

Date: July 1, 2018

Scripture: Mark 5: 21-43

Title: HOLD ON TO GOD'S PROMISES

In your life, have you ever been “put on hold?” Being put on hold, is a familiar, as well as a frustrating experience for many of us. It’s particularly frustrating, when the matter you’re calling about is urgent. Some places have added music to hold buttons. It doesn’t help when the situation is serious. In fact, it’s even more irritating! Life is no fun when you are put on hold.

Picture a frantic father whose daughter is dying. He has no phone but he has heard that there’s a specialist nearby who may be able to save his daughter’s life. He puts on his coat and searches the community for this esteemed physician. When he finds the physician he hurries up to him. Even though he’s a man of some prominence and power in the community, this worried father lays aside his pride and literally gets on his knees at the physician’s feet and begs him to come see his daughter. The father’s name is Jairus. The esteemed physician’s name is Jesus. Would Jesus come lay his hands on the girl? Mark simply tells us, “Jesus went with him.”

But wait. There’s a break in the story. While Jesus is making his way through the crowd after Jairus, a woman with an issue of blood reaches out and touches the hem of Jesus’ garment. Jesus stops, engages her in conversation and ministers to her in a beautiful way.

Can you imagine, how Jairus felt watching this? His young daughter is dying and this woman is tying up Jesus’ time with her complaint. Can you imagine the stress this frantic father was under, at this particular moment? Put on hold while the Master ministered to another.

The same thing happened to Mary and Martha. They sent for Jesus at the sickness of their brother Lazarus but it was days before Jesus responded. “If you had been here,” they said, with a hint of accusation, “our brother would not have died.”

Why does the Master seem to dawdle sometimes? Why isn’t he quicker to respond to our requests? Doesn’t he know that the matter is urgent?

This question goes right to the heart of prayer. Why do our prayers sometimes seem to go no higher than the ceiling?

A third grade teacher had been working long and hard to help a certain student improve his behavior and attitude. After a reading session, that was continuously disrupted by this student, the teacher in her frustration said to the boy, “John, I am going to turn you over to God.”

Another boy who happened to be walking by said, “Mrs. Jones, God is going to give him right back to you.”

Why does that seem to be true of some of our prayers? Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn prayed for a fishing pole and hooks. When he got only the pole, he gave up prayer. Most of us aren’t that rash. We know God loves us. We know He’s aware of our concerns. We have confidence, that he’s moved by our prayers. It’s just that sometimes he seems to

move very slowly. And it's difficult for us to deal with those delays. We feel so helpless.

An O'Hare Airport study of air traffic controllers, completed just prior to the controller's strike several years ago, confirmed the high stress level that these controllers are under. The job is stressful, but not because these controllers have to make decisions that affect the lives of others. They're stressed, because they're called controllers, and they often feel they're anything but in control, due to fluctuating weather, pilot error, equipment failure, etc.

We're also told, nurses have more stress than physicians, because they have less control, while still having the responsibility.

In situations, where we have responsibility but not control, we have learned to depend on prayer. But anyone, who has long had an active prayer life, knows that there are times when we confront a profound silence, on the other end of our prayer line. Sometimes God is like that. We know He knows about our distress. We know He cares. He just seems to dawdle. He seems to put us on hold.

Picture this frantic father waiting for Jesus to minister to the woman with the issue of blood. Then his worse fears are realized. Some friends come from his house. He could probably sense the news even before they spoke. It's the news no parent wants to receive. His friends say, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Master any longer?" Poor Jairus feels a sudden terrible ache within. His friends try to give him their support, but there's a limit, even to the help your best friend can give you, at a moment like that. Something more is needed.

Fortunately Jesus was still there. He hadn't forsaken Jairus, just as he doesn't forsake us. He probably touched him on the arm or the shoulder as he said, "Don't be afraid, just believe." He was asking a lot of this man.

When we're put on hold, we're to hold on ever firmer, to the promises of God. We know God will not forsake us, even if He doesn't work on our time schedule.

