

TWO DAUGHTERS
[written in oral form]

Mark 5:21-43 (also used Judges 11:30-40)
Proper 8, Year B

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Before I start, we must be reminded that nothing in the Bible is there by accident. All of it was written for a purpose.

Even the historical accounts are not verbatim, but rather instructive theology in the context of an historical event. They are intended to teach and challenge, so that we will learn and grow.

Many of the stories try to disclose the nature of God, and they often attempt to undo bad theology, and correct destructive misconceptions that we somehow acquire about life and then project on God.

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One such example is assuming we know the mind of God.

This is evident when someone declares they know the will of God for others/ for a group of people.

Another example of bad and primitive theology is the devotion to paying for reward, which includes sacrificial atonement and redemption by works. It can also be called, "an eye for an eye."

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Our country's retaliatory tariffs are an eye for an eye, and will only exacerbate the situation.

Also, being Canada Day, we may hear the myth that soldiers died to make us free. Their tragic deaths were for political reasons, and they didn't buy us freedom.

This **bad sacrificial** theology demands that we must balance the evil with an equal amount of good, and the task is daunting and monumentally impossible!

This is the angst of the social activist.

Fortunately that belief is wrong, and comes from the temple / sacrifice mentality which is not only dangerous, but down right destructive!as the story of the 1st daughter will demonstrate. ~~

This story is found in Judges chapter 11, which was not read.

The story's main character is Jephthah.

Have you ever heard of Jephthah before?

During the period of the conquest of Canaan there was a man named Jephthah. Jephthah was a mighty warrior, like Hercules.

He made rulers a little nervous.

Because of his reputation and background, he was forced to leave Israel and live in the land of Tob.

There, his reputation grew. Everyone, all around, had heard stories of the "brave" and "mighty" Jephthah,of the renegade warrior. He was a kind of bandit warlord.

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There came a time when Israel was threatened by the Ammonites who were making war on Israel.

Fearing they would be defeated, the leaders decided that they needed a mighty warrior, and sought out Jephthah.

They went to him, and begged him to return and lead them in battle.

Jephthah, balked at their request saying, “aren’t you the very ones who kicked me out, and now you want me to return?”

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Even so, they continued to beg him to come back.

So, sensing the opportunity to make a good deal, Jephthah declared, “I will return and, with God’s help, lead Israel in battle, **but** you must make me your leader. He mastered the "art of the deal."

They were desperate, and they agreed.

Jephthah, said good-bye to his wife and daughter, and made provisions for all of his animals (his chickens, cattle and sheep), and returned to his homeland, Israel, and became their leader.

He organized the army, and tried to negotiate with the Ammonites. But, the Ammonites were set for war, and did not feel like **submitting**.

So, both armies, made their plans, and moved toward each other for battle. Jephthah was a little nervous: the Ammonites had a bigger and stronger army.

So, before the battle, Jephthah **negotiated to** God.

It was a unilateral PRAYER– he was doing the talking, and God had to listen.

In his prayer, Jephthah made a vow to God promising,

“If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, **then the first thing that I see when I return home from victory, I will give to you God as a burnt offering.**” Remember that vow – [repeat].

He likely had a chicken or maybe a lamb in mind.

As it happened, he led Israel to a decisive victory. The Ammonites were routed, and utterly defeated. It was a slaughter.

It **appeared** as though God had granted him the Victory.

After the battle and celebration, Jephthah wearily headed for home.

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As he was about to crest the last hill before his house, Jephthah imagined the scene that awaited him chickens scattered about, and probably a few other animals, everything would be so peaceful just as he left it. “Home,” he thought, how good to be home, and of course he was more than anxious to reunite with his wife and daughter.

The sun was low in the sky as he cleared the top of the hill, and he gazed down, through the evening glare. Around the house were long shadows from the trees, **but no animals.** They must have been put away for the evening, he thought.

**And then,** the front door burst open and out ran, dancing and singing, his excited daughter so glad to see her daddy home. **His one and only daughter.** She was about 12 years old.

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When he saw her, the text says, “...he tore his clothes and cried out, ‘**Alas my daughter! you have bought me very low**I am crushed for I have made a vow to the Lord, and I cannot take it back.’”

** He had made a deal to God, and his one and only daughter became a **burnt offering**.
How terribly sad..... How horrible!

