

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 [The Story]

Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee with his Twelve favorite fishermen.

They're learning how to be fishers-of-men.

They land in a town on the north side of 'The Deep.'

The Bible doesn't say which town for sure, but Magdala is a reasonable deduction.

But when He arrives, He arrives to much suffering.

It's a broken world—*these things happen*.

Jairus, the ruler of the local synagogue, meets Him at the waterside.

(Mark 5:22-23)

He falls at Jesus' feet.

(Jesus has just been in a fishing boat. His feet aren't exactly clean.)

But Jairus doesn't care. Truth is, he's desperate.

His little girl, just twelve years old, is at the point of death.

He doesn't know what else to do—*these things happen*.

Jesus leaves the water to go to her, and the crowds start pressing in.

You can imagine this crowd pressing around Jesus.

Everyone jostling to get the best view.

They've heard all about Jesus. They've seen Him around.

They weren't about to let Him walk alone!

They want to see a miracle!

And many *need* one.

One woman has been suffering for twelve years—as long as Jairus' little girl had been alive!

And the woman thinks to herself, "*If I touch even His garments, I will be healed!*"

(Mark 5:28)

Jesus walks by.

She reaches out... and is healed instantly!

Jesus turns around: "*Who touched me?*"

And the disciples don't know how to answer the question.

"*Jesus, why are you asking 'who touched you?'*"

Everyone's touching you. You're in a crowd—these things happen."

(Mark 5:31)

The woman comes forward to admit the whole truth.

(She falls at His feet, too.)

"*Daughter,*" Jesus says, "*your faith has made you well. Go in peace, be healed.*"

(Mark 5:34)

Jesus healed one 'daughter,'

But it was apparently too late for the daughter of Jairus.

News arrives that the little girl has died. He may as well walk home alone.

Jesus walks with him, saying: "*Do not fear; only believe.*"

(Mark 5:36)

[The Setting]

2 You're probably familiar with this story.

If you didn't learn it in Sunday school, you heard it just a few minutes ago.

But you may not know much about where it took place:

In a little town along the freshwater 'Sea' (Lake) of Galilee.

Likely the ancient city of Magdala.

I recently had the chance to stand there on my own two feet. (My feet did *not* smell of fish.)

I had many meaningful moments in Israel, but Magdala caught me off guard.

3 You see, modern-day 'Magdala' is a retreat center.

The Roman Catholic Church knew about where the ancient city was supposed to have been, procured the land,

and planned to build a church with a hotel.

All to honor Mary Magdalene and the other women in the life of Christ.

(And to trap the tourists and whatnot.)

They didn't expect to find the actual ancient city of Magdala directly beneath their hotel.

But, of course, ***these things happen!***

4 When they broke ground, they found an ancient street,

Then a house! Then another!

Then a fish market!

Then a synagogue!

Ancient Magdala was thriving on the edge of 'The Deep!'

Rather than decide between keeping these ancient ruins or constructing these modern buildings, they placed the modern buildings *over* the ancient ruins,

sometimes even incorporating those ancient stone streets

—where those ancient stinky feet once walked— right into the buildings!

[The Purpose]

Now *modern architecture* over the dig of some ancient city sounds like a cool concept, I guess. But it wasn't exactly high on my list of things to see in Israel.

5 Then we came to the church on the grounds.

It's called *Duc In Altum* – Latin for "*Put out into the deep.*"

(A reference to when Jesus told the disciples where to catch fish.

(Luke 5:4)

The not-so-subtle double meaning is about how we, as Christians,

must regularly '*put out into the deep*' of the world to share the Good News!)

6 Walk into the main room (nave) of that church, and you'll know why we call it 'the nave.'

"Nave," the Latin word for "boat." (Where we get our word "navy.")

(Whoa! Cool language moment! ***These things happen.***)

I could go on about the beautiful imagery of being "fishers of men,"

or the artwork of those first Twelve "fishers," but that's not what struck me.

7 Modern Magdala is dedicated to women of faith.

Women like Jairus' daughter, and the long-suffering woman.

8 The pillars in the narthex honor the women in the earthly ministry of Christ.
One is left blank for all women of faith of all time.

9 The undercroft chapel, in the basement, is stunning too.

It incorporates the unmoved stones of the 1st century street discovered beneath it—

10 Perhaps the very stones where the suffering woman reached out,
inches above those stinky feet—

“If I touch even His garments, I will be healed!”

11 Back outside the narthex are four chapels.

Each shows a moment of Christ's earthly ministry around the “The Deep” of Galilee:

Jesus calling the Twelve fishers-of-men.

Jesus healing Mary Magdalene.

Jesus calming the storm.

12 And Jesus raising Jairus' daughter.

This, of all the places in Israel

—from Dan to Beersheba, Jericho to Tel Aviv—

this was where I, a grown man, was moved to tears. 13

[These Things Happen!]

The daughter of Jairus lay dead.

14 No one ever experiences the exact same grief,

15 but there is a shared sense of loss between those who've lost children,
and, really, between all of us who face 'The Deep' of this fallen world.

A few years ago, we lost our unborn Charlotte before we could hold her.

Her little heart simply stopped beating.

The lab reports listed no medical explanation.

No way to have prevented it.

The report emotionlessly listed the medical facts:

the 'normal' content of her tissue

and, of all things, the measurements of her little feet.

We were told, *“These things happen.”* 16

17 My wife has just one tattoo—of our little one's little foot upon her own.

A reminder that no one walks alone.

We have each other.

And we have Jesus.

When I saw this mosaic at Magdala, **18**
the little feet of Jairus' daughter,
I was overcome.
Not with sorrow. Not with loss.
But with overwhelming joy.

The words of Isaiah 52 echoed through my mind:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News!"

(Isaiah 52:7, Romans 10:15)

For that is what this little girl in the mosaic brought to me: Good News.

19 Jesus said to her "*Talitha cumi!*" ("Little girl, arise!")— and she arose!
When Jesus is walking with you, "***These things happen.***"

On the Last Day, He will say the same to my little Charlotte.
She will not only touch the hem of His garment,
but wear the robe of righteousness He won for her by His own death and resurrection.
He will take her by the hand,
and lead her into new life.
As He will for all who believe in Him, including *you*.
"These things happen."

[Walk Together]

Brothers and sisters,
We do not walk alone.
There are many 'little feet' out there in God's Creation.
Many are not here in the nave, but out there, lost in 'The Deep.'
They need someone to catch them in the nets of the Gospel.
Someone to be a fisher-of-men.
Someone to walk together with them.
Someone to be Christ's hands—and feet—to them.

Our Redeemer had a wonderful opportunity this past weekend
to *be* Christ's hands and feet to the people of Iowa City.
Those who participated in UKANDU know what that was like,
as they committed "Godly Acts of Kindness" around town.

So here is where I challenge you:
These things happen.
How will you make it so?

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
