

Luke 8:40-42, 49-56

Sermon: **Let us be such fathers**

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THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIAL

1. Today we go a little bit back in the narrative; in the previous sermon I spoke about the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. Jair, the synagogue official, also witnessed that event. Who is Jair? Jair is a desperate father who has a sick daughter, and in his desperation, he decides to find Jesus so that he may ask Him to heal his child.

1.1 As before, we will compare the text from the Synoptic Gospels to gain a fuller picture of the event that lies before us.

1.2 **(Luke 8:40–42)** And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. And a man named Jairus came, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet and began to implore Him to come to his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying.

1.3 **(Mark 5:21–23)** When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so, He stayed by the seashore. One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live."

1.4 From Mark we know that Jesus returned by boat to the other side of the shore. This means that if the Decapolis was on the eastern side, it is very likely that Jesus returned from where He had started—back to the western shore. Back to Galilee... perhaps to Capernaum?

1.5 Scripture does not give us the exact location where Jesus returned, but it is very likely that it was Capernaum. And why do I make that assumption? We read in Luke that the people were waiting for Him. Why would they be waiting for Him? Because Jesus and His disciples lived among them, and

therefore their expectation of His return was justified, I believe—and because of that, Capernaum seems the most likely.

1.6 But before Jesus could begin the journey from the shore toward the house, something very significant happens in front of all who were present—and there were many of them, as the Gospels tell us. The synagogue official, named Jair, falls at the feet of Jesus and begs Him through tears to save his daughter who is on the verge of death.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIAL

2. What responsibilities did a synagogue official have? The official—or overseer, whichever is easier to understand—was responsible for administrative duties. He oversaw the conduct of the service within the synagogue and ensured that the worship was carried out according to the regulations of the oral tradition of the time, which was largely led by the Pharisaic movement.

2.1 Moreover, he maintained the synagogue building and made sure that the structure was functional in every respect so that proper worship of Yahweh and His Law could take place within it—the very reason for which the synagogue was built.

2.3 Jair was one of these overseers, which means that he was surely highly respected within the community to which he belonged. In other words, he was certainly well known to the crowd that witnessed the moment he fell at the feet of Jesus.

HE DOES NOT CARE

3. This is undoubtedly a desperate act—as I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon—motivated by a father who deeply loves his daughter. Picture him: in the midst of a crowd, likely pushing through others, he dramatically falls before Jesus in front of everyone. From this we can conclude that at this moment Jair does not care that he is the official of the synagogue. Jair does not use his status to find some alternative, quieter way to reach Jesus. By this I mean: fearing the scribes and the Pharisees, he could have secretly sent one of his household members to call Jesus. But he does not do this. He comes himself and “earnestly implores Jesus while kneeling at His feet...,” as the text says.

3.1 Let us recall something: up to this point, Jesus had already had several serious confrontations with the Pharisees. The banquet at Matthew the tax collector’s house—where the Pharisees attacked Him: *“Why do You, who call Yourself a Teacher, eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*¹ The healing of the paralytic, where Jesus said that the man’s sins were forgiven—right in front of the Pharisees.² The plucking of grain on the Sabbath—where, according to the Pharisaic oral tradition, the disciples of Jesus were not allowed to do this; such an act was considered a profanation of the Sabbath. And He had even declared Himself to be the Son of God.³ And finally, we have the event where Jesus, inside the synagogue—again on the Sabbath—publicly healed the withered hand of one of the members of

¹ Luke 5:27-39

² Luke 5:17-26

³ Luke 6:1-5

that synagogue: “The Pharisees were filled with rage, and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus,”⁴ as the text tells us.

3.2 I presume that Jair knew about all these events; he was in administrative service. Again—why do I presume this? Because if we consider that the Pharisees had the habit of writing reports which they sent to the Sanhedrin⁵, especially if those reports contained material that threatened the religious order dominating Israel at the time, all those reports would have gone through Jair’s hands. In other words, he was the one sending them to the Sanhedrin.

3.3 Therefore, Jair—knowing that his reputation might be destroyed by what he was about to do—does not care; he chooses to do what any father who loves his daughter would do.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A FATHER AND A CHILD

4. Since we are already on the subject (a father loving his daughter), I want to say the following: our ears have heard from other people how, in this or that time, children were treated in such and such a way. Some have told us that when they were children, they had to wait on the floor beside the table until the adults finished eating, and then they would receive whatever leftovers remained.

4.1 Unfortunately, we have countless times heard — and perhaps even personally witnessed — a father physically venting his anger on his own children. On the other hand, some biblical teachers claim that in the time of Jesus, children were had primarily for the purpose of assisting their parents in daily activities. They say that until they were old enough to begin helping their parents, children were viewed more as a burden rather than a blessing, etc., etc.

