

“Death was not God’s doing, he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living.” The author of the Book of Wisdom could not be more direct in communicating the nature of our God. This message is communicated time and time again throughout the pages of the Bible: our God is a God of the living, not of the dead.

However, this can easily remain just an abstract idea – a comforting idea, but an idea nonetheless. It is only when we turn to the story of Jesus that we see this idea fleshed out in the concrete terms. In today’s gospel we see in Jesus the One who has conquered death in the story of Jarius’ daughter as told by the evangelist Mark.

Mark is a master story teller. He employs ingenious literary devices to sharpen the dramatic intensity and to highlight the theological themes of his gospel. One such device he uses is called “sandwiching”, placing one story within another. We see this device in the story of Jarius’ daughter.

The synagogue official, Jarius, rushes to Jesus and pleads with him to heal his daughter who is at the point of death. On the way to the home of Jarius Jesus is interpreted. Someone has reached out and touched his cloak and he has felt his healing power course from his being. He turns and invites the woman who has been healed to step forward so that he may commend her faith.

This delay has only increased the dramatic tension of the story. Death has been hovering over the little girl, but now it appears too late. A group arrive with the news, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” We can easily imagine these words delivered in a dead-pan monotone. The very words are lifeless, void of animation and bereft of hope. However, Jesus is not perturbed. He presses on only to find a throng surrounding the home of Jarius, the air thick with grief. It is at this point that the authority of Jesus is most evident. The forces of death cannot compete with the One who is the author of life. He takes the little girl by the hand. She is restored to life.

***Peace & blessings,
Gerard***