

The God With Skin On

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the God with skin on, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, amen.

There's an old story about a Lutheran pastor who grew up in a missionary family in Papua New Guinea. He recalls living through some of the tremendous thunderstorms common in that region. (SLIDE) As a child, he was very frightened when the storms came in the middle of the night. In the dark, he would cry out, "Mom, come quickly! I'm scared!" Immediately, mom would come and wrap her arms around him in the darkness. "Don't be afraid," she said. "It's all right. God is here with you." On one occasion, he remembers replying, "I know God is with me, but sometimes I just need God with skin on." That's exactly what we have in Jesus Christ - God with skin on! Our God came into this world to become one of us. He experienced first-hand trials, afflictions, and temptations. He witnessed the pain of his people caused by guilt and shame, by sickness and death. In our text, he witnesses first-hand the helplessness of a father who stood by while his only daughter lay on her deathbed. Don't let this God with skin fool you. He became a man like us to be our Savior. He experienced our every weakness except the weakness of sin. Jesus is a man, but He is still almighty God and able to help us in our times of need. In our scripture text for today, he invites us to do the same thing he invited Jairus to do... **DON'T BE AFRAID! JUST BELIEVE!**

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The Greek word we have translated as “believe” really means trust... Don’t be afraid, just trust. I think trust sort of works like this. We start out not trusting. We start out hurting. We start out with a pain that grows and grows until we become so desperate we’re willing to try anything. (SLIDE) I think that was the starting point for both Jairus and the nameless woman with the bleeding disorder. Jairus was a Synagogue leader. He was a very prominent citizen of the town and well respected. He was an important man. As the synagogue leader he could read and possibly even write. He taught from the Torah. Yet, despite all he had going for him, Jairus could not save his precious daughter. The Bible says he fell at Jesus’ feet. They say the bigger they are the harder they fall. I can’t speak to the force with which Jairus hit the ground, but I can tell you he had a mighty fall. He fell all the way from the top of his intellect. He fell from atop a mountain of pride. He fell from the acme of everything he thought he knew about how religion and medicine worked. He fell from reliance on what he could do for his daughter and landed in the only place where he could find what he needed most. At the feet of Jesus, Jairus found the faith he needed to believe and to trust in the promise of Jesus.

I’ve heard many well meaning Christians say things like all you have to do is believe and you’ll be saved... That sounds like such a small thing to ask of us, only believe... The problem we have is we all sit on top of that very same

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mountain of pride, and self-reliance from which Jairus had to fall. (SLIDE) It's not natural for us to cede control to someone else, even to God. We want to maintain the illusion we're the ones with all the power. If this doctor can't figure out what's wrong and fix me, then I'll find another who can... So, we fall at the feet of every doctor, self-help guru, and snake oil salesman we can find. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying all you have to do is fall down and worship Jesus in order to have all your needs and wants fulfilled. Life isn't that simple.

Life wasn't that simple for Jairus either... I mean he finally was able to overcome his pride and self-reliance. He fell at Jesus' feet and worshipped him. He finally was able to put his trust in this itinerate preacher for Nazareth. All seemed to be going his way. He got the attention of the travelling healer and Jesus had agreed to visit his daughter and make her well. The clouds were parting, and the sun was finally peaking through. Then the unthinkable happens... A no-account woman pushes through the crowd. She also has overcome her pride and self-reliance to come to the master. She has been doctor shopping for 12 years with nothing to show for all her efforts except a deflated bank account. She too finds herself at the end of her rope, with no place to go, except to Jesus. (SLIDE) Here's the rub... Her need is just as important to Jesus as that of the respected synagogue leader and her timing could not have been worse. As Jesus takes a few moments to speak to and heal this woman, Jairus' daughter dies.

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How many times do we pray, and pray, and pray, yet the situation never gets any better and may in fact get much worse. How do we react when our best efforts yield, bupkis? Do we give up and lose what little faith we have? I mean, can you imagine what must have been going through Jairus' mind? He thought he had finally found the one person who could save his daughter and before he can get the man to his house, word comes that his beloved has already died. No need to bother Jesus now. The girl is gone... Maybe you're in a situation right now where you prayed as hard as you could, only to find the test results haven't improved, or may have even gotten worse. Jesus says to you, "Do not be afraid, only believe." In the face of death itself, Jesus says to you, "Don't be afraid, only believe." In John's Gospel Jesus famously says "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." That's a really comforting Word!

Once more, put yourself in the shoes of Jairus... He falls at the feet of Jesus, giving up all his earthly head knowledge and prostrating himself flat on the ground. You can't get much more humble than that! When we humble ourselves before the Lord Jesus Christ the promise is Jesus will do for us what he did for Jairus. The promise isn't the healing of the daughter. The promise is in those 5 little words that come right after Jairus falling at the feet of Jesus. Those 5 little words are these, "So He went with him." "So He went with him." Jesus stopped what he was doing and went with Jairus. Jesus was there, with Jairus when the

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servant brought the news of the girl's death. Jesus was there when Jairus put one foot in front of the other and slowly made his way to his home. Jesus was there when the crowd told Jairus not to be any further bother to the teacher. Jesus was there when the little girl was brought back to life and given to her earthly father.

Jesus was God with skin on and was not capable of leaving such a pure, honest demonstration of faith unrewarded. Yet, these miracle stories were not the reason Jesus came. They were not the reason God put on skin and became human. Sickness and death are only the symptoms of a much deeper, more fundamental problem. We are all already dead in our sin. That's the real evil. Sin has invaded every pore of our bodies and made death inevitable for us all. As Jesus made his way to Jairus' house he was responding to the agony that was right there in front of his face. As the God with skin on, Jesus couldn't just ignore what was happening. He made things right. He temporarily eased the pain and suffering of Jairus, of the woman with the bleeding disease, last week it was the man possessed by a legion of demons, earlier in the Gospel, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. These were all miracles that only put a band aid on the real, underlying problem. Humans are sinful and the wages of sin is, and always will be, death. All these stories of Jesus healing and teaching, all the parables and even the arguments with the religious leaders; all of it were little more than band aids. They are like putting pressure on a deep, bleeding wound until the surgeon can sew up the bleed and bring real

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healing. The real healing humanity needs happened when Jesus finally made it to the cross. That's where Jairus' daughter, the woman with the bleeding disease, you and me, all of us, receive our true healing. God took on skin and died for us. God did it all for you and for me. Here's the part that really blows my mind. Jesus didn't just take on our trials and tribulations for those of us who, like Jairus fall at His feet. He did it mostly for those who are still sitting at the top of their mountain of pride and self-reliance. (SLIDE) Jesus lived and died for those in the crowd that day who tried to persuade Jairus to leave Jesus alone and even for those who laughed at Jesus when he told them the girl wasn't dead, but only sleeping. He came and died for those still today who can't or won't believe. Remember what Jesus said when they asked Him why he ate and made friends with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners? He replied that doctors don't come for well people, but for those who are sick.

May we fall from our mountains of pride, and self-reliance and land at the feet of the one who takes away our sin. May the healing power of Jesus lift our souls straight out of the fires of hell and into the loving arms of the one who loved us before we were born. In our joy, may we show others the one and only source of eternal life, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To God be the glory, amen.