4.2 I do not know what to say to all of that except this: I personally believe that throughout all of history there have been selfish, corrupt, and evil fathers — regardless of the culture in which they lived or the historical era to which they belonged. On the other hand, I believe that there have also been, throughout all of history, fathers who were caring, patient, and full of love toward their children.

LET US BE SUCH FATHERS

5. In this case, we have a father who belongs to the second category. But I again ask myself: would Jair have loved his daughter this much if, for example, he had both a son and a daughter? Or would his focus then have been more on the son? In the sense of: *“I need to teach him the Torah, I need to teach him what it means to be a man, I need to teach him the commandments of God — after all, he carries on my lineage, my name...”*

5.1 In other words, so preoccupied with the thought that the son is more important, perhaps Jair would never have truly come to know that beautiful human being — his daughter — who also would have been part of his life. I do not know, but what I do know is that God decided that Jair would have

⁴ Luke 6:6-11

⁵ Sanhedrin – Definition: The term Sanhedrin comes from the Greek word synedrion, meaning “to sit together,” or “council.” The Great Council was the Jewish judicial and administrative body. The Sanhedrin was composed of members of the local elite — including members of the high priestly family, scribes (religious experts), and elders.

a single daughter. And Jair surely taught his only daughter the commandments of God, teaching her the history of their people and what was expected of her as a future woman.

5.2 But also, because she was an only child, he had the unique opportunity to know his daughter on a deeper level — a level he might not have recognized if he had had more children. In short, I believe that Jair loved his daughter deeply.

5.3 So should we, fathers who declare ourselves to be disciples of Jesus — regardless of how many children we have, whether sons, daughters, both, or only one child — we must strive to know them as individuals, of course as time allows, and teach them all: about God, about His plan for this reality, about Christ and why He came into the world.

5.4 Let us remind ourselves of something: God said to Moses on Mount Sinai, during the establishing of the Covenant with Israel, that the entire nation must obey His commandments.⁶ He did not say only the men must obey them.

5.5 The same applies today to us Christians: our wives, our children, and we as fathers must learn to follow and carry out the commandments of Jesus in our lives. And what does that look like? Let us be like Jair — let us love our children, recognizing that they have been given to us as a gift from God so that we may first teach them God's commandments, which we know are: righteous, true, merciful, gracious, strong in moral purity, wise, exalted, perfect — and in the end — "holy."

— Let us be such fathers! —

HOSTILE TOWARD JESUS

6. All right, let us move on with the text. We now skip the event with the woman who touched Jesus' cloak and move to the moment when Jair's household meets Jair and Jesus — intending to inform him that his daughter has unfortunately died.

6.1 **(Luke 8:49–56)** While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." But when Jesus heard this, He responded to him, "Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter, John, and James, and the girl's father and mother. Now they were all weeping and mourning for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. He, however, took her by the hand and spoke forcefully, saying, "Child, arise!" And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He ordered that something be given her to eat. Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

6.2 **(Mark 5:35–43)** While He was still speaking, people came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why bother the Teacher further?" But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid, only believe." And He allowed no one to accompany Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. They came to

⁶ Exodus 34:10-35

the house of the synagogue official, and He saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. And after entering, He said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child has not died, but is asleep.” And they began laughing at Him. But He put them all outside, and took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was. And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). And immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. And He gave them strict orders that no one was to know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

6.3 Very well. After healing the sick woman, the household of Jair arrives to deliver the painful news: his daughter has died. The next sentence that came from their mouths was, *“Do not trouble the Teacher anymore.”* This statement can mean two things in my view:

1. Just like Jair, his household had begun to take interest in Jesus — they had started listening to what others were saying about His teaching — they liked what they heard — and now they show Him respect by addressing Him with the title Teacher.
2. They were not like Jair. They were not interested in what Jesus had to say, but they were afraid for Jair. After all, he was the synagogue official; his life and their lives were intimately tied to the “righteous” people known as the Pharisees, scribes, and experts in the Law. And that life had its advantages. They knew that Jair’s reputation was potentially endangered by his decision to seek out Jesus. But out of respect for Jair, they did not want to say anything — after all, his daughter was dying. And when she died, this is what they thought in their hearts: *“Now that she has died, it is better that we go and get Jair before he brings into the house a man whose arrival will shame him — and us along with him.”*

6.4 I believe that the second meaning applies in this passage. I believe that Jair’s household was hostile toward Jesus.

THEY WERE AFRAID FOR THEIR REPUTATION

7. Let us now walk with Jair toward his home. As we examine the following verses, I will try to convince you that the second meaning is indeed the more logical choice in this event.

7.1 So, let us begin. Jesus comforts Jair — He responds to the shock that overcame him when he heard that his daughter had died. I believe that Jesus wanted to awaken him from the anxiety attack that had suddenly crept into his mind and heart: *“Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well!”*

7.2 I assume Jair knew that Jesus could heal living people from sickness, but that Jesus could raise someone from the dead... that was something entirely different. I do not know what Jair thought in that moment, but desperation can be a powerful motivator; although he did not know what Jesus would do next, he obeyed Him. In the end, what did he have to lose? His daughter had already died.

