

Worship: Surrendering Your Future

We are in a **message series on worship** these weeks of Feb. We started by noting that worship happens in **a special place** – the place where you can see God's mercy. That's the place where your heart is melted, where your hopes rise and where you are glad **to surrender** your life.

Surrender is a worship word. We sing it and live it, **surrendering all to him who surrendered all for us**. Last week we looked at surrendering **our past**, and today we want to look at surrendering **our future**.

We spend a lot of energy **trying to control our future, not surrendering it; shaping the future is big business**. It's interesting to me the things people will try to know what the future holds: **crazy stuff** like astrology, horoscopes, reading tea leaves. But there is serious stuff as well: the study of our past is considered one of the best predictors of our future, the study of our genes is said by some to determine our destiny, study of past performance in business can be a solid indicator of future trends. People try all kinds of things to figure out what's going to happen next because **we want to shape and control our future**.

- *The course of life is unpredictable... no one can write his autobiography in advance.* ~Abraham Joshua Heschel
- *We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there.* ~Charles F. Kettering
- *"For the majority of us, the past is a regret, the future an experiment"* ~Mark Twain

Uncertainties about our future days **haunt** our present days. We lie awake at night **worrying**. We make elaborate plans for the days to

come. We work hard to **minimize every risk**. And minimizing risk is **big business**, dominating a major sector of our economy: from insurance to health care to pension, social security and retirement plans.

We are concerned for the future, but we never seem to be able to control it. We are constantly surprised by the twists and turns of life. It may be a medical emergency or an accident or a broken relationship. **No one is immune from life's harsh surprises**; they come to believers and non-believers, to young and old, to rich and poor, to the famous and the unknown, to the well educated and the unschooled. No one knows the day of their death. No one knows how their kids will turn out. No one knows who they are going to marry. Many of us are still discovering who we really did marry!!!

The only thing that is certain is the **future will shock you**, sooner or later. And in the middle of that deep uncertainty, God invites us to trust him for our future. **Surrendering our future to him is an important part of a life of worship.**

I want to look with you today at the story of someone who faced a **moment of 'future shock'**. His name is **Jairus**, and we meet him early in the ministry of Jesus. We are told that he is a **ruler of the synagogue**.

Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name
Mark 5:22 (RSV)

You have to pause for a moment to **think about that**. The synagogue was the center of village life in Israel. The ruler of the synagogue was the center of the town. His presence anchored the community, held it together. He was the best educated man in the village, the spiritual leader, sort of like the mayor and the rabbi and the head of the chamber of commerce all rolled into one. He was a **role model** for people, someone who was **widely respected and loved**. He would be welcome in every home, greeted warmly in the market place, listened to carefully on Sabbath worship.

But **then his daughter fell ill**. **She was his only daughter**, Luke tells

us. And she was dying. In one swift moment his world has collapsed, spinning beyond his capacity to control and **nothing mattered** to him anymore but his little girl.

That was when **he heard that Jesus had just come back across the lake**. We don't know what he knew or believed about Jesus, but he would have certainly heard about how he was healing people in the region. He would have heard a few of his parables by then as well. The rulers of the synagogues **heard all the rumors**, all the stories. He's probably been asked what he thought about this Jesus. And we don't know what he might have said back **a week or two ago**.

But we know **what he did now**. When the dreams you have had for your life begin to crumble in front of your face, painfully crumble, it will shatter your world. In moments like that **you will risk**, you will **reach**, you will – he would – do anything to save his little girl.

In a moment like that, **Jesus came through town**. And **Jairus placed his failing future in Jesus' hands**.

he fell at his feet, and besought him, saying, "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."

Mark 5:22-23 (RSV)

Did you notice **how he did it**? He **didn't bargain** with Jesus ("If you do this, I will make you a permanent elder in my synagogue"). And he **didn't make excuses** for his new-found faith ("Uh, usually I don't come forward for prayer, but..."). In front of everyone he knew, he just threw himself at Jesus' feet – and **begged, pleaded...** "Please..."

There are moments like that in life, when your future is failing, and everything you care about is on the line.

