

My Child, Get Up!
By Jason Huff
Psalm 67, 1 Corinthians 15:12-22, Luke 8:40-56

Good morning! Excuse me...am I at...the fellowship of the covenant? Is this the right place? Oh good! I was worried there for a moment...you all don't look like you're from Palestine. Such shoes! Such clothes! Ah well...no matter. I was sent here today to talk to you. Have you a few minutes to spare with me? Thank you.

My name is Moshe. I am the son of Aaron, the son of Yakov, the son of...well, I suppose beyond that, it doesn't really matter, does it? What is most important now is that I am a child of God! Imagine that...me...a child of God! I've come here today to tell you about how that happened, and how it all goes back to a day not terribly long ago where I met a certain man called Jesus. Have you heard of Him? He's the reason I stand before you today.

But let me back up a bit. I lived in a town not far from the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee. Now a few years back, there was a great deal of commotion about this fellow Jesus. You couldn't go anyplace without hearing about Him. My neighbor Samuel told me how He had healed a man in a town not far from Him, how He'd cast out demons. But what struck Samuel even more was how He preached. Now Jairus, he was the leader of our synagogue. He was also my best friend. He was responsible for organizing the worship of God, our God, the one true God of Israel. He could talk about Moses and the prophets and the people who had come before us and how they lived and what they taught. He could go on for hours and hours, you know? But this Jesus, He was different. He taught with authority. Jairus was a good man, a righteous man, some might say, but he only commented on what others had said long ago. Jesus acted like He knew God. And what's more, He talked like he knew God as His father. Now we Jews know that God is our Father as a nation, as the Father of Israel, but a personal father, someone we could relate to? Forgetaboutit. But no one could ask Him a question that would stump Him. He did strange things, too. He didn't follow the Sabbath the way that some people thought He should. He ate and drank with people we knew were sinners. Have you heard of the Pharisees? They were our religious leaders, and they said Jesus was a bad influence. But still we came to Jesus. He wasn't like the people who acted all high and mighty. He hung around with ordinary people like my friend Samuel. And yet He was different, and we all knew it.

Now my friend Jairus had a daughter, a lovely young girl named Abigail, which in Hebrew means "her father's joy," and she was. She was Jairus' only daughter, and he loved her very much. He cared for her something fierce, and everyone in the town knew it. But not long after her 12th birthday, she began to get sick...very sick. Jairus had plenty of money for the doctors; being the synagogue leader, he knew a lot of people and had a lot of contacts. But nobody could do anything for her, and she just got worse and worse. It became very clear that she wasn't going to get better.

So one day I went up to Jairus and put my hand on his arm and said, "Friend, we must go talk to this Jesus. Samuel has told me all about him. If anybody can do something for your daughter, it's him." He nodded his head no. I thought, isn't he going to at least try?

But then he told me why he was so worried. “Haven’t you heard, Moshe?” he said. “The last time anyone heard from Jesus and his disciples, they had headed out on the sea, towards the land of the Gentiles. There was a huge storm, and nobody on this side of the lake has seen Him since. I’m afraid they may have drowned...or if they did get over to the other side, something terrible may have happened to them. There are men filled with demons over there, you know.” I was beside myself. My friend’s only hope, and He might never be coming back.

So you can imagine our relief a few days later when our friend Joshua came into town with good news. “They’ve seen His boat on its way back home!” he yelled in the streets. Everyone knew what this meant. Abigail might be saved! I raced out of my house to get Jairus, but he was already a full forty paces ahead of me. You couldn’t slow him down! In fact, the whole town poured out of their homes and shops and from out in the fields to see what might happen. But when we got near to the seaside, we realized we weren’t the only ones to welcome Jesus’ return. A crowd as thick as locusts had gathered around him. Everyone was so glad that he was safe. Many had been waiting patiently while he had been gone so that they might hear his words of truth again. But it also meant that it was almost impossible to get close to him. We were packed in around him like sardines. How close? Well, let’s see...you two there, not close enough. A little closer, a little closer...OK, too close, a little too close. But you understand the picture. It was overwhelming.

I don’t know how he did it, but somehow Jairus got through the crowd to approach Jesus. Some younger men must have made a path for him...as I said, he was quite a well-known man. And when he reached Jesus, he fell at his feet, crying for Jesus to help his daughter. “Just come and see her,” he said, “and I know she will live.” So Jesus set out for our home, and the crowd got even larger and even more packed in. Jesus was nearly crushed! It was hard to breathe with so many people together.

That must have been how Susan got into the group. Now we all knew Susan...her name meant “lily,” and much like Abigail, she had been a beautiful flower in our village. But none of us had seen Susan in a while. That wasn’t really a surprise at all. You see, Susan had no real place in our town any more. She had been having hemorrhages for twelve years. I’m sure it was awful. But it made her unclean to us. She spent all the money she had on doctors, but nobody could cure her. We thought maybe she was cursed by God. Why would someone have such an awful disease unless God had given it to her? At least, that’s what we thought. She’d gone here, there, everywhere trying to find a cure, but it was no use.

As soon as I saw Susan standing right by me, I backed away. After all, being touched by an unclean person makes you unclean too. Perhaps that’s how she got right up to Jesus. She moved so fast, it was like she didn’t want anyone to see her. And just as soon as she got up to him, she moved away...but she looked different. She looked...I don’t know...stronger somehow. But then I lost sight of her, the crowds were just pushing together so hard. And in the middle of it all, Jesus stopped dead in his tracks and said, “Who touched me?” We all kind of laughed. None of us intended to hurt Jesus or touch him; it was just a big mob. His disciple Peter even said, “Master, you know all these people want to see you. It’s a gigantic crowd!” But Jesus said it again. “I know someone intentionally touched me, because power has gone out from me.”