— In other words, Jair believed the words of Jesus even though he had no prior evidence (Jesus raising someone from the dead) to support such belief. He believed that Jesus was the Son of God. —

7.3 Whatever the case, unlike his household — who feared for the reputation they had — he still did not care about his reputation. Jair loved his daughter, and that was more important to him than anything else he possessed (his reputation) in his life. In other words, he was willing to sacrifice everything just to see his daughter healthy and alive again. While his household, unfortunately, I believe, used her death to protect themselves.

7.4 I know this sounds harsh coming from me: *“How can you say, Danijel, that his household was thinking of themselves at the very moment their loved one had just died?”*

7.5 At their mother’s funeral, there was a sister and a brother who had not spoken to each other for years. Pride and selfishness were visible on their faces at the very moment they were burying their mother. They did not even look at each other during the funeral. They left without speaking to one another.

7.6 With that being said, unfortunately, even in moments when we believe that selfishness, unforgiveness, and pride surely would not be present — they are. Human beings are indeed capable of thinking first of themselves, even when they should not. I repeat, I know this sounds harsh on my part, but that does not mean it isn’t true; this story of the brother and sister proves my point.

MOURNERS

8. All right, let us continue. We see that Jesus invited only Peter, John, and James, the brother of John. Why only them? According to the biblical accounts, it can be concluded that Jesus knew who each of His apostles would become, and what role each of them would fulfill after He ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father. And because of that knowledge, He decided who would receive, and when they would receive, a new insight that was closely tied to His title as the Christ.

8.1 Likewise, this is not the only time Jesus took these three somewhere to be alone with Him.⁷ Through all the events I listed in the footnote, it can be concluded that during His ministry Jesus developed a closer relationship with these three than with the other nine apostles. But in this event, Jesus was ready to share a new theological truth only with these three — for now, I repeat.

8.2 After Jesus called these three disciples to come with Him, they arrived at Jairus’s house. Inside there was a large crowd; everyone was already weeping and mourning for his daughter.

8.3 At that time, it was customary to hire professional mourners. I am not entirely sure what mourning looked like in Jewish culture, but from conversations with my own family, I know that something similar was practiced even in the time of our grandparents. Usually, women from the town or village would come to the funeral and loudly lament during the ceremonial procession. They would mourn with words like, *“Why did you leave us so young?”*, *“We will miss you,”* *“Greet those who went before you,”* *“Kiss our fathers and mothers when you reach them,”* and similar expressions.

⁷ Mark 9:1–8: Jesus’ transfiguration while meeting with Moses and Elijah.

Mark 13:3–8: Jesus speaks privately with three of His disciples about the troubles awaiting their nation.

Mark 14:32–42: Jesus experiences anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, taking three disciples with Him to support Him through prayer.

8.4 What interests me is the following: how is it that the mourners were already there? Are they not called only after someone dies?

8.5 I assume that Jair and his wife, because of their daughter's severe medical condition, wanted to prepare themselves ahead of time for what could come at any moment — her death. Their family physician surely told them that the end was near. That is why family, friends, Pharisees, scribes, and professional mourners were already gathered. They knew death was at the door and wanted to be ready for all the ceremonial rituals that followed her passing.

8.6 The expectation of someone's imminent death often brings together the closest relatives and friends so they can support those who will suffer the most. In addition, Jair was a very well-known figure in his town, so neighbors and members of the community surely came to express their support to him and his wife. For this reason, I believe their house had already been full of people for days. That is why the mourners were already there.

HE WAS ALWAYS WEIGHING HIS WORDS

9. So, Jesus enters the house together with Jairus. Inside there is a multitude of people who are loudly crying and mourning. In that moment Jesus interrupts them and clearly says, *"Stop weeping; she has not died, but is asleep."*

Their reaction — their laughter — is precisely what led me to choose option number 2 that I mentioned earlier. (See §6.3.)

— I believe their shared, immediate laughter was a clear and visible confirmation to Jesus and His disciples of what they had already been thinking in their hearts about Him and His ministry. —

9.1 "She is only sleeping," Jesus says. What did He mean by that? Many biblical teachers connect His statement here with the event of Lazarus's resurrection,⁸ where Jesus also used the word "sleep." They claim that Jesus in both cases uses "sleeping" as a reference to the "first death."

9.2 We know that biblical teaching is such that a person passes through two deaths: the first, physical death, in which one goes to the abyss, and the second on Judgment Day, when God raises all the dead and decides who enters His kingdom and who goes to final destruction. For this reason, they say, Jesus uses the word "sleeping" as a synonym for the first death — and that is correct. But I do not fully agree with this interpretation. I believe that in the case of Jairus's daughter, Jesus is speaking of literal sleep, like the deep sleep into which a severely ill and exhausted person falls.

