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Our Faith ... His Faithfulness

Luke 8:40-56

Last week Dave introduced us all to the idea that the miracles performed by Jesus in Scripture are not, in their functioning and results, the sole purpose for their having been done or included in the Canon. By these stories, the Lord is teaching us, and there is a lesson in them that we can all learn and grow from.

This week, we begin our passage on the heels of Jesus having liberated a demon possessed man in the country of the Gerasene's across the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum where Jesus lived. You will recall that the people of the country of the Gerasene's had fearfully asked Him to depart from them, wanting nothing to do with Him.

The people in Capernaum, however, were waiting to welcome Him back.

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed Him, for they were waiting for Him.

I think it's worthwhile to consider the crowd that is waiting for Him because if we take a moment to think on what we've already read in Luke, then it isn't a great mystery why the people of Capernaum were waiting for Him.

He had recently performed many great miracles in the towns and villages of that area. Prior to these events, He healed a man with a withered hand, healed the centurion's servant, and raised a widow's son among many other things.

For these reasons, there was a crowd that would gather around Him in Capernaum and Matthew tells us that it was this crowd that prompted Him to go over to the other side of the sea. While He was in the boat, before He calmed the storm, Scripture says He was sleeping, and I like to think maybe He just needed a break from the crowd.

Regardless, in Capernaum many people knew what He could do and so He was sought out by the people that He might help them and heal them.....which is why they were waiting for Him.

⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, He implored Him to come to his house, ⁴² for He had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

So as not to miss the significance of the scene unfolding in front of us, we have to consider who this man is. We're told that Jairus is a ruler of the synagogue.

Think of an official over the local synagogue; something like a general manager. There were synagogues in every town and city across Judea and each one had a person appointed to manage the day to day and to coordinate events and services. We ought not think that this man was anything less than a devout Jew. His outward piety would almost certainly have been conformed to the expectations of the ruling religious elite of the time, without whose approval he probably would not have been appointed to the position He currently held.

Remember that prior to this, we've already seen Jesus have run-ins with the Scribes and Pharisees of the area and it is with these same groups that Jairus is surely affiliated. So it's no small matter that Jairus has approached Jesus in this way. In fact, for the casual observer, to see Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, fall at the feet of Jesus, would be nothing short of amazing.

So, there's Jairus, imploring Jesus to go with him to his house because his daughter is dying. The Greek behind this phrase, "she was dying" coupled with the way the other Gospels write of the same account, makes it clear that she was in the throes of death as Jairus came to Jesus. Not that she had a terminal illness and might die someday soon but rather, that her final breaths were upon her.

I think what we are seeing here from Jairus is a last-ditch effort by a desperate man. He's no doubt heard of this man they call Jesus

Who can heal all manner of sickness, cast out demons, and raise the dead.

But, he's also heard all the naysayers from among the religious crowd that he is a part of and they would certainly be very judgmental of anyone that approached Jesus as a prophet of God.

At this point though, none of that matters. He has no more recourse. He's simply a father that wants his daughter to live and so he puts his faith in Jesus.

What a glorious picture we see in Jairus which is reflective of each of us and our own need. To know Christ is to abandon self and for so many of us, it is only when we reach the end of ourselves and the notion that we have it within ourselves to be found acceptable before God that we turn to Jesus and throw ourselves at His feet. Praise God that He made a way.

The rest of verse 42 reads,

"As Jesus went," (that is with Jairus to see his daughter), *"the people pressed around Him."*

The focus of the story is going to shift here, but as we continue, I want you to hold with yourself, a sense of urgency like what you think Jairus might have been feeling as he was wanting to get back to his daughter with Jesus. We'll come back to it.

Now the Scripture says that while Jesus went along, the people pressed around Him. This isn't a Times Square on New Year's Eve kind of situation where the crowd has no room for dispersion. Rather, the crowd of people were pressing into Him that they might receive a miracle of their own.

