confident, complimented, ¹⁶ permanently healed, placed in a new family, and restored to society

Although Jairus and the unnamed woman are adults, perhaps roughly the same age and residing in the same community, there is no indication that they knew each other. Instead there are clues that their differences – he a wealthy and influential ruler, and she an unclean and probably poor outcast – indicate that they moved in different social and economic circles. Their interlocking stories present no clue of any interlocking in their lives. Their point of meeting is their point of need: Jesus.

Similarities

Jairus and the woman share similarities. Their stories emphasise touch (Mt 5:27, 30, 31, 41): the woman touches Jesus' clothes from behind without his knowledge or volition; Jesus touches the dead girl. Both encounters do not render Jesus unclean¹⁷ – indeed because there is no evidence! Instead of uncleanness flowing to Jesus from the woman, healing flows to the woman from Jesus (Gaiser (2010:12). Instead of death contaminating Jesus, the child lives and is ready to eat (Branch 2013).

Both Jairus and the woman in the crowd approach Jesus and kneel. These actions express homage and worship.¹⁸ Jesus bestows his compassion and power on both a rich man and a poor woman (Willson 2012). Both are members of Israel's covenant community. Both interrupt Jesus. Both become part of the crowd accompanying Jesus to Jairus' house.¹⁹ Both are desperate.²⁰

Each exhibits faith.²¹ They express faith differently, however.²² Each is courageous. Each states personal needs before Jesus

16.The compliment *daughter*, an endearment, suggests that Jesus accepted her as she was, in spite of the way she received her healing (Powell 2005:74).

17.For a more thorough investigation of uncleanness and purity, see Branch 2013. In that article, I mention the insight of Mathew (2000:104) who notes that, when Jesus touches the leper (Mk 1:40–45) and the leper becomes clean, Jesus' presence spreads purity and Jesus 'turns impurity into purity'. In addition, Garland (1996:55) sees the reason why Jesus does not become impure as 'the divine dimension' in Mark's prologue, notably that Jesus speaks with authority, drives out evil spirits and evil spirits obey him (1:27).

18.Mark 1:40 recalls an earlier incident involving healing: a man with leprosy kneels before Jesus. Jesus accepts kneeling, an attitude of worship, without rebuke or reprimand. Perhaps Jairus knew of this.

19.The woman mingles with the crowd. Loader (2007) offers insights on the crowd – observations that add to an understanding of groups of unnamed participants in biblical stories that serve as bystanders and characters. These bystanders make a story believable. Combining imagination and scholarship, Loader (2007:1–6) writes that the people of Capernaum include the unemployed, those looking for work in the harvest, an occasional Roman soldier and more frequently a Roman tax collector, and farmers afraid of a possible scarcity in the upcoming harvest. Loader (2007:3) notes that, whilst people may seem happy, 'there is also a lot of resentment. Those men waiting around for work at the market are clearly quite desperate. You wonder how their families make ends meet. The other day you heard the scandal that the wife of one of them had turned to prostitution to survive. People had nowhere to go. There was some help organized by the people who ran the synagogue, but it depended on gifts and donations. There were no government welfare agencies.'

20.Jairus' urgency reflects a frantic search for help, for his little daughter is not yet dead, but is near death (Walters 2012:204).

21.Reading in a canonical sense, the concepts of faith link Jesus and Paul. Indeed, Paul arguably builds on Jesus' statements like that in Mark 5:34: 'Your faith has healed you.' Similar statements occur in Mark 10:52, Matthew 9:22 and Luke 7:50, 8:48 and 17:19. A statement of faith from Paul is found in 1 Corinthians 13:2: 'a faith that can move mountains.' For a link between Jesus and Paul regarding faith, see Pao 2011:321.

22.Spivey *et al.* (2007:197–198) offer this interesting observation: the healing of the woman makes the implicit point that belief in Jesus is actually faith in the

and an attentive audience. Each receives healing from Jesus, but is forced to wait: the woman for many years and Jairus for agonising minutes, whilst Jesus interacts with the woman. Her action is both forward (because she 'takes' healing from him) and arguably selfish (because whatever and whomever she touches becomes likewise unclean and must be separated from society).