And then Susan came up, trembling and weeping at Jesus' feet, and she told Him her whole story. About the doctors and the visits and not being able to go to the temple. And she gave her testimony...that her bleeding had suddenly stopped. Even in that short a time, she knew that she had been healed just by touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak. And then Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." And that amazed me. Susan, a daughter of God? How could that be? This woman, an outcast, a stranger to us now, someone accused...she could be God's child too? Yet that's what Jesus was saying. And she was healed by faith! How could that be?

But before we could think about it long, bad news came. As Jesus was speaking with the woman, we saw Jacob running from the city. He had the fastest legs of anybody in the city. And as he arrived out of breath, we heard him wheeze, "Don't trouble this man any more, Jairus. Abigail is gone." A shock ran through the crowd. All of this effort for nothing. I felt anger go up my spine against Susan. How could she of all people have stopped Jesus when Abigail lay dying? A few wails went up from the crowd. But with a single word, Jesus silenced them. He said to Jacob and Jairus, "Don't fear. Just believe, and she will be healed." None of us knew what to think. Could Jesus do the impossible? He continued his march to Jairus' house. Some of the crowd just dispersed at that point. He was talking nonsense. But some of us kept going. I went along with Jairus...I so wanted him not to be disappointed. I had no words for him. I couldn't believe what Jesus had told my friend. Did he want to make him worse with false hope? And yet, somewhere in my soul, I believed Jesus too.

So we finally arrived. Jesus asked for all of us to wait outside, except for a couple of his disciples and Jairus and Jana, his wife. But the mourners were already there, and all the weeping and mourning from that house was unbearable to hear. I just staggered to the ground. But then I heard...laughter? Jesus was saying that she was just asleep! Now maybe our medicine is different from yours here, now, but when somebody's dead, we know it! And when I talked to Ezra the physician after the whole thing was over, he told me what I already knew...Abigail had stopped breathing. The spirit had left her. There was no doubt.

But then, all of us even outside could hear Jesus clearly give a command. He said, "My child, get up!" And once again, there was a shock that came from the crowd. Abigail stood up! And Jesus gave her to Jairus and Jana and told them to give her something to eat! We were all amazed and fearful and thankful all at the same time. This little girl was alive! Then a few minutes later, Jesus came out to us. Jesus asked us the strangest thing...he asked us not to tell anyone else what he had done. It was an odd request...you would think that he would have wanted everyone to know how great he was. And yet, here he was, so humble. We all agreed. We wouldn't say a word.

Which might make you wonder why I'm here today! Did somebody spill the beans? Well, that happened a lot to Jesus. When someone that wonderful does something so spectacular, it's hard to keep quiet about it. But we did keep it under wraps for a while. It seems that Jesus wanted for people's faith to be about more than the miracles that He did. He wanted to prove through his life that He was indeed the son of God.

There were a lot of things we had to think about when Jesus left our village. Maybe the biggest one was how we treated him. We wanted him to heal little Abigail, but when push came to shove, many of us didn't believe it. We learned that if we were going to trust in God, we were going to have to have more faith than that. We realized that we needed to treat one another better, especially the less fortunate around us. Jesus had all this power and authority, but he treated an outcast the same way he treated the synagogue ruler – with mercy and kindness and love. He had shown love even to the Gentiles when he had visited Geneseret. We needed to learn that kind of love.

We finally learned when the time was right to share what Jesus had done for our friend. It turned out that Abigail wasn't the only one who would come back from the dead! Jesus did nothing wrong during his life, but he upset the religious leaders who didn't like how he challenged them. Eventually, they had him arrested on trumped up charges and got the Romans to beat him up and then crucify him. It was terrible. Now all of us have done some bad things in our lives, but this Jesus...for this man who had been our friend and our teacher suddenly to be murdered in this way...it wasn't right. If anything in this whole world didn't make sense, it was that. But on the third day after he was crucified, Jesus returned from the dead himself! The One who had returned Abigail to life was raised Himself by our Heavenly Father! And Jesus didn't come back to life just to die again, but He lives on. He was taken to heaven and lives even now!

I see some of you are wearing red today. Maybe you know what today is? It's Pentecost...the birth of the church. Several weeks after Jesus was raised from the dead, He rose into heaven. But a few days later, the Holy Spirit was sent to all the believers in Jerusalem. That's what we celebrate today! Soon word spread throughout Israel and started making its way through all of the Roman Empire. When we heard this good news, we couldn't help but rejoice! This kind, brave Jesus, the Son of God, had died so that we too might live again someday. He died so that we might no longer be trapped in our sins but could live lives pleasing to God. And He rose again to prove that we will someday live with Him through all eternity.

You might not have been expecting to meet me today. You might not have come here expecting to hear about this Jesus fellow today. But I'm telling you, if you've never known Jesus, you've never really started living! Jesus is alive today and can take away your sins too. He is God's very own Son, and you can know Him as your own Savior who frees you from death, just as He freed Susan and Abigail. Let me pray for us right now that it might be true for you. Pray with me...Lord God, I thank you for my friends here today. I pray that they would accept Jesus as their savior and lord. That they might admit that they have sinned and fallen short of what you have wanted for them. That they might realize that they need a way to know you God. And that they might accept that Jesus is the way for them to know You and become like You. Touch their hearts today, Lord, and when they pray this prayer, give them the Holy Spirit that they might know your ways and be guided in your truth. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

Well, friends, I must be getting back to my shop. But feel free to stop by anytime. May God's blessings be with you!