9.3 Although in both events the word "sleeping" is mentioned, the contexts of the events are completely different. To understand the context of this event, we need to begin with the verse where Jesus told Jairus, his wife, and His disciples, *"You must not tell anyone what has happened here."*

9.4 If we interpret this event through Jesus' own statement, everything else slowly falls into place, I believe. In several instances Jesus used the same command: *"Do not tell this to anyone."*⁹ Yet we also

⁸ John 11:11-15

⁹ Mark 1:44; 7:36; 8:26

have events in Scripture where Jesus said the opposite: as in the case of the man healed in the country of the Gerasenes, *“Go and tell everyone what God has done for you.”*¹⁰

9.5 Why would Jesus sometimes command, *“Go and tell everyone what God has done for you,”* while at other times He forbade any mention of what had happened?

9.6 We must understand that Jesus was incredibly wise and strategic. He was constantly weighing where something could safely be known, and where it could not. All of it was closely tied to His upcoming death — but not only to His death, also to the people who were with Him during His ministry.

9.7 Prematurely spreading the news that He had authority to raise the dead would certainly have forced the Pharisees into an immediate decision to eliminate Him. After all, it was precisely Lazarus’s public resurrection that became the key moment which led them to gather and officially decide to put Jesus to death.

9.8 Moreover, almost all the events in which Jesus forbade speaking about a miracle took place in Galilee. Jesus was from Galilee, and His disciples as well. Keeping that in mind, it becomes clear that He was protecting them too — He did not want them to be prematurely exposed to danger that could arise from the spreading of news about His full authority.

9.9 As I said a moment ago: Jesus was a good strategist. That is what is happening here, I believe. Jesus tells everyone that Jairus’s daughter is sleeping and that He will now heal her.

9.10 Let us take into account: all the household knew that Jesus could heal the living, even if they did not like it; they knew He had such power. Given that, imagine how they would react if, before their own eyes, they saw Jesus exercising authority to raise someone from the dead.

9.11 It would scandalize them; afterwards they would tell everyone, including the Sanhedrin, who would react exactly as they reacted after Lazarus’s resurrection.

— Knowing their heart, Jesus knew that such an event would place Him, His disciples, Jairus, and his wife in potential danger. And that is what He wanted to avoid. —

WISE AS SERPENTS, AND INNOCENT AS DOVES

10. “She is only sleeping,” Jesus said. After everyone had finished laughing, Jesus sent all of them out of the room where the twelve-year-old girl lay dead. With Him in the room remained only Jairus, his wife, Peter, John, and James. He took the girl by the hand and said, *“Little girl, get up!”* And she, thank God, got up.

10.1 Can we even imagine the joy of these parents, and the positive confusion rising in the hearts of His disciples: *“Wait a moment... our Teacher raises people from the dead?!”*

¹⁰ Luke 8:39

10.2 Unlike many events in which Jesus intentionally used miracles to highlight a theological truth — meaning, He planned them — this event was not planned. In other words, Jesus had no other motive here except that He had compassion on Jairus and chose to heal his daughter.

— The key word is: “heal,” not “revive.” —

10.3 But on the journey toward Jairus’s house, Jesus receives the news that the girl has died. He adapts to the situation, tells everyone that she is literally sleeping, enters the room, and does something He had not done until this moment — He brings a human being back to life.

10.4 As a man, He understands that His action places Him in potential, premature danger. Yet He still did it; He could not help Himself — Jairus’s cry was too strong.

10.5 With that said, Jesus had to navigate and carry the weight of situations just like any other human being. They were sometimes unpredictable and difficult.

10.6 As we slowly approach the end, let us remember this: unlike the other people in the house, Jesus’s disciples and the girl’s parents now knew that Jesus had authority to raise someone from the abyss. Although it happened unplanned, a new theological truth was revealed to a small group. And it had to remain that way for the time being.

— We see in the text that He strictly commanded them not to tell anyone about it. —

10.7 Finally, let us be fathers like Jairus — teaching our children a biblical perspective because we love them more than anything in the world. It does not matter if most of the world laughs at us for doing so; it does not matter if it shakes the pillars of respect we have built throughout our lives in community with other people.

— Let us be such fathers. —

10.8 Likewise, let us be like our Teacher Jesus: “wise as serpents and innocent as doves”.¹¹ That is exactly what He was in this event: innocent as a dove toward Jairus and his daughter, yet wise as a serpent toward the people in the house: “*She is only sleeping.*” He had to think wisely and say that in that moment. Only a wise man responds in such a way. He is our way, our truth, and our life — let us be like Jesus.

¹¹ Matthew 10:16