Now let us pause, as the narrative does, and consider the delay from Jairus' perspective. Jairus says nothing during Jesus' interaction with the interrupting woman, but we readers and hearers are allowed to imagine his emotions. Undoubtedly 'panic and frustration must fill his heart', Walters (2012:205) comments. Jairus realises that speed is essential, for his beloved girl is dying! Yes, a delay occurs, and word comes that the child is dead. His fatherly heart must fail him in despair. Yet, that is not the end of the story.

Now let us continue with more similarities binding the two supplicants. The number 12 joins them: Jairus' daughter is 12 years old, a child emerging into young womanhood. The woman has spent 12 vital years of her adult life with an unstoppable flow of blood. Similarly, the word *daughter* connects them. Jairus' daughter needs healing. Messengers come to Jairus informing him his daughter has died. Jesus calls the healed woman 'daughter'. In addition to being the only woman in the New Testament to seek healing for herself, this woman is also distinguished as being the only woman to be called, by the endearment, 'daughter' by Jesus.²³ Perhaps the endearment warms her heart, for the story lacks mention of her parents. Perhaps they are dead or have abandoned her. Perhaps Jesus deliberately calls her daughter to show that she, like Jairus' daughter, has someone looking after her too – someone equally concerned with her welfare.

Both receive discouraging advice: the woman from her physicians and Jairus from his messengers (Powell 2005:69). Both see Jesus as a last resort. Both are desperate: Jairus because his daughter, whom he loves, is dying and the woman because of her chronic condition. Both had heard about Jesus.²⁴ Both obey Jesus: Jairus obeys by evidently

power that works through Jesus rather than in Jesus himself. They (Spivey *et al.* 2007:198) note that resuscitation is this: a person receives life again, but must die. Resurrection differs in that it does not entail another death.

23.The Book of Ruth offers insights on the use of the endearment 'daughter' in Israel. In chapter 2, two people in separate instances honour Ruth, a Moabitess, but convert to Israel's faith on the same morning by calling her daughter. They are Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, and Boaz, the owner of the field in which Ruth gleaned (Rt 2:2, 8). For Naomi, the term may well signify the transition to a family status equal to that of blood. For Boaz, the term carries with it his protection for he further instructs Ruth to glean only in his fields and amongst his servant girls. He commands his field hands not to touch her and to let her have water whenever she wishes (Rt 2:8–9). Boaz, by doing this publicly for all around to hear, puts his protection on Ruth. Jesus does the same with this powerful, tender word to the woman in the crowd (for further insights on this, please see Branch 2012). As mentioned there, the endearment is non-erotic, yet allows for an expressive tenderness (Cotter 2001:59). Jesus acknowledges the intimate, personal nature of the woman's need and of the healing she received through her faith. The risen Jesus called his disciples 'children', which is another endearment (Jn 21:5).

24.Arguably what they had heard was earlier stories about Jesus. Mark 1:21–28: Jesus drives out an evil spirit; 1:40–45: Jesus heals a man with leprosy; 1:29–34: Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law and others; 2:1–12: Jesus heals a paralytic; 3:31–34: Jesus reorients the definition of family around him; 4:35–41: Jesus calms a storm; 5:1–20: Jesus heals a man with a legion of demons.

choosing not to fear and to believe, and the woman obeys, because she departs in peace. Both direct their faith toward Jesus.²⁵ Their hopeless situations lead each to turn to Jesus on the same morning. 'Both eventually end up at the feet of Jesus (vv. 22, 23), where finally all are equal', Gaiser (2010:10) writes.²⁶

A comparison and contrast between the woman in the crowd and Jairus' daughter

Woman in the Crowd	Jairus' Daughter
Unnamed	Unnamed
Suffered her infirmity for twelve years	Twelve years old
A mature woman	A child on the cusp of womanhood
Suffering from a chronic illness	Suffering from seemingly a sudden illness
Healed instantly	Raised instantly from the dead and healed
Her problem seems to be ongoing menstrual flow	Age 12 is the normal time for a girl to begin her monthly periods
Sought healing for herself ²⁷	Her father sought her healing
Consulted doctors	No mention of doctors
Desperate for healing	Her father was desperate for her healing ²⁸
Mark summarises her direct speech	No direct speech
Inability to have sexual relations because of her condition	Purity stressed; she's called a child and maiden (Mk 5:39–41, 41–42) ²⁹
No known family or attendants	Surrounded by parents who love her and servants
Poor; she has spent all her money	The daughter of affluent and influential parents
Restored to the community	Restored to her family
Called 'daughter' by Jesus	Described as the daughter of Jairus Endearingly called 'lamb' by Jesus ³⁰
Given a new family centred on Jesus ³¹	Returned alive to her family ³²
Given new life	Given life again
Unclean because of chronic illness	Unclean because of death
Seemingly alone in the world	Seemingly the only child of Jairus and his wife

25. Some commentators talk about a combination of superstition and faith, especially for the woman (see English 1992:114). I agree with Miller (2004:59) who finds claims of magic or belief in magic as unconvincing.

26. Beavis (2010:62) sees the raising of Jairus' daughter as a 'radical revision' of the familiar story in Judges of Jephthah and his daughter and consistent with a similarity between Jonah 1:4–14 and Mark 5:35–41. I do not agree that Mark used the Jairus story to revise the Jephthah story, but do agree that the Mark story highlights Jesus' power over death.

27. In an earlier article (Branch 2013) healing is discussed in more detail. The Talmud addresses the woman's condition with 11 remedies. It must have been a common condition (Barclay 1956:128). Perhaps Mark makes fun of the doctors (see Barclay 1956:128). The Talmud prescribes tonics and astringents and even advocates carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in the summer and in a cotton rag in the winter (Ogilvie 1975:104). Yet another cure was carrying a barley corn, which had been found in the dung of a she-ass.

28. Common diseases in ancient Palestine were malaria and typhoid, both characterised by a high fever (Packer & Tenney 1980:460). Perhaps Jairus' daughter was afflicted in this way. Gaiser (2010:8) notes that Jairus uses a word for healing as being saved. This concept develops in Mark to include the kind of saving Jesus accomplishes on the cross.

29. I am indebted to Beavis (2010:57) for this keen insight.

30. Walters (2012:206) points out the interesting translation possibility of *'Talitha, cumi'* [Little girl, arise] (Mk 5:41). 'The Aramaic is important, as there is a fine double meaning hidden away in it: The same word that denotes a young child – Talitha – also stands in the Targum for "lamb". Jesus takes her hand and says, "Lamb, arise"', Walters (2012:206) writes. John the Baptist describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

31. In Mark 3:31–34, Jesus re-defines his family as 'whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother'.

32. The story of the return to life of the daughter of Jairus shows God's power to raise the dead (Spivey *et al.* 2007:198).

She touches Jesus' clothes	Jesus takes her by the hand ³³
Jesus commands her to go in peace	Jesus commands her to get up
Jesus compliments her for her faith	Jesus commands others to give her something to eat

Although the woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus' daughter do not interact formally in this story, readers are left to wonder if they do meet at a later stage. I think they probably do, for it would be natural for the family of Jairus and the woman to want to talk amongst themselves about their encounters with Jesus, especially after Jesus' death. The Marcan account illustrates that Jesus handles their healings in an individual way. Encounters with Jesus – whether for healing or teaching and whether with the living or with the dead – are not stereotyped or based on a formula. The stories of the woman with the haemorrhage and the 12-year-old girl serve to verify Mark's opening statement that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1) by showcasing aspects of Jesus' power over a long-term illness and death. They highlight different aspects of his ability to heal and of his compassion. It would seem that human need triumphs over any assumed right of gender, rank or age.

A comparison of secondary characters: Jesus' disciples, the messengers to Jairus, the professional mourners at Jairus' house

The intercalation stories of Mark 5:21–43 also invite a comparison or contrast of their secondary characters: the disciples who accompany Jesus, the messengers from the house of Jairus and the mourners at Jairus' house. The messengers and professional mourners are static characters in that they do not show change or growth (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:14). Arguably, Peter, James and John, the three disciples Jesus took with him into the home of Jairus and into the bedroom of the dead girl, grew as characters for the text records that all in the room 'were completely astonished' with the girl's resuscitation (Mk 5:42; see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:15).

