**Desperation is the Beginning**

**FBC Albemarle**

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Back in 2004, Tim McGraw, a country music star, released a song titled, “Live Like You’re Dying.” The song told a story of a man in his early 40’s receiving the bad news that he had a terminal disease. He was asked how that has impacted how he lived his life since then and what changes he made. The chorus was his answer:

I went sky divin',

I went rocky mountain climbin',

I went 2.7 seconds on a bull name Fumanchu.

And I loved deeper,

And I spoke sweeter,

And I gave forgiveness I've been denying,

And he said someday I hope you get the chance,

To live like you were dyin'.

So I wonder what our answer would be? What would you do if you had one day to live?

This was the very question that a researcher asked to 625 young men in 12 different German vocational schools. The researcher reported a wide variety of responses including the expected, get intoxicated, get a fix, get a girl. Some said they would spend the time with family, others wanted to climb a mountain or sail their boat, and yet others wanted to go on a picnic with friends. One student indicated that he would spend the time reviewing his photo albums and savoring the memories. An 18-year-old young man wrote: I would like to spend my last evening in church alone with God and thank him for my full and happy life.

It is an interesting question and a daunting exercise to answer it. What would we do if we knew that we had but 24 hours to live? Someone once found Francis of Assisi hoeing his garden and put the same question to him. Francis simply replied, “I would finish hoeing my garden.” And I remember how John Wesley was asked what he would do if he knew Jesus' second coming would occur the next day; Wesley replied he would continue with what he planned to do, including calling on a friend and preaching that night in a nearby town. A popular news columnist imagined what the world would be like if everyone suddenly knew there were only 24 hours left for them to live. He said the telephone circuits would be overloaded with desperate people trying to call family and friends in order to say, “I love you.”

Desperation. It is a good word to describe what was happening in our text today. We find two different stories wrapped into one. Some theologians call this a Markan sandwich since Mark liked this style of storytelling. The flavor of the outer story adds zest to the inner one; the taste of the inner one is meant in turn to permeate the outer one. The outer story is about Jairus and his dying daughter. Jairus was one of the synagogue presidents who probably were not a big fan of Jesus. Jesus was the rogue rabbi who was causing a stir among the people and changing how things have worked around there for ages. The local experts of the Law were upset at most of the things Jesus was teaching about the kingdom of God. Thus, Jairus probably would not have invited Jesus to be a guest rabbi in his synagogue. However, when his daughter got very sick and near death, Jairus was desperate. He had heard of Jesus healing people in nearby towns so he swallowed his pride, put work and the religious controversy aside to take a chance on Jesus being the answer to his daughter’s sickness. He personally went to Jesus, threw himself at his feet and begged him to come and place his hands on his sick baby girl.

At this point in the story, Mark breaks off and another character enters as the inner story. A woman who had chronic internal bleeding was desperate to find healing for herself. In midst of a crowd, she reached out to just touch something of Jesus in order to find healing. When she was able to touch his cloak, the bleeding stopped immediately and she was freed from her suffering. Jesus felt some power leave him so he turned and asked who touched him. Though she did not want to reveal her identity, she threw herself at his feet and told Jesus the whole story.

Then Mark returns to the outer story as the suspense heightens even more. The servants of Jairus came to report that the daughter had already died and that Jesus was too late. But Jesus reassures Jairus that his daughter was not dead but just asleep. The men laughed at Jesus but Jesus continued to make his way to the house where the girl laid. Jesus and his three closest disciples went into the house where his friends witnessed the miracle of the 12-year-old girl being raised from the dead.

Two people desperate for Jesus for different reasons but both felt they had nowhere else to turn. They were at their wits end and they were willing to try anything. So in their desperation, they turned to Jesus. Have you ever felt desperate? Are you desperate today? For many of us, desperation feels like the end. When we have tried everything else and nothing seemed to work, we finally turn to the place where we should have turned to in the first place. We turn to Jesus. However, rather than turning his back on us for not having believed in the first place, Jesus helps us to realize that desperation is the beginning to hope and faith within a new life in Christ.

When we try everything in our own power and we come to a point of desperation, we come to a place where we learn to embrace humility. Jairus humbled himself before Jesus because he had nowhere else to go. He was willing to let go of his high position within the synagogue for the possibility of saving his daughter’s life. When we reach the point of desperation, we are stripped of our pride and we learn to humble ourselves before the Lord.

Humility isn't a trait that has much appeal in our postmodern world. In America, we like to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We like to see ourselves as a "can-do" culture -- bursting at the seams with good ideas, good intentions and good results. Humility, on the other hand, suggests to us an aroma of helplessness. It is the quality that admits there are things we cannot do, problems we cannot solve, forces we cannot control. This "can-not" admission clashes terribly with our "can-do" arrogance. However, it is only when we humble ourselves before the Lord that we can receive true hope and experience true faith. We must let go of our pride in order for God to hold us in His mighty hands.

In desperation, we also learn what it means to be persistent and to persevere. No one likes being in a position of desperation. But it is in those moments that we stop trying to fix it ourselves and we learn to trust God to meet all of our needs. Both Jairus and the woman were persistent. Though they were desperate, they had not given up. Jesus might have been their last chance but they were willing to take that chance. They were persistent in their pursuit and they persevered in finding faith and hope.

James tells us to “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James understood that difficulties were going to be a part of life. Desperate times are a reality for everyone. But in those moments, we learn to trust God a little more, depend on the strength of the Holy Spirit and lean on the support of fellow believers. It will help us to mature in order that we might not grow weary in doing what is right. Whether in sickness, financial struggles, broken relationships, bad work situations or something else, we need to remember that God walks with us.

Lastly, our desperation leads to increased confidence in Christ. In their desperation, both Jairus and the woman found healing not only physically but also spiritually. It took some amount of faith for Jairus and the woman to turn to Jesus to find healing. However, imagine how much more faith and hope they had in Jesus after they encountered him?

In the Gospels, Jesus made us numerous promises that should encourage us and give us confidence in our relationship with him. Jesus said, “Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matt. 7:7-8) He promised, “I am the vine and you are the branches. If a person remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) He also said, “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” We should have confidence that Jesus will hold true to each of his promises. The more we encounter our Living God; greater will be our faith, hope and confidence in Christ.

Are you desperate? Have you reached your breaking point? Has your life spun out of control? We don’t have to face death to feel desperate but the Good News is that what seems like the end is really the beginning to greater hope and faith in the Lord. There are brighter days ahead. In desperation, we are led to greater humility, greater persistence and perseverance and greater confidence in Christ. When we are desperate, we simply need to Cry Out To Jesus.

**"Cry Out To Jesus"**

To everyone who's lost someone they love

Long before it was their time

You feel like the days you had were not enough

when you said goodbye

And to all of the people with burdens and pains

Keeping you back from your life

You believe that there's nothing and there is no one

Who can make it right

There is hope for the helpless

Rest for the weary

Love for the broken heart

There is grace and forgiveness

Mercy and healing

He'll meet you wherever you are

Cry out to Jesus, Cry out to Jesus

For the marriage that's struggling just to hang on

They lost all of their faith in love

They've done all they can to make it right again

Still it's not enough

For the ones who can't break the addictions and chains

You try to give up but you come back again

Just remember that you're not alone in your shame

And your suffering

When your lonely

And it feels like the whole world is falling on you

You just reach out, you just cry out to Jesus

Cry to Jesus

To the widow who suffers from being alone

Wiping the tears from her eyes

For the children around the world without a home

Say a prayer tonight