

Sometimes journeys, even short ones, can seem as if they are going to take forever. This past week, I was in NY for a meeting, and had opportunity to see my first Broadway show, *The Color Purple*. I was very excited. The hotel I was staying at was fairly close to the theater and my friend who had managed to get the tickets, figured it would take no more than 10 minutes by taxi. We planned to get there at 7:30 for the 8 o'clock show since we were picking up tickets from will call and had no idea of what the lines would be like. I got out of my meeting at 5 pm with lots of time to spare, and then it began to rain. My friend called to say she had been delayed at the hairdressers and that the traffic was bad. Originally we thought we would have time for dinner, but now it looked like we would barely have time to get there. The rain poured. Thunder and lightening crashed through the skies. My friend finally got to the hotel, and at 7:15 we were outside the hotel looking for a taxi. A couple was ahead of us waiting for a taxi and we overheard that they were also going to the *Color Purple*. We didn't know if they would mind sharing. I tried not to look at my watch and after about 5 minutes, a taxi showed up. To my surprise, the other couple offered to share and we left at 7:20. "We're OK", I thought, "as long as we were there by 7:40, we would be OK". I knew we had to get from 44th to 53rd street but I wasn't sure how many avenues we had to go across. The streets went by 45th, 46th 47th. The lights seemed to be against us. The thunder continued and the lightening flashed. Finally we got to 53rd. It was 7:35. It couldn't be much longer now, but as we turned on 53rd, I saw a sea of red lights. We inched forward slowly. Other lanes moved faster. I wondered why we had to have a non-aggressive taxi drive that seems content to wait in the middle lane while other taxis seemed to be sneaking around on the left. We went along slowly and then I spotted the theater blocks away. If only it wasn't raining so hard, we could walk. We seemed to be eternally stuck at every intersection. Just as there seemed to be space for us to get across, a white limousine pulled in front of us and we had to wait through another red light. Somehow we got through those remaining blocks, and approached that last intersection, the one where we would turn and end up in front of the theater. The light was green and there was space to turn and our taxi

seemed to be slowing down. What was the driver doing? There was no one coming. Come on - Make the turn – but he slowed and the light turned red. Then the taxi driver asked if we wanted to get out here and I said yes. I was ready to pay for everyone in the cab. I was getting out. We all got out and ran through the pelting rain. There was no line at will call and a couple minutes before 8, we were in our seats waiting for the show to begin.

If I thought my taxi ride to the theater was long and frustrating, I can't imagine how Jarius felt as he brought Jesus back to heal his daughter. His was a matter of life and death and every second could make a difference. Jarius is truly in a desperate position. He is a leader of the synagogue, a man of wealth and power, who has surely tried to find a cure from every available source at the time. Nothing has works and now when his daughter is about to die, he goes to Jesus. It doesn't matter that Jesus is a street healer and preacher who has had run-ins with other rulers of the synagogue. Jesus is Jarius' last hope and he finds him and begs him 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 live."

Jesus agrees to come and they set out. I'm sure Jarius would have run all the way there with Jesus but that doesn't seem to be the way things are going. There is a large crowd pressing in on them and then Jesus stops to deal with a woman who has touched his garment. We didn't hear this part of the story this morning and it comes right in the middle of the story. A woman, in the crowd, who has had a hemorrhage for many years, touches Jesus' garment with the faith that this small touch will heal her and it does. Jesus feels it and stops and asks "who touched me." When he finds out, he tells her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." Jarius must have been going crazy. Why stop to bother with this woman? She wasn't dying. She could be healed later. And then the worst news he could get. People come from his house to say his daughter has died. Do not trouble the teacher any further. But Jesus says to Jarius – do not fear only believe.

Jesus gets rid of the crowd and only allows Peter, James, and John to accompany them. What was Jarius thinking at that point? Was a flicker of hope ignited in him at that point? He had just heard the news of his daughter's death. Can Jesus change that? Was she really dead? The situation does not get better as they approach the house. People are outside wailing and causing a commotion and then when Jesus goes to enter, they laugh and mock him.

Jesus tells them that the girl is sleeping not dead. Jarius must have wondered if he was now on a fool's errand. Was Jesus crazy? Should he send Jesus away? Why persist when it was so clear that his daughter was dead?

But Jarius doesn't do any of this. He just follows and he and his wife enter the house with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus says to the girl, Little girl, get up! And she does. The joy and relief of that mother and father must have been something to behold. It was a wonderful and amazing end to this journey.

Journeys can be long and frustrating – sometimes it is something that doesn't matter too much like getting someplace on time and other times it is a matter of life and death. We go through times when it seems like there is no hope and our troubles will never end. There are obstacles at every turn. Often these are the times when we turn to God. These are the times when we have tried all the other avenues and finally collapse in our helplessness and cry out to Jesus. And Jesus comes and walks with us – even in the worst of times. Jesus says “do not fear – only believe”.

But many of our journeys do not end like the story of Jarius and his daughter. We pray and cry to Jesus but our illness or the illness of our loved one goes on and on. Our situation does not get better. Our loved one dies. Now the story of Jarius and his daughter is not saying that if you have enough faith and if you try hard enough, the healing, the miracle you desire, will occur. This story is telling

us that at the end Jesus has promised new life. In death, Jesus brings life. Jesus will be there for us with us through all of our difficult times and at the end, Jesus promises resurrection. It may not be now or in the way we envisioned it, but nothing can keep us from Christ. There will be an amazing and wonderful end for us.

In the mean time all you can do is keep walking especially in the worst times - like Jarius did when the news came that his daughter had died. Jesus said not to fear, only believe and Jarius kept on going – through the news he feared the most, through the mockery, and through what didn't make any sense.

Our journeys may seem endless and we may be beaten down as we go. We may get to the point where we are so broken that we can finally release our grip on all the things that we think we have in our control. In these desperate times, all we can do is to turn to Jesus – turn to Jesus with our deepest hopes of healing whether it is for ourselves or for our loved ones. We turn to Jesus knowing that in the end there is resurrection, new life. We turn to Jesus knowing that Jesus will be with us – no matter where our journeys take us or how long they are. Jesus walks with us always saying – Do not fear only believe.