However, the portrait in Mark is not altogether favourable toward the team of 12 disciples. For instance, they received private instruction from Jesus regarding his parables (Mk 4:34), but also panicked during a storm on the lake (vv. 35–41). Williamson (1983:102) writes that, in this unit of Mark, faith recognises Jesus as the Son of God (1:1), and the disciples lacked that kind of trust. He (Williamson 198:102) says that an appropriate paraphrase of Mark 4:40, after Jesus calmed the ferocious storm, is this: 'Why are you afraid? Do you not yet trust God, whose rule is present with me?'

No doubt, the disciples pondered these questions for they indeed serve as an appropriate segue to the amazing events

33. Both encounters emphasise touch. Gaiser (2010:8) points out that touch involves physical contact, interaction on a personal level, a sharing of emotions and a mutual understanding.

of Mark 5: the healing of the demonic and the woman with the haemorrhage, and the resuscitation of Jairus' dead daughter. However, perhaps their level of reflection was too shallow for, at the end of chapter 5, they fail to affirm Mark's opening assertion that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1):

Jesus' disciples (Mk 5:31)³⁴

Accompany Jesus³⁵

Hear Jairus' plea

Probably try to shield Jesus from the press of the crowd

Express incredulity when Jesus stops and asks who touched Him

Seem embarrassed at Jesus' seeming stupidity in asking who touched Him

Seem to ridicule or rebuke Jesus for his question³⁶

Point out how many people surround Him

Seem not to understand Jesus' ability to feel power leave Him³⁷

Messengers sent to Jairus (Mk 5:35)

Come to Jairus as Jairus, Jesus, and the crowd walk toward Jairus' home

Abruptly announce the death of Jairus' daughter

Seem to express no compassion for the father

Simply do a job curtly and without sensitivity

Seem not to understand Jairus and his love for his daughter

Professional mourners in Jairus' home (Mk 5:38–40)

Loudly do their job

Know the girl is dead

Ridicule Jesus

Seem to have payment in mind

Seem to have no prior knowledge of or permanent attachment to the girl

Secondary characters are often overlooked in biblical studies, because they are often unnamed, do not speak and are referred to in bulk as a large group. In short, they are hard to handle and a reader skips over them, heading instead to a named character who speaks. However, biblical narration abounds with anonymous characters. This pericope spends five verses on them, surely a significant contribution. As such, they deserve mention and analysis.

The unnamed disciples, members of the crowd and professional mourners give the interlocking stories validity by showing diverse people and the public ministry of Jesus.³⁸ In addition, they serve as literary tools that help a story move

quickly. The text identifies them in terms of function and place in society. Their anonymity binds them in a literary way to the two unnamed major characters in the pericope: the unnamed woman with the haemorrhage and the unnamed girl who is at the point of death. Arguably, the function or status of an unnamed character or characters gives a clue toward why a character or characters are in a story in the biblical text. The words and actions of unnamed characters sway events (Branch 2004:186). The unnamed woman with the haemorrhage serves as a foil for the unnamed, clueless disciples, because she grasps that Jesus can heal – and can even heal her.³⁹ Perhaps Jairus' daughter remains unnamed, because the story's focus is this: Jesus' words, touch and presence are more powerful than death.

A textual analysis of the passage in the synoptics: Matthew, Mark, Luke

The stories of the healing of the woman with the ongoing discharge of blood and the resuscitation from the dead of Jairus' daughter also occur in Matthew 9:18–26 and Luke 8:41–56.⁴⁰ Mark's account is both the longest (with 23 verses) and most detailed. Neither story appears in John.⁴¹ A comparison or contrast of the Synoptic accounts proves helpful, because it lets a reader see the literary emphases in each gospel.⁴² The analysis below is based on a comparative viewing of the Synoptic texts:

- Matthew gives no location. Mark says Jesus and a crowd are beside the sea.
- Matthew says an unnamed ruler comes. Mark says one of the synagogue's rulers comes and names him as Jairus.
- Matthew's unnamed ruler kneels before Jesus and says, 'My daughter has just died.'⁴³ In Mark, Jairus says, 'My *little* daughter is at the point of death' (italics added).
- Matthew's ruler asks Jesus to 'come and lay your *hand* on her, and she will live'. Mark's Jairus specifies *hands* and adds, 'so that she may be made well'. Both accounts stress the faith of the father who believes that the outcome of Jesus' coming to his home will be that his daughter will live.