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Jephthah sacrificed his **only daughter**. ,,,, His only child! His future!

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This was an avoidable tragedy.
God did not ask for that sacrifice! It was all Jephthah's doing.

He thought that he had struck a deal with God, but God wasn't even involved with the process. The prayer was not a prayer.

He thought that he had to buy a blessing, and that is bad theology and **dangerous theology**.

He valued the codes from the past, the creeds, the sense of honour... more than he valued his own daughter -- the future.

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This story of Jephthah is an abomination, an embarrassment in the history of Israel. And, it is in the Bible to remind us, teach us, to avoid such reckless theology and behaviour.

It stands as an example of the dangers of thinking that we **don't** have to listen to God and that we can strike a deal with God.....striving to balance the scales of life.

We cannot buy God. We cannot pay enough to undo what is wrong.

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There is another story in the Bible about a daughter, and it's is found in the Gospel of Mark beginning in Mark 5:22.

Jesus is travelling about, and talking with people along the way, and as usual a large crowd is gathered around him. When out from the crowd, a man surges forward, a synagogue leader named Jairus who falls at Jesus' feet begging repeatedly,

“my little daughter is at the point of death! Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and alive.”

This is interesting because synagogue people tended to be skeptical of Jesus.

In spite of that, and responding to his faith, Jesus immediately left with Jairus to go visit his ailing daughter.

Also interestingly: a synagogue official's job is to negotiate-- to tell people how to balance their sins with payments. He does the bargaining. But amazingly or, as a last resort, Jairus put his faith in Jesus, and simply asked. There was no bargaining!

There was humble request; there was response, and there was a walk together.

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As they headed toward the Jairus' home, the crowd followed and slowed their progress with questions and more requests. As they were on their way, people from Jairus' home met them and reported to him, **"there is no need in bothering the teacher, Jesus, any more because your daughter is dead."**

Overhearing their report, Jesus said to Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe."

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Keep on believing: the wonderful message for troubled times.

*Keep on believing. Which makes no sense, when all seems lost and the end of the rope is reached.
"Do not fear, only believe"*

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Jesus stayed with Jairus, continued with him to his house.

When they arrived, there was lots of commotion. People were weeping and wailing loudly! Jesus made his way through the distraught gathering, and entered the house where there were more people crying and wailing.

Jesus asked, "Why do you make such a commotion, and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

Nearly everyone there, openly laughed at Jesus' bold declaration. They thought him an idiot. They knew dead. **She was dead!**

The situation was hopeless,..... they thought.

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Not hindered by their affront, Jesus politely asked them to step outside.

Sometimes, when cynics and nonbelievers become a distraction, then they are not welcome.

Jesus, then took the child's mother and father, Jairus, and the few disciples who were with him into the room where the daughter was lying. All was quiet and still. Through the heaviness of the moment, Jesus approached the side of the bed where the child was, and held her frail, limp hand.

Here, now you will see a glimpse of God's way!

Here you will see grace!

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From verse 41, Jesus said to the daughter, "Talitha cum, which means, Little Girl get up."

*It may seem strange why the Aramaic word was kept in the translation, but I think it was intentional.*

Talitha is Aramaic for "daughter", translated as "little girl".

It is from the same Hebrew root of the word used in Judges for Jephthah's little girl. I don't believe this was a coincidence.

Here we have ... **A daughter brought back to life!**

Jesus broke the rules. He broke the natural laws so that  
**a 12 year old daughter could be brought back to life!**

One daughter was needlessly killed!  
One daughter was amazingly saved!

**\*\*God, through Jesus, undid what was once done wrong!**

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This is a lesson, NOT about the miracle of restoration, BUT rather about God and what we need to value and focus on.

God is gracious, and Grace can NOT be purchased or earned.
Grace is the blossoming of love.

Moreover, these two episodes are more about the fathers and their devotion and theology.

One father was a slave to the past, to the constructs of human limitations...where might makes right and power is a currency.
Jephthah chose archaic honour, and killed his own daughter.
He killed the future.

Jairus chose love and grace when he called out to Jesus.
For the sake of his daughter, he broke from his customs and reached out to Christ.

His daughter / the future was saved.

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It is Canada Day.  
Our nation has choices to make, and so do we.