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*Mark 5:21-43*

*When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.’ So he went with him.*

*And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.’ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ And his disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, “Who touched me?” ’ He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’*

*While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, ‘Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cum’, which means, ‘Little girl, get up!’ And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

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*There’s a practice in ancient Jewish rabbinical traditions called midrash. Simply put, it is the practice of “playing” with scripture and using our sanctified imaginations to fill in the gaps. Ever wondered what it was that Jesus wrote in the sand in the story of the woman allegedly caught in adultery? Curious about what Mary was* actually *thinking as she “pondered these things in her heart?” Ever expressed frustration at a pesky detail that is omitted in scripture that would otherwise answer a burning question? Then midrash can be a wonderful way to engage, explore, and share scripture. And so, today, I wish to offer a midrash of my own: the perspective of a certain 12-year old little girl who is told to get up.*

I’m a 12 year old girl. Jairus is my father. This is my story.

Like so many other women and girls in the Bible, my name goes unmentioned. Too often, we’re treated as if we’re only as important as the men in our lives. But I do have a name, and I’ll tell you exactly what it is. You can call me Tally. T-A-L-L-Y. Tally.

In most ways, I suppose, I’m a typical 12 year old girl. I like to play with my friends in the street. I like to go to synagogue with my father, Jairus, who is a leader there. I love to sit and listen to him read from Torah, though I confess I’m sometimes reprimanded for giggling in the back pews with my friends. In those moments, my father will give me a stern look followed by a playful wink, the perfect balance of a stern worship leader and a father who knows that young children wiggle and giggle. And let’s face it. Leviticus is boring; what’s a kid to do?

When I’m not playing with my friends or attending services with my dad, I go to school a few blocks away from our house near the synagogue. My walk to and from school is a predictable routine. There’s the friendly grocer who, at least once a week, sneaks me a pomegranate when his boss isn’t looking. There’s the corner where the Pharisees and Saducees like to gather to spar over the latest theological argument. There’s the block where I can get the view of the tombs outside the city infamous for housing one of the local demoniacs; though I have noticed the usual sounds of his agony have been silent as of late. I overheard my dad talking to my mom about some healer that freed that man from his demon but I was too busy playing hopscotch with my friend to hear the rest.

And, finally, my walk to and from school takes me right by a doctor’s office where there always seems to be this nice woman waiting in line. She’s been there for years, my dad says. She’s really sick and though my daddy tells me that people go to the doctor to feel better, she only seems to be getting worse. I feel bad for her; my mom once told me that she’s been sick as long as I’ve been alive! Sometimes, I’ll split my pomegranate with her and we’ll chat for a few minutes. I never tell my dad about this because he’s told me that she’s unclean and I can’t be near her, but I think that’s silly! She’s kind and gentle, and has that look of someone who has carried a huge burden for far, far too long. So I’m gonna share my pomegranate with her if I want to!

One day, though, I got home from school and began to feel really bad. My tummy hurt and my parents told me to go to my room and rest. We thought that maybe the pomegranate that day have been rotten and I’d be fine in the morning.

But I wasn’t better in the morning. I woke up in a cold sweat, a raging headache, and a fever that made my mommy and daddy scared. I was told I’d have to stay home from school that day, which made me sad because I really wanted my friends. So I stayed home that day and looked out the window at the street I wish I could have been walking up and down. I managed to catch the eye of the sick woman who gave me a worried wave; she must have noticed that I didn’t walk by her today.

That afternoon I managed to doze off and had some strange dreams. I lost pretty much all sense of time and I have only fleeting memories and images from brief bouts of consciousness.

My father pacing back and forth in my bedroom, mumbling prayers…

My mother crying gently as she pressed a cold clothe to my forehead…

One of the “doctors” who was supposed to be helping my sick lady friend on the street shaking his head at my parents before taking money from them and stepping out the door…

My parents arguing and my father telling my mom he had to find someone he had heard about, someone who had helped that demoniac in the tombs that served as the local tourist trap…

And then…darkness. For how long? I have no idea. Could have been hours, could have been days.

All I remember is hearing a stranger talking to me. His voice was gentle and yet strong. I didn’t yet know what he looked like but I could hear his voice calling me from my slumber. “Talitha Cum,” he said. *Little girl, get up*.

You know that weird space between sleeping and waking up; when you’re grasping on to the last moments of your dream but haven’t fully joined the land of the living? Well, I was in that space for what felt like an eternity but was later told was only a few moments. Eventually, I felt my body return to life. The numbness in my fingers and toes began to give way to wiggles and stretches. My eyes opened and blinked, what was foggy became more and more clear. A man with kind eyes and a lopsided, subtle smile looking at me encouragingly. Standing on one side of him were three men I didn’t recognize, one who stood by himself and two other men who must have been brothers.

And on the other side of the man who told me to get up were my parents. As our gazes found each other, they rushed to me and practically crushed me in a double hug. And telling them that I couldn’t breath with them clinging on to me, they chuckled through their tears and I got up to stretch my legs. I walked about the room and you would have thought that my walking was the most amazing thing these adults had ever seen in my life.

They couldn’t seem to grasp the fact that I was walking but I had one and only one thing on my mind: I. Was. Starving.

The man who had called me from my sleep seemed to be a step ahead of me. He told them to get me something to eat, to which I mouthed “thank you” to him. And then he told the rest of the adults to not tell anyone. But, you know who he *didn’t* say that to? Me!

I figured it was a pretty good story, and since the man wasn’t looking at me when he gave them the instructions, I knew I had to tell! I hopped down the stairs, two by two, to find some cold pizza in the fridge from the day before. Oh. My. Goodness. It tasted so good and hit the spot.

I walked out the door, blinking as my eyes adjusted to the bright sunlight, and found my friends sitting anxiously outside our home. They couldn’t see me because their backs were turned away. They were talking worriedly about me; even talking about me in the past tense, as if I was dead! My best friend, Mary, was crying, saying how much she would miss listening to Taylor Swift with me!

I decided to have some fun with them and said, loudly enough for everyone to hear me, “then I guess it’s a good thing I decided to *shake it off!*” It took them a minute. But they slowly turned around and saw me and they’re jaws dropped to the floor. Then they started laughing. And hugging me. And crying. And jumping up and down. And they said, “Oh my gosh. What happened?!”

I don’t know, I said. All I know is that a man called me “Talitha” and told me to get up, and I did! Mary looked at me and said, “maybe we should call you Talitha from now on!” I looked at her and laughed, “Sure. But I think I like “Tally” better. Let’s go with that!”

As we caught up and chatted, I noticed behind them that my lady friend at the doctors office was walking down the street. She looked different somehow. First of all, I don’t think I had ever seen her walk down the street by herself. But it wasn’t just that. It was how she walked. The burden seemed lifted, her eyes more relaxed, her shoulders more free and her demeanor just…looser. That, and she was smiling like I had never seen her smile before.

I told my friends I’d be right back and crossed the street to greet her. We ran into each others’ arms and embraced each other. For some reason, everyone around us on the street was gasping and whispering to each other. But my friend and I were too glad to see each other to notice.

Through happy tears, I told my friend I had a story to tell her she wouldn’t believe.

She smiled at me and said playfully, “Try me. Wanna split a pomegranate?”