39. See Branch (2004:186) for a lengthier discussion of unnamed characters that serve as foils.

40. Calvin (1981:409–410) asserts that any discrepancy in the three gospel accounts is absurd. Mark and Luke simply give more details. Calvin (1981:409–410) points out that Matthew, known for his brevity, withholds the ruler's name and represents the father as saying, 'My daughter is dead.' Matthew summarises the ruler's plight whilst Mark and Luke add more details to it. Calvin (1981:410) concludes that all three evangelists 'relate the same event'.

41. John 11:1–44 contains the story of the resuscitation of Lazarus. In addition, Luke 7:11–16 contains the story of Jesus' compassion on the widow of Nain. In this story, Jesus stops a funeral procession, commands the dead son of a widow to get up and restores the son, alive, to his mother.

42. For an excellent reference, see Aland 1985. This book presents parallel accounts, thereby eliminating the need to flip back and forth to various Bible passages. Aland provides textual notes and variants at the bottom of each page. For example, he (Aland 1985:x, 126) gives the reading of Mark 5:32 as follows: Jesus 'looked rounded about to see *her* that had done this thing' (italics added). This was the reading of the Authorized Version (King James) in 1611, the English Revised Version of 1881 and the American Standard Version (Edition of the English Revised) of 1901. Kalin (1988:39) also appreciates Aland's contributions. The translations using *her* show the text's purposeful emphasis of Jesus' ability to know that a woman in the crowd touched him.

43. Matthew's account informs the reader or hearer that the young girl is already dead probably because Matthew's audience proclaims 'that in Jesus, God's day of eschatological shalom is at hand' (Kalin 1988:47).

34. Hay (1973:18) points out that, frequently in Mark, discipleship means following Jesus. However, in this pericope, the disciples seem clueless. Both Jairus and the woman with the haemorrhage and portrayed as having more faith than do Jesus' closest followers. This is surprising, because the disciples had witnessed the healing of demon-possessed man (Mk 5:1–20) just a few hours earlier. The faith of Jairus and the healed woman grow in this pericope (see Williamson 1983:111) and leads to the natural question: What about the faith of the disciples? The woman clearly emerges as a model disciple (see Branch 2013).

35. Levine (1996:396) observes that discipleship involves both following Jesus and a personal commitment. In the Matthean version of the story of Jairus, 'Jesus arose and followed him' (Mt. 9:19, KJV). Levine (1996:396) finds this 'entirely fitting' and sees that Jesus is a leader who models what he teaches.

36. The disciples chide Jesus for stopping to ask who touched him. The pushing of the crowd in the narrow street indicates the absurdity of the question. After all, everybody is hurrying to Jairus' home, probably intent on seeing a sideshow miracle. Definitely a large crowd surrounds Jesus. Some disciples probably run interference (see Spivey et al. 2007:55).

37. Discipleship in Mark gradually points to the cross, to following the Master even to death (see Achtemeier 1978:136).

38. See Branch (2004:171–172) for a related discussion.

- Matthew's Jesus seems to follow behind the ruler. In Mark, the two men seem to fall in step side by side.
- Mark indicates others: 'A great crowd followed him and thronged about him.' Luke indicates that the crowd was waiting for Jesus.
- All three gospels record that Jairus approached Jesus publicly and fell at Jesus' feet.
- With the textual marker, *behold*, Matthew singles out that something surprising is happening.⁴⁴
- Matthew limits the woman's suffering to suffering from the haemorrhage for 12 years. Mark designates it as coming from the hands of many physicians.
- Matthew and Luke add this important detail: the part of Jesus' garment she touched.⁴⁵ She touched its fringe.⁴⁶
- Mark's woman touches Jesus' cloak and feels she is healed of her disease. Luke's woman touches the fringe of his garment and immediately her flow of blood ceases.
- Matthew and Mark recount the woman's thoughts: 'If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well' (Mt 9:21). Matthew adds that Jesus says, 'Take heart,' to the woman. Matthew eliminates Jesus' other words, 'Go in peace' whilst Mark records them.
- Matthew records that the woman's healing comes *after* Jesus' words. In Mark and Luke, the woman is instantly healed after touching Jesus' garment.
- Matthew eliminates four encounters: the conversations of Jesus with the crowd, his disciples and Peter about who touched him; Jesus' face-to-face interaction with the healed woman; the abrupt announcement of Jairus' servants that the daughter is dead; and Jesus' immediate command to Jairus not to fear.
- Luke (8:54b–55a) records an additional assurance to Jairus about his dead daughter's situation: *she shall be well* (Lk 8:50; italics added).
- Matthew details the commotion at Jairus' house: flute players and a crowd made a tumult (Mt 9:23). Matthew also adds this command of Jesus, 'Depart' (Mt 9:24).
- Luke adds a significant insight about death. After Jesus took the child's hand and said, 'My child, get up!' *Her spirit returned* (italics added). Matthew 9:25 summarises Jesus' direct words to the child. After the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went inside, and took her hand, and the girl arose.
- The Jesus in Matthew is one of action and few words. Significantly in Matthew, the *touch of Jesus* is enough to raise the dead girl. The child is healed without words.

44.This word, Behold, common in the Hebrew text as *hen* or *hinneh*, is an interjection that demands attention. It means 'Look!' 'See!' 'Take note!' 'Be aware that an important word or action follows' (Harris, Archer & Waltke 1980:506–507).

45.A Jewish man's outer garment evidently was a square or oblong affair measuring two to three meters (80 to 120 inches). This garment, in Hebrew a *me'yil*, was a coat, robe or mantle, and it was wrapped around the man as a protective covering. Clothing was a measure of wealth, and a large wardrobe indicated prominence. A poor man used the outer garment, made of coarse goat hair, as a bed covering at night. A rich man's outer garment was of a softer and finer wool (Packer & Tenney 1980:480).

46.The garment's fringe indicates that Jesus complied with the dress code of an Israelite male. The fringe was to be on each corner of a garment (Nm 15:37–37), and a blue cord was to be attached to each fringe. The ornament was not to be showy, gaudy or ostentatious. Instead, it was to remind the wearer of the Lord's command to be holy and to live a holy life (Freedman 2000:472).

- In Luke, the story of the resuscitation of the son of the widow of Nain takes place before the stories of the dead girl and the sick woman (Lk 7:11–18; 8:40–56).

Conclusion

This article presents a close literary analysis of Mark 5:21–43 that concentrates largely on the character traits of two supplicants: Jairus and the woman with the ongoing flow of blood. The needs and actions of the characters entwine to form the pericope's plot. It asserts that these characters' two early morning encounters in Capernaum enlarge the portrait of Jesus that Mark has presented so far. In addition, this concluding section takes selected aspects of the character of Jairus and of the woman and analyses them.

Notice an interesting role reversal: Jairus kneels at the feet of Jesus, a new resident of Capernaum.⁴⁷ Kneeling customarily indicates not only supplication, but also recognition of one of superior rank. Yet outwardly, this town ruler and wealthy man outranks this carpenter in terms of social status. Jairus openly begs and kneels in front of Jesus in a public place. Begging acknowledges another's power and authority to do something as well as one's own need. Perhaps Jairus had been one of those in Jesus' home when the paralytic had been lowered through the roof and healed and had left amazed and praising God (Mk 2:1–12).

Jesus receives without comment this unusual expression of homage, first from Jairus and quickly thereafter from the woman in the crowd. In short, Jesus acknowledges that kneeling represents worship; Jesus accepts their actions. It is his due. Both characters by their actions acknowledge Jesus' power and seek Jesus' power to meet their needs. Gaiser (2010) makes this observation:

Power kills; power makes alive – but it is the same power: the power of life and death, the power of God, now present in Christ. For the haemorrhaging woman, that power will at the same time heal her disease and nullify her uncleanness (Lev. 12:2, 5). (p. 12)

Jairus and the woman also share something: a desperate, immediate need. Because of their individual needs, Jairus and the woman in the crowd begin – indeed a better word probably is *force* – an interactive conversation with Jesus about healing. Each supplicant receives more from Jesus personally and more of Jesus' power than anticipated. The outcomes are quite likely different from what each supplicant initially expected.⁴⁸ The woman expected to touch Jesus' garment, be healed and disappear back into the crowd, which was not to be (see Branch 2013).

Instead, the woman received public recognition and commendation for her faith, a new family whose focus is on Jesus, a loving endearment – daughter – from Jesus and the assurance that the malady will not return. Jairus, distraught

47.Gaiser (2010:9) also sees this connection.

48.See Gaiser (2010:14) for additional insights.

to the point of being frantic, seeks healing for his gravely ill daughter. In the short time he is away from home, his daughter dies. As is so typical of the miracles of Jesus and of God's character throughout the biblical text, Jairus receives more than an answer to his initial desperate plea. Jairus, his wife and household receive back their beloved daughter from death to life. She is healed and ready to live again – and undoubtedly hungry!⁴⁹ Jairus had believed only that Jesus could heal. The restoration of life to his daughter gives Jairus and his household this added insight: Jesus also has power over death.

Pelikan sheds light on Jesus' authority and power. Calling Jesus the Cosmic Christ, Pelikan (1985:65) acknowledges that Jesus has priority over all created things. Jesus shows his lordship over death and incurable disease by touching the dead girl and commanding her to get up, and by receiving the touch of the woman in the crowd that drew healing from him.⁵⁰ Jesus pulls rank on disease and death. By doing so, he establishes a principle around himself of having the ability to completely heal and to completely restore to life. In a canonical reading, perhaps Paul thought of the resuscitation of Jairus' daughter when he penned these verses, acknowledging the kingship of Jesus throughout the cosmos: 'He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death' (1 Cor 15:26–27).

Jesus' actions toward the woman in the crowd and Jairus' daughter conquer death and fight the fallenness of the world (see Pelikan 1985:67). The four gospels show that Jesus overcomes the fallenness of the world by becoming incarnate, suffering and dying on a cross, rising from the dead and thereby showing that he is 'victorious over sin, death, and hell' (Pelikan 1985:67). These two stories in Mark prefigure Jesus' upcoming passion by pointing out fallenness in two areas: chronic ill health, leading to death, and death itself. The healing of the bleeding of the woman and the resuscitation from death of Jairus' daughter speak of issues common to humanity and 'effect even the Christ' (Levine 1996:397): blood and death. Jesus will shed much blood and die as the story in Mark progresses.

Indeed, death connects the interlocking stories of Jairus and the woman. In a literary sense, the pericope indicates this significant conflict: both supplicants know they face the immediacy of death. Yet, their encounter with Jesus culminates in victory over death. The woman suffering the chronic illness, an illness that would probably have led to her death, is healed. Healing here represents the restoration of physical vitality (indeed, life!) and a life lived within a community. The resuscitation of Jairus' daughter erodes any

concept of the finality of death. Her resuscitation points to Jesus' upcoming resurrection. Walters (2012) explains Jesus' upcoming resurrection in the following way:

Resurrection continues creation and is faithful to creation. Death does not undo humanity, it leads us forward into a transformation of our created humanity, to which only it – death – can conduct us. (p. 209)

The two stories of Jairus' daughter and the woman in the crowd show this: an encounter with Jesus changes a person – and tangentially changes many people. Let me explain.

The woman is healed, and thereby, her life is changed. The daughter of Jairus is restored to life. The wider significance of their public healing needs noting. The woman returns to society – restored as a fully-participating member. Additionally, in a kingly gesture, Jesus designates his authority over her by calling her 'daughter'. In effect, he makes her his ward. The daughter of Jairus, who, at 12 years of age, is emerging into womanhood, receives her life restored to her so that she can grow up! What joy that must have been to her family! The girl can become a young woman. She can marry, have a family, take her place in society, be an ongoing joy to her parents and provide them with grandchildren! Jesus' power spares Jairus and his wife a lifetime of grief.

These encounters with Jesus portray different kinds of faith. Faith in the New Testament is directed to Jesus. I shall briefly start with the mourners, messengers and disciples. The mourners have no faith in the aforementioned New-Testament sense. Informed that the girl is dead, they carry on loudly. Their income depends on death, and they do their job. Their scornful laughter verifies the girl's death. The messengers, in their abruptness and insensitivity, report what they know: the girl is dead. Their report may indicate that the news came from the girl's mother for it includes perhaps what was probably originally a tactful statement: 'Why bother the teacher anymore?' (Mk 5:35). Jesus' disciples seem to be clueless to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 1:1). Although they quite recently saw Jesus command the wind and waves to be calm and were eyewitnesses of earlier healings and miracles, they exhibit less faith than do Jairus and the woman in the crowd. These different character portrayals within the pericope on the aspect of faith illustrate different responses to Jesus.