If, in the middle of that moment, you take a moment and look around, you will notice that **Jesus is not very far away**. Close at hand. **The sight of Jesus gave Jairus hope for his future. He hoped, he believed that maybe Jesus could rewrite his future. So...** take a

moment and look for him. Look at him. Remember what you have heard about him. The **sight of Jesus will always give you hope!**

Jesus began to move with Jairus towards his home, but they were **interrupted** along the way by a woman who had a desperate need all her own. Just imagine Jairus' anxiety when Jesus stopped to attend to her. He must have been **frantic**. But he waits. Precious minutes slip by. Maybe a half hour or so. And then came the message from his house,

While Jesus was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

Mark 5:35 (RSV)

Wild with fear and maybe with anger for the unnecessary delay, I can just sense **his heart sinking** like a stone. His daughter has died! And then, when it seems like it is all over, the drama accelerates.

But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

Mark 5:36 (RSV)

Did you notice **what Jesus asked him to do?** "Don't be afraid. Just keep your eyes on me, not on your fear, and trust me." And sometimes to do that you have to **ignore what people say**. Jesus did. *"Don't listen to them, trust me."*

The words of Jesus gave Jairus hope in his fear. They always do.

To hear him you have to be willing to **ignore a lot of other voices**. When they got to his house, people **laughed** at Jesus, but Jesus **threw them out** of the house. Threw them out! Max Lucado says it like this, "Faith sometimes begins by stuffing your ears with cotton." You have to simply **stop listening to some of the voices** in your life, especially the ones that always **criticize** and always **discourage** you and always **laugh** at you. That ones that say you could never really be forgiven, never really start over, never really get through this mess, never really live a great life for God... Jesus threw people like that out of the house. He can do that for you, too!

St Paul said that to inherit God's future, you have to be able to...
*look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are
 unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that
 are unseen are eternal...*
We walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 4.18, 5:7 (RSV)

Jesus was teaching Jairus to see the unseen, to reach for a future that he had never even dared to dream about, and to walk by faith...

You remember last week I talked about **surrendering our dreams** to the Lord. It is **part of our worship**. Our dreams are **very powerful**. But our dreams about life are always, in the best of us, **twisted and bent** by our brokenness. They **filter** how we see our world and sometimes even **blind** us to what is really going on around us. **Paul's dreams had to be shattered** and **surrendered** before Paul could discover God's dreams for him.

Jairus had a dream, too. And it was **a good one**. It had to do with being a synagogue ruler, and a respected and loved spiritual leader, with being a model for his community, and with raising his daughter. And then **life crashed his dream**, and he had to let it go. He had to surrender it to Jesus, and face his fears in doing so, and just throw his whole desperate situation at the feet of Jesus.

The result was that **Jesus gave him back his daughter**. And did something else – **took away his fear of death**. Do you think Jairus or his daughter or his family or his friends **ever forgot that day**? What do you think they thought when they heard that Jesus was teaching that he was the resurrection and the life, and that people who believed in him would never die? What do you think they thought after the crucifixion of Jesus when these wild reports of his resurrection began to circulate? Jairus would have heard it all.

Jairus was a man who had a good plan for this life – but as good as his

plans were, they were nowhere near good enough. When his plans crashed, his prayer for his daughter was **an extension of her natural life** for a few more decades. But Jesus' plan for his daughter was not just a few decades more of a natural life, but **a supernatural life** that would extend into his forever. Sometimes God lets life shake up the good dreams you have for your life in order to give you the God-sized dreams he has for your life. No, not just for your life, **for your eternity.**

Will you trust God with your future?

Steve Matson's told a story last night about how they catch monkeys in S America... This is a monkey trap (a mason jar, sized to the hand of the monkey, chained to a tree, w. a banana inside the open top – monkey can put his hand in it and grab the banana, but not take it out w. the banana in his hand, because his hand is now too large to get out of the mouth of the jar. He will stay there w. the banana in his hand rather than let it go. Until the guys come along and make monkey stew out of him)

That banana is like the dreams and plans for the future that we hold on to. **Some of them good, some of them far less. Most of them of our** own making. Not very many of them are as big as God's good and perfect plans for us. And we won't let our plans go, no matter how dangerous it gets. We have dreams like that for our homes and families, for our careers and lifestyles, for our relationships and our children and our retirement years. Some of them are good. But maybe not good enough. And we hold on to them far too tightly.

Some of these dreams have even seemed larger than God in your life. Can you let them go? Give them to him? As you think about this, look again at Jesus – walking though your neighborhood. Listen to him say, *"Do not fear, only believe."* Will you let go of your future and yield it to him, so that his plans, his future, can be your real future?

That is part of a life of worship.