Author Tim Kimmel tells about tiny cemetery that sits outside of Phoenix, Arizona. It's blown by hot desert winds and rarely visited. Amidst the Bermuda grass and west of a pond, lies a modest grave marker: PUNKIN, In loving memory, Jennifer Marie Strader, August 11, 1975, December 13, 1984.

Young Jennifer's life was snatched away from her on a tragic drive home from school one afternoon, when a young man ran a red light, and crashed into her. What makes this tragedy worth noting, is how Jennifer's parents dealt with the worst phone call a parent can receive.

Roger Strader is a song writer, and was conducting a Christmas choir in Salem, Oregon when he got the call. "There's been an accident, and Jennifer didn't make it." Just like that. A father of three becomes a father of two. With a funeral to plan. And Christmas presents to unwrap.

When Roger returned home his normally confident spirit was crushed with gut-wrenching longings for his little girl. Everywhere he turned, he was reminded of her, by an unfinished project, artwork in her room, memories of his nine-year old haunted him at every turn.

Roger had prayed a hundred times since the tragedy, but a few days before the funeral he tucked his wife and children in bed and walked to the stillness of his study. And he wept. And he poured out his heart to God. And God visited him with peace. Roger, as I said, was a hymn writer, and his study had a stereo system and a bunch of tapes. He walked across the room and plunked in an old song he had written and heard many times. But this time the chords were from heaven and he hung on the lyrics as if he were hearing them for the first time.

In a world that's wracked by sin and sorrow,
There is peace.

When you find no hope for your tomorrow,
There is peace.

When it seems your heavy burden is much too much to bear,
In Jesus, there is perfect peace.

Jesus made his way to Jairus' house accompanied by his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John. When he came into the house, he saw family and friends weeping loudly. Jesus asked, "Why all this crying and commotion? The girl is not dead. She is only sleeping."

Those gathered there ridiculed his diagnosis. He asked them to leave the house. Then he went into the room where the little girl lay. Taking her by the hand he said to her, "*Talitha cumi.*" "Little girl, I say to you arise." And she arose.

Does this story disturb you? Do you believe Jesus could perform this kind of miracle? A prominent neurosurgeon recalls an incident that occurred when he was a senior medical student. He was working in an emergency room when an unconscious 12-year-old boy was wheeled in, with a stab wound to his heart. The cardiac monitor showed a straight line. The boy's skin was cold and his pupils didn't react to light, indicating that the boy's brain wasn't functioning.

Rainer looked to the nurse and said, "He's dead," and told her to turn off the monitor. Just then a doctor came in, felt the wound on the dead boy, grabbed a needle and stuck it into the boy's chest. Immediately the boy's heart began to beat; a few hours and an operation later, he was moving his legs and mumbling.

Rainer comments, "I left the room and wandered down the hall, discouraged. I had just pronounced a boy dead, who had been saved seconds later while I watched."

Is it any more difficult to believe that the Lord of Life can take a little girl's hand and bring her back from the dead, than a surgeon can perform the same miracle with a needle pressed into the chest?

We hold on to Christ's promises because we know that he is the Lord of life and death. When our lives are put on hold, we don't let go, because we know that he doesn't let go of us.

Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) is regarded as one of Russia's three greatest novelists. He was the first Russian writer to win wide recognition outside Russia.

In his book *Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev tells about a father and mother whose only son had been killed in a war. They go out to another poorly kept cemetery to visit his

grave. The weeds have grown up, the fence is down, the trees have fallen and been left where they fell. But there is one grave that is well kept, green and smooth as velvet. It's the grave of their son.

As the elderly couple stand holding hands, looking down on the green, flower-covered grave, they bow their heads in prayer. They pray, "O gracious Heavenly Father, grant that one day in your homeland, and in your own eternity, we three may be together again, and know each other and love each other and live down the centuries together. O God, please grant this one thing, that we may live together again."

What a profound prayer. This couple's lives, had been put on hold in terms of their relationship with their son, but they trusted God, that the three would one day be reunited. They had come to know Christ as the Lord of life and death. They held on tightly to God's promises. And so should we, whenever our lives are put on hold. So, at all times in life, Trust, Believe, and have an Active Faith in God making disciples of Jesus Christ in the transformation of the world. Amen.