

Mark 5:21-43
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“Turning Annoying into Anointing”

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Interruptions in our work day are annoying. Admittedly, some jobs are designed to run on interruptions, if you are an Emergency room nurse, you always have to be ready for whatever is next because anything could be coming through the door.

But many jobs are not grounded on the assumption of interruptions and when we look at how interruptions harm productivity we find some very disturbing statistics. A University of California – Irvine study found People spend an average of 11 minutes on a project before they're interrupted. It takes them on average 25 minutes to get back to the point they were at before a distraction.

This same study found employees in cubes are interrupted nearly 30 percent more often than people in private offices. Researchers found a 2.8-second interruption often doubled the error rates of employee. And these error rates tripled after a 4.5-second distraction. Workers who are frequently interrupted reported 9 percent higher exhaustion rates, almost as high as the rate for exhaustion due to work overload. The effects of interruptions on workers' productivity, energy, and work satisfaction were estimated to cost \$588 billion a year in the United States... In other words, interruptions are annoying, and sometimes very costly.

A retired colleague in the UCC tells a story about a time early in his ministry when he was interrupted. He was moving down the hallway from his study to the sanctuary, running a few minutes later than usual on Sunday morning. The elders were in the church leading praise songs and the large congregation was singing and praising God.

The moment had come for the Pastor to enter the sanctuary and move the church into rousing prayer and hope-filled preaching. The organ was playing, the choir singing and swaying, the congregation ready to praise God.

And as the pastor approached the door a member walked up to him and said, “I need to talk to you for a few minutes.” The pastor replied, “I can talk right after services.” The member said, “I'm sorry I need to talk now.”

“But the entire congregation is waiting for me, can we talk later?” said the pastor. “Pastor my life is falling apart and I don't know where to go or what to do. I don't know if I am going to make it to the end of worship. I need to talk now.” The pastor tells that he reluctantly agreed, he took the man back in his study, and they talked for about 15 minutes.

Today we meet Jesus in the middle of a busy day of ministry. He is trying to find some rest and even before our savior steps onto the shore he finds a crowd there to greet him. They are expecting a word of courage, they are eager for a miracle. Each person there needs Jesus --

And from among that crowd appears Jairus, a leader of the synagogue who wants Jesus to save his dying daughter.

Running on fumes, Jesus goes with Jairus. This seems like the kind of work a Savior just has to muster up the energy to do. On his way the crowd follows, pressing in closer and closer, sort of like being trapped in a late-night crowd at Summerfest.

Suddenly as he is moving through the crowd Jesus feels power go out of him and discovers a woman has interrupted his life-saving work. He turns and finds a woman who has had a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had been examined by medicine men, she has taken prescriptions with side effects worse than her ailment, more than a decade of suffering she comes to Jesus believing he can help her. What endurance. What a powerful example of faith. She touches his robe and is healed.

This encounter becomes a long interruption in Jesus' already long day. One of those annoying, productivity demolishing, costly interruptions. Jesus is showing us that sometimes, the interruption in our day... is an opportunity for mutual blessing, sometimes the interruption is our ministry as it becomes an opportunity to share our faith in God through caring, listening, peacemaking, loving, and forgiving?

As I think about our annoyance with interruptions I realized it is the very nature of Justice issues to interrupt our lives. We are not naïve, most of us realize people of different cultures and backgrounds are not equal, men and women are not treated equally, we know our immigration system could work better, we know we need to do better to care for creation and work on environmental justice. But being reminded of these issues feels, and here is a theological word, icky. It feels like it an interference with what we have to do that day. We want to live in the world, do our part make things better, and take care of our responsibilities, and allow others to do the same.

Today in our story Jesus is interrupted by this woman who touches his robe. He feels power go out of him. We know how interruptions can drain us. Yet, here our Savior has a choice to forge ahead with Jairus for one last moment of ministry before he collapses in rest, or he can use this moment to turn **annoying, into an anointing.**

Every time I hear this story I am reminded of a phrase one of my seminary professors used. He said, "Jesus had a ministry of interruption. You will too. You can either love your schedule, or you can love people."

When the interruptions of life come, and they will come just as surely as the sun will rise and set, we need to remember that ole cliché, "Your life may be the only bible some people will ever read." Then we will begin to see God in the interruption and it becomes an opportunity to renew our call to love as boldly as Christ loves. It becomes an opportunity for God to work through us to turn annoying, into an anointing.

So just as you hit save on your computer calendar each morning, or pencil in one last item on your desk calendar... be ready – something new is going to come up, someone unexpected is going to drop in, and you will have another opportunity to live out Christ's call to love his people.

Amen