Now let us look at the parents and the woman. In Mark, the distinction of a disciple, shown by the woman in the crowd and by Jairus, is a faith that believes in spite of unbelief (Spivey *et al.* 2007:85–86). Significantly, the disciples do not yet express this kind of faith. The response of the parents reflects a normal human reaction to what they had just seen: the power of Jesus over death. The response of the parents to seeing their dead daughter get up and walk around is astonishment, awe, amazement.⁵¹ Astonishment rather than

49. An earlier example of this principle of abundance is in Mark 2:1–12. The paralytic is first told that his sins are forgiven, and then he is healed. The men who by faith brought the paralytic to Jesus only wanted their friend's healing, but everybody in the room and on the roof also received the amazing teaching that Jesus, the Son of Man, has authority on earth to forgive sins as well as the power to heal (Mk 2:10–11).

50. Regarding the raising of Jairus' daughter, Calvin (1981:416) links the power of Jesus' voice, the touch of his hand and their result: the girl's spirit returned. No doubt these happened simultaneously.

51. Other resuscitations are the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11–17) and Lazarus (Jn 11:1–44).

disbelief is consistent with the response of others to other miracles stories and is certainly within the culture portrayed in New Testament times, writes Powell (2009:90).⁵²

Earlier in the story, Jairus obeys Jesus' command not to fear. Jesus' command reminds Jairus to remember his initial faith-filled request to Jesus to 'Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live' (Mk 5:23b). Jesus' command, which Jairus obeys, calls on the distraught father to believe for healing past illness and past death. Jairus, to his credit, does this, and his action enlarges faith to include faith past death. Consequently, Jairus contributes significantly to the ongoing development of faith in Jesus given in the stories so far in Mark.

The woman with the haemorrhage likewise enlarges faith by taking the initiative. She draws healing from Jesus without a face-to-face encounter. In effect, she commands him for her action draws power from him, and he acknowledges her action as faith. I believe the woman in the crowd also exhibits faith as *chutzpah*.⁵³ Young (1995:171, 178) defines *chutzpah* as 'headstrong persistence, brazen impudence, unyielding tenacity, bold determination, or what in current English terms might be referred to as raw nerve' and then links it to faith, as associated in Jesus' parables.

I would add pushiness as an aspect of faith as *chutzpah*. This woman is determined to be healed! Desperate, she pushes through the crowd toward Jesus, disregarding that her touch makes others unclean (see Lv 15:25–30). She displays a determined, self-centred, pushy persistence that focuses on Jesus (see Branch 2013). Her faith draws power from Jesus; it activates Jesus' power. Self-interest is not a bad thing. Jesus does not condemn it for her self-interest and need recognise that Jesus meets needs. Furthermore, her action recognises the egalitarian nature already expressed in Jesus' ministry: Jesus earlier had healed a woman with a fever, a leper, a paralytic, a man with a shrivelled hand and a demoniac (Mk 1:29–31, 40–42; 2:1–12; 3:1–5; 5:1–20). Consequently, her story likewise significantly contributes to the ongoing revelation that Jesus is both the Son of God and the focus of faith (1:1; 2:5; 4:40; 5:34).

The restoration of life in its varied forms to the young girl and to the woman in the crowd show that Jesus has power that is greater than the power of death and the power of a chronic illness leading to death. Jesus publicly exhibits a God-given power. Jesus' ability to heal in these ways and to restore life after a death 'foreshadows the resurrection' (Beavis 2010:62). Truly, Jesus is the Son of God in suffering and death as these interlocking stories and the cameo appearances of these two desperate people in Capernaum show.

52.Powell (2009:90) explains that 'almost everyone believed that there were spiritual and magical powers that might enable people to do what they could not have done on their own'.

53.Young (1995:171–180) writes of faith as *chutzpah* in some instances in the New Testament. His book focuses on Jewish elements in the parables, and the parables he chooses are 'The importunate friend' and 'The importunate widow' (Lk 11:5–8; 18:1–8). He (Young 1995:171) prefers to rename the parables 'The contemptible friend' and 'The corrupt judge'.

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