Back in Luke 6:19, we read that,

"... all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed them all."

The Jews were no doubt familiar with the prospect of power in the prophets to heal by touch alone and are hoping for the same from Jesus.

Recall in 2 Kings 13 that as a man's burial was interrupted by a band of marauders he was hastily thrown into the same grave as Elisha the prophet and when his body touched the bones of Elisha, he was revived back to life.

Historical accounts like this, coupled with the miracles Jesus had already performed, had everyone desirous to touch Him, and so they pressed around Him.

⁴³ And there was a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. ⁴⁴ She came up behind Him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

It's hard to imagine a more pitiful situation to be in than the one that this poor woman is in. If you were thinking that she just had some inconvenient medical condition that she wanted healed, let me tell you that it is so much more than that.

In Leviticus 15, the Lord, speaking to Moses and Aaron says the following,

"²⁵ If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. ²⁶ Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. ²⁷ And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening."

Understanding this, how might this woman feel? She is perpetually unclean. This isn't a moral uncleanness but a ritual uncleanness. Still, these rituals and adherence to the laws of Moses are important in her culture. Everything she touches becomes unclean and her condition has surely made her an outcast in society, a pariah.

In that context, her coming up behind Jesus rather than approaching Him directly makes sense.... at least in her reasoning. She would have had to be sneaky while moving through the crowd. It's doubtful that she navigated through the throng of people that were pressing into Jesus like a ninja and touched no one along the way. She would certainly have had to make contact with others as she also pressed in. And how appreciative do you think the others around her, if they knew her to be unclean, would be of her touching them?

No. She would be slipping in as incognito as possible, head low, wanting not to be recognized.

We're also told that she spent all her living on physicians that were not able to help her. With her, as with Jairus, we see desperation as that of someone who has reached the end of what they can do in their own power. She knows her condition and she knows that she is all out of options for obtaining a cure. Like Jairus, she has come to the end of herself and her means. For her, Jesus is the only way, but she knows that if she touches Him, He will be made unclean so she must try to get to Him undetected. She reasons, in her faith, that if she can only touch the fringe of His garment, she'll be healed.....and so, she does.

This fringe of Jesus' garment, interestingly, gives us more insight into His perfect adherence to God's law. This fringe, or tassels (called by Jews today tzitzit) is a requirement on the garment of Jewish men. We read about this in Numbers 15:38 and again in Deuteronomy 22:12 where it says,

"You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of the garment with which you cover yourself."

It was this small tassel that the woman reached out to touch and upon touching it, was immediately made clean.

⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

It's important here that we not lose sight of Christ as an equal member of the Trinity. He has, on multiple occasions, shown His omniscience (that is knowing all things) and His omnipotence (that is having power over all things). Jesus is not aloof. He surely knows this woman, knew of her condition, and was fully aware of her approach behind Him. His power is not outside of His control and so His healing of her was done with His full knowledge and intent.

The dialogue here is for the benefit of all who were present and for all we who read of the account afterward. Even His disciples are confused by His question. They're like, 'What do you mean who touched You? Everyone's touching You.' That was not His point though. He had done a thing and He wanted it to be known.

The woman at this point was likely terrified. For a short moment she was probably filled with joy as she felt within herself that she had been healed, only to then see Jesus stop in His tracks and gather the attention of everyone in seeking her. It's evident that she wasn't going to just pop up and say, 'I did it!' since it says "all denied it". That and because the next verse implies her desire to be hidden. You can almost picture Jesus' eyes scanning the crowd slowly and coming to rest on her. He doesn't want to call her out. He wants her to come forward.

⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before Him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.

Fearful and "trembling", it says, she came forward, no doubt hoping for mercy. For why would she be afraid and trembling, except that she is expecting a harsh reaction from Jesus and the crowd. As we see though, it was not to be as she was expecting.

⁴⁸ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

What amazing grace it is that we too can come before the Lord of all creation in our humiliation, our sinfulness, our uncleanness of

thought and deed, and be told by Him, “go in peace.” Christ in His perfection satisfies all requirements to be found acceptable in the sight of God the Father and gives us the Spirit of God that we might truly believe that it does not fall on us because it already fell on Him. By His finished work, we now have peace with God through Him and this fact ought to have each of us praising and worshipping the Lord in our hearts and minds always.

Surely the crowd was amazed at what was happening and all that was being said and done but how do you think Jairus is feeling while all this is happening?

It’s not an accident that the three gospel writers that included this account tell it in the same way, two interactions intertwined into one account. The Lord wants us to consider the events as they moved from focusing on Jairus to the woman and then back to Jairus. What we are reading are object lessons in faith and just as the recounting of these events edifies God’s children today, it was almost certainly edifying for the faith of those present, namely Jairus when he bore witness to the events with the woman just before focus moves back to him.

49 While He was still speaking, someone from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher anymore.” 50 But Jesus on hearing this answered Him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.”

So here’s Jairus, anxious to get back to his daughter before she has passed away, having managed to actually plead his cause to Jesus and then be enroute to his own home, only to then be made to wait while everything that transpired with the woman occurred.

Have you ever had that feeling of wanting so bad to take action with something but having to instead practice restraint? Your heart rate rises, your senses are more aware, your eyes may dart back and forth, and you may seem fidgety like your adrenaline is up but, you have to stay put. No one in such a state can be said to be waiting patiently. It’s like needing to be somewhere very important but also being stuck somewhere or in front of someone that you can’t just cutoff or walk away from.

We unconsciously turn on those tell-tale social cues that no one ever seems to pick up on and our frustration and impatience mounts.

I imagine Jairus feeling that way but more amplified. How must He have felt when while He was standing there, desperate to get a move on, someone from his home comes along and says it’s too late and that his daughter had died? He’s human, as we all are, and surely loved his daughter as we all love our children. In such moments, the heart sinks low. Blood drains from the face. The sounds around you and perhaps even your vision begin to fade and narrow. A person in that type of situation might just come undone.

Jesus, knowing all things, was fully aware of what was going on, even while He himself was still speaking with the woman and the crowd. Knowing the news that Jairus was just given and knowing the fear that was in him, Jesus encourages him and tells him to believe. After all, Jesus had just performed a miracle for the woman and commended her for her faith and now He tells Jairus to do the same, have faith. What more can Jairus do except follow Christ.

51 And when He came to the house, He allowed no one to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. 52 And all were weeping and mourning for her, but He said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.” 53 And they laughed at Him, knowing that she was dead.

More detail is provided about these events in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark that help us to understand all that is going on.

Mark 5:38 tells us that there was a commotion at the house with people weeping and wailing loudly. Matthew adds that flute players were present, adding to the commotion.

You see, in those days it was customary to hire musicians to play somber music and to hire women to weep and wail at funerals. This was done to really drum up the mournful state of all those who were present.

It's because of the presence of these people that we know Jairus' appeal to Jesus was a last-ditch effort on his part. The funeral arrangements had already been made and the weeping women and the musicians that were hired for the funeral were already onsite ready to go.

That was the scene, people literally waiting for the girl to die, when Jairus left his home to go find Jesus. And when he returned, it was these same people that were doing their job, causing a commotion. It was to these people that Jesus said, "Do not weep." And it was these people that laughed at Him, having no faith and feeling entirely confident in their understanding of life and death.

Allowing no one to enter where the girl was lying, save her parents and three of His disciples, we read the following.

⁵⁴ But taking her by the hand He called, saying, "Child, arise." ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And He directed that something should be given her to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

And that's where Luke's account of what happened with Jairus' daughter ends.

We can imagine how her parents must've been feeling. Scripture cites amazement but I'm sure that overflowing joy was present in them as well. After all, they had their daughter back and we praise God for all that He's done.

But this retelling of the glory of Christ in saving people and His power over death was, as I alluded to earlier, not just for those present at the time but for all we who would read about it in the generations since.

Both of these accounts are objects lessons in faith, and this is where I want to spend the rest of our time together.

So, what do we learn about faith? Well one thing that strikes me about our passage today is the amazement the parents felt after Jesus had raised their daughter.

Why were they amazed? Did they not really expect Jesus to do what He said He would? I believe they did, but their faith was imperfect.

The same goes for the woman with the bleeding issue. Not that we read she had the same amazement but that there was evidence of imperfection in her faith as well.

In fact, both she and Jairus show this to be the case by attaching something to Jesus' miracle working that was not needed.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus performs personal miracles for individuals who approach Him according to the faith of the people for whom He is doing them.

For example, Jairus. His faith included Jesus coming to his home. Matthew adds that Jairus said, "...come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." So we learn that according to the faith of Jairus, Jesus needed to go to his home and lay hands on his daughter. He believed she would be healed by Jesus in that way.

With the woman that had the bleeding issue, her faith required only that she touch the tassel on His garment, and she would be healed. It was done for her according to her faith.

Another time, some blind men approach Jesus asking to be healed and He asks them, "do you believe I am able to do this?" and they are given their sight according to their faith. Another time still, some people brought a deaf man to Jesus and implored Him to lay His hands on him and so Jesus touched the man's ears and healed him according to their faith.

One more example. A centurion approaches Jesus asking Him to heal his servant. Jesus at first offers to go to the centurion's home but the centurion states that he is not worthy to have Jesus in his home and that if Jesus will only say the word, his servant would be healed. Jesus' marveling at this man's faith is even recorded for us to read about. For the centurion, there's no need to be there, no need to touch his servant, no need to see him at all. His faith is such that Christ need only speak it and it will be done. And so it was.....according to how the centurion believed.

Now ask yourself the following: Was Jesus able to do all that He did for these people without having to touch them and without having to go along to see them? Absolutely He could.

Yet He still did these miracles according to the faith of each person so that in each encounter, we might learn something about faith. And this is it...even if our faith is imperfect, Christ is faithful to save us and to heal us from our terrible affliction.

In our flesh, we're prone to wander. Thankfully it is God who keeps us, and not the other way around. Our faith may waiver but God's faithfulness toward His children is perfect. Elsewhere in Scripture, Christ admonishes His disciples when they fail to drive a particularly aggressive demon out of a boy. He calls them out on their faithlessness and then after faithfully healing the boy Himself, He tells them that if they have faith like the grain of a mustard seed, they could move a mountain by command.

These disciples had driven out many demons from people but stumbled with this one. Why? It's not entirely clear but perhaps when they approached the boy initially and saw the violence and power of the demon they were about to confront, doubt entered their minds.

Can we not also relate to this? Does not doubt enter into our own minds as well? Do we not sometimes wonder at the great grace of God that He would even consider us, let alone save us?

Sure, there are times when we are secure in our faith; thoroughly convinced that it isn't about us and that there is nothing we can do to help save ourselves. Then there are other times when we may stumble in that. Perhaps a sinful action on our part has us doubting that we're truly saved; that God's spirit dwells in us.

Or maybe someone has planted an idea in your head that there's no way God will take a person that does sinful things like A, B, or C or that for God to love you, you have to be doing X, Y, or Z. In all such thinking, we shift away from faith in Christ to faith in what we're doing.

And when we fail again and again to meet the standard, both God's and our own, God's Spirit is there to remind us that that is why we need Christ.

In those times our faith is renewed even stronger to trust in Him, only, to be satisfaction before our holy God.

These object lessons exist to teach us about what it means to have faith. We ought to read and learn, always in humility and regularly calling out to God to increase our faith and help us in our unbelief, because He will.

God is faithful.