

18. The Sick Woman and the Dead Girl

Luke 8:40-56

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

In his narrative in the former passage, Luke has described the rejection of Jesus by the Gerasene population after Christ had cast out the demons into a herd of 2,000 pigs: “Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left” (Luke 8:37). Luke’s attention now turns to show us more of the character of the Lord Jesus, showing His care and compassion for people. As the boat slowly approached the northwestern shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, a great crowd had gathered where the boat was normally beached.

⁴⁰Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped (Luke 8:40-44).

There was a different atmosphere on this western side of the Sea of Galilee, and the crowd was expecting Him (v. 40). Oh, how the Lord loves to come to us when we are expecting Him. This is a good indication of faith: expectation. Jairus, one of the synagogue rulers, was expecting Him, and so was a woman who was subject to internal bleeding. Among the hundreds, perhaps thousands, who were waiting for Christ, Luke concentrates on these two individuals who were so opposite one another in the social spectrum. The woman was a social outcast because of her hemorrhaging, and Jairus, a ruler or leader in the local synagogue, came pleading for healing for his daughter. There was no more highly respected man in the whole town than Jairus. It was Jairus’ job to oversee all the inner workings of the synagogue. As Jesus got out of the boat, the crowd let Jairus through to Christ.

Question 1) Of all the hundreds of people that were expecting Christ that day, what was it about these two that their needs were met by Christ’s miraculous power?

When Jesus got out of the boat, Jairus stepped up and fell, not knelt, but fell at His feet. His anguish was palpable. With him it was a battle for time. When he had left home on his errand of finding the Master, he knew that his daughter was slowly losing her battle with death. As he saw the boat approaching that day, how he wished it would move faster. He was going against the ruling religious establishment by seeking out Jesus. This was a time when the synagogues were closed to Jesus by order of the chief priests and ruling powers of the day. The Lord Jesus was known to disobey the religious rules of men so that He could obey God. This had gotten Him into trouble with the Pharisees and Scribes and ruling elders, but Jairus did not care about his position as ruler of the synagogue! He came to the Lord with his need. His only daughter, a girl of twelve years old, was dying. A man will do anything when any of his kids are at the point of death.

Here was a man of humility and desperation who would get on his face before the only One who could heal his only daughter. How important do you consider yourself? Sometimes, God requires of us to humble ourselves before His mighty hand that He might lift us up. Naaman, the leper general from Aram in 2 Kings 5 is an example of one that was humiliated before he was healed. He abhorred the step of faith required of him by the prophet Elisha by washing in the dirty river Jordan, but when he humbled himself, he was cleansed of his leprosy. Humility, then, is a key factor in releasing God's power in our lives. Peter, the Apostle, writes: **"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).** Why did the ruler of the synagogue abase himself? It might have been his desperation, but also, he may have understood that humility is a factor in approaching the Lord.

I love that Jesus is One who holds people first. So often in our day, leaders do not come down to the public level and mix with people on a common level. The Lord is highly relational and always has time to care for His people's needs. Without any hesitation, Jesus begins to walk to the house of Jairus. In modern terms, we could say that the crowd was treating Jesus like "a rock star!" They were thronging around him, just to get a glimpse of him. Jesus, however, was unaffected by His own notoriety. He had an inner compass that led Him only to do the work of His Father. His will was to please His Father and do whatever the Father showed Him.

The Woman Subject to Bleeding

As long as Jairus' daughter had been alive, twelve years, was the same amount of time the woman had been subject to bleeding. We don't know her name or how she heard about Christ, but what she did know was that, when Jesus laid hands on people, they were healed of whatever sickness they had. In Matthew's account of Jairus' approach to Jesus, he says, **"My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live" (Matthew 9:18).** Faith and desperation began to rise in the woman's heart at the thought of being touched by the hand of the Master. The woman had difficulty in trying to get Jesus to lay hands on her, though. Her internal hemorrhaging from the womb allowed no one to touch her or even be near her. She was considered by others to be unclean. This is because of what was written in the Law about an issue of blood:

¹⁹" **When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.** ²⁰" **Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean.** ²¹**Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.** ²²**Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.** ²³**Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.** ²⁴" **If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.** ²⁵" **When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period.** ²⁶Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean,

as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. ²⁷Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²⁸"When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. ²⁹On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge. ³¹" **'You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness** for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.' " (Leviticus 15:19-31).

She was ceremonially unclean and was afraid that, if she were discovered, she might be stoned because, with her condition, she was ostracized from the community of Israel. Her bleeding separated her from coming into the synagogue and enjoying fellowship with the godly. Who would want to be around her when the passage in Leviticus threatened death for defilement?

Question 2) How was this woman's life different from the life of Jairus, the synagogue leader? How do you think this affliction affected her day-to-day life? How do you think it affected her self-image?

More than likely, this poor woman had not slept in a bed for some time. What hotel would have her? What friends would let her stay at their house? Everything she touched would be contaminated. She was desperate. She was alone. She was ashamed. I am sure that some looked down on her and judged her, suspecting that this medical condition was caused by sex outside of marriage or some other sin for which they thought she was being punished for. How scared she must have been as she was mingling with the crowd trying to get to Jesus. He was her only hope, and He did not let her down! In his Gospel, Mark adds: **"She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse"** (Mark 5:26). All of this background knowledge adds to our understanding of her desperation. Imagine her struggle as she is pushed and jostled, trying to get to Jesus. To have the Rabbi lay hands on her would, in her mind, make Him ceremonially unclean. What rabbi would ever do such a thing? The impossibility of her situation seemed like such a barrier to her. Desperation drove her to do the unthinkable: she would steal her healing by approaching Him from behind:

²⁷When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸because **she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed"** (Mark 5:27-28).

Perhaps, she reasoned that, if she just touched the hem of His garment, she was not technically touching Him. She made a faith statement inside her heart to the Lord. Faith rose up in her to believe that, if she could get close enough to just touch the hem of His garment, she would be healed. The word "fringe" or "hem," depending on the translation you are using, is the Greek word *kraspedon*, the Septuagint term (The Septuagint is an early Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament) for the tassel, which male Jews were to wear on the corners of their outer garment.

³⁷The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. ³⁹You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes (Numbers 15:37-39).

Orthodox Jews still today have the fringe or tassels on their *tallit* or prayer shawl either under their sweater or garment so that the tassels show. Sometimes, they put the tallit over their heads when praying. Her faith was inspired by God but conceived in the depths of her heart. In her desperation, she thought through a plan that God in His grace honored. God responds to expectant faith as well as humility, key words in approaching God, but also determination, i.e. not allowing anything to put you off from getting your need met by the Living God. This principle of determination was what the woman had, no matter how big the crowd was. I imagine that she pressed through almost on her knees, trying to keep her identity secret and trying to get to Jesus. As she touched the tassels of His garment, she was healed instantly. As we have seen, the blue tassels of the garment were to remind the Jewish people of the Word of God.

¹⁹Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.

²⁰He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions (Psalm 107:20).

Question 3) Does a thought that may be inspired faith get shut down as ridiculous, or do you run with it? Does desperation and humility make us more sensitive to the voice and promptings of the Spirit?

As soon as she touched the tassel on the hem of His garment, the power of God flowed into her being. Imagine her relief as she felt the warmth like electricity flow through her body and a peace and awareness of her healing took place. She had been instantly healed!

⁴⁵"Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Luke 8:45-48).

Immediately, Jesus stopped and turned around. I'm sure she gulped as Jesus said, "Who touched me?" The words might have sounded very accusatory to her at first. I think He knew who it was but didn't focus on her. Why did He stop? Couldn't He just have carried on to Jairus' house, especially as the situation for Jairus' daughter was so perilous? This speaks so much as to the character of the Lord Jesus, for there was further healing for her that needed to take place. There was the social healing for her to be restored to the fellowship with God's people. He looked for her confession so as to bring restoration. What she did had to be brought into the light; otherwise, she would be ever trying to hide what had happened. Perhaps, Jesus also wanted the Father to get the glory for this miracle.

We are told in verse forty–five that the crowds were pressing against him. Peter was incredulous at the delay, “**Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.**” How is it that some can crowd the Lord while others can touch Him for their needs? Don’t you think that there were others in the crowd that had physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? Verse forty-seven tells us that she came out of the crowd, trembling. She had been discovered! Imagine the fear that gripped her. What would He do to her for stealing her healing? Would she now lose it for not asking? It is probable that all these fears rushed through her mind. She fell down before Him and confessed as to why she had touched Him and how she had been immediately healed. What would be His response? How kind and gentle He is in His words to her. He is oblivious to the crowd as the woman comes forth from the ring of people around them. She is important to Him as all of us are. He called her daughter, a term of familial endearment. How her fears subsided at being called part of the family of the Lord Jesus. How intimate and full of grace is our Savior! This woman was considered a reject by the people of Israel, but to Him she was a daughter and highly loved of the Father.

It was very important, for this woman’s future that Jesus brought her actions into the light. As Jesus was able to affirm her publicly, this would change how others saw her. He banished her shame, and with that word, “daughter,” He brought her back into the fold of the company of faith. He wanted everyone to know that she was healed, and that she should be welcomed to worship with others. The message was loud and clear! He commended her for her faith and showed her approval and love. She was now able to go in peace.

The more we reach out to Him through the Word of God, the more we will walk a life of faith. Jesus felt power leave His body as the woman touched Him through the tassel of the Word of God.

The Healing of the Daughter of Jairus

Can you imagine the thoughts and fears of Jairus as this delay took place? It was at that moment, while Jesus was yet speaking, that the blow hit Jairus below the belt:

⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher anymore” (Luke 8:49).

Question 4) Have you ever heard that voice in your mind, i.e. the one that says, “Don’t bother the Teacher anymore?” What causes you to draw back instead of approaching the throne of grace for help in time of need? (Hebrews 4:16).

⁵⁰Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”
⁵¹When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother. ⁵²Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.” ⁵³They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” ⁵⁵Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus

told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened (Luke 8:49-56).

How Jairus must have wept when they came and told him his daughter had died while he was on the way. I love how Jesus responds to tears. I picture Christ coming alongside Jairus and putting His arm around him with the words, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed” (v. 50). They carried on to Jairus’ house. When they got there, the professional mourners were there and were already crying and wailing at the loss to the family. He said to them, “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.” ⁵³They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead” (v. 52-53). The funeral was already underway. At that time, people in the Middle East buried their dead right away, before the body began to decompose and smell badly. The mourners had already anticipated her death, and lots of screaming, