Could the situation have gotten any more desperate? Here was a man who was pouring his heart out to Jesus while lying at his feet. Jairus was a man of power, no less. He was a synagogue ruler. He was a Jew, and a Jew of high standing, and obviously, given that there was a great crowd at his house to weep for his passed daughter, he was a Jewish ruler of respect and renown. And this man of respect comes pleading at Jesus’ feet because the situation had grown so desperate. He was truly in a state of emergency!

You can hear the desperation in Jairus’ words. Literally he says to Jesus, “My dear little girl has finally…” He stops short of saying that she has already died, though in Matthew’s account of this text it says that Jairus’ daughter had just died when he came to Jesus. His dear little girl, the outcome was inevitable. She was on her death bed, a true tragedy by our standard at only 12 years old. What a desperate situation! What a desperate plea for help!

And as though things couldn’t get any worse, Jesus stops on the way to take care of another ailing person. Didn’t he know that Jairus’ daughter was about to die, or had already? And immediately after this little episode with another ailing woman, the worst news comes. The servants of this synagogue ruler told him what he already knew. “Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher?” Like a dagger to a heart that has already suffered so much, Jairus must have been gripped with fear. What comes next? Is the situation hopeless? Why am I trying to get Jesus to come with me? He already knows that the girl is dead, and so do I. Could things get any worse? Could the situation have gotten any more desperate?

Is our situation any different than Jairus’? We too are in a desperate situation, a situation facing death. You see, there’s a fact that we all have to come to grips with, and some of us have seen it firsthand already in a very personal way. We all die in this life. Some of you have lost loved ones very close to you, and perhaps some of you have stared death in the face yourselves. We all have to come to grips with that fact—the fact that everyone dies. But what is so terrifying about death? What was so terrifying about death to Jairus? It’s more than simply that we miss our loved ones. The prospect and thought of death grips so many because of what death means. It means there’s something wrong. We don’t face death because it’s natural. We don’t face sickness and failing health at the end of life because that’s just the way things were meant to be. In fact death is the most unnatural thing in the world. We were never meant to die. God created man in his image, to be perfect and holy and to live forever. But the fact that we all die reveals a deep, terrifying truth: “the wages of sin is death.”

Right next to Satan himself, that ultimate enemy of God and of his people, stands sin which Satan brought into the world. And because sin entered the world, death came to all men. And now when it comes it stands as a terrifying messenger and reminder that things are not the way they should be. We are sinful, and deserve death—not just death in this life, but death in the life to come.

Could things get any more desperate? Could the situation get any worse than that?

“Don’t be afraid, just believe!” These are the words of comfort that the Savior had for Jairus. And these are the words of comfort that our Savior has for us. “Don’t be afraid, just believe!” To a man whose daughter has just died, the Teacher of all teachers uses his Word to strengthen Jairus’ trust in his Savior. Jesus’ allowed the situation to get to its very worst, even allowing more time to pass after Jairus’ initial plea, until finally it seemed all hope was lost. Then, Jesus springs to action, encouraging with the Word, and then taking the situation over to show his ultimate and supreme power—power even over death itself.
Look at the comforting way Jesus took control over a situation where there was no control. Jesus calls death “sleep”, because death is not the end for the believer. Then, to all who would ridicule such a notion, Jesus bids them away. And then he shows the truth of his Word by raising the girl from the dead. In such a personal way, with such love and care, he bends down to take the girl’s hand, and speaks to her personally, with as much personal love as Jairus had for her when he pleaded with Jesus to save her. “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” And immediately she does, and she is better now than when she had been before she ever got sick. She gets up to her feet, walks around, and is ready for something to eat. And Jesus even pays attention to those minor details. What love! What care! What power! What comfort that brings to Jairus and to us.

This same Jesus, this very same God who has ultimate power over everything, also has power over us. When we face death—or any other trouble or trial in this life—we have the same Savior springing to action when things are at their worst to encourage us with the same Word, “Don’t be afraid, just believe!” Desperate times called for desperate measure, and our situation was truly desperate. To a world steeped in sin full of people doomed to die, God sent his Son to take their place and to die for them. By his death on the cross Jesus defeated not only Satan, that ancient enemy, and not only paid for the sin of the whole world, but he also paid the wages of that sin and broke death forever. That final, terminal expression, the wages of sin—death—it is broken by Jesus’ death and resurrection. Yes! His resurrection. Jesus showed his true power over death itself not just by raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead—not just by raising 2 others from the dead during his earthly ministry (the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus) —but by raising himself from the dead. Now that’s power, power even over death itself!

What harm could come near you? What trouble could you face that God isn’t powerful enough to take care of? He has eliminated death for you, won’t he take care of everything else too? He will! Of course he will! Don’t be afraid, just believe!

Desperate times call for desperate measures. When the situation seems desperate, hopeless, daunting, and terrifying, look to your Savior. There you will find that everything has been taken care of—even those small and minor details. Jesus has paid for sin, he has broken death, he has opened heaven, he calls you his own, and he takes care of you every day of your life. In any and every situation, don’t be afraid, just believe! Amen.