



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday we will hear a Gospel of two miracles. First, Jesus heals the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years, and then He raises the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus from the dead.

St. Luke highlights these similarities to make different points about the power of faith. The woman with the flow of blood is bold enough to touch the hem of Jesus's garment, and when she confesses before the crowd, Christ blesses her, saying, "*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.*" (Luke 8:48) Let us compare this with the attitude of Jairus's household, who are overcome with grief at the death of a child. Grief hardens their hearts, so when Christ tells them, "*Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping*", the Evangelist says that "*...they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.*" (Luke 8:52-53) I now wish to tell another story, which illustrates the inability to understand the mind of God.

A man was the victim of a terrible shipwreck, and after many hours of struggle, he rode the waves to a nearby island. There he set to work to build shelter & a fire, using what few trees there were, and every day, he looked to the sea, carefully tending his fire and praying for a ship to pass, so that he could be rescued. One afternoon, after returning from his search for food, he was full of despair to see that his campfire had not only gone out: it had burned his home to nothing! All this work to keep the fire going, and his only signal to the outside world was gone forever! "This," he said to himself, "is the worst thing that could have ever happened to me!"

However, the very next day, a ship approached his island! He was saved! Onboard, he thanked the ship's captain and asked how it was that they had happened to find him?

"We saw the fire burning yesterday and came back today."

We must remember that while the healing of the woman with the flow of blood delayed Christ and His Disciples on their way to Jairus' dying daughter, our Lord also knew their hearts were weak. When Christ finally arrives, his household says to the grieving father, "*Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer.*" (Luke 8:49) Like the shipwrecked man, they cannot see that God has a solution. Where the man saw the fire as destruction, it was his salvation; and where those of little faith wailed for a death, they could not understand that Christ was to demonstrate a greater power than healing: in raising Jairus' daughter, He prefigured His own Resurrection.

Like the woman who dared to approach Jesus, we are meant to leave our prayer in the hands of God, who also loves us and wants the best for us. What we might see as a disappointing obstacle, is meant to strengthen our reliance, not on ourselves, but on God. When we choose to trust in Him, the fire that caused despair yesterday, could bring joy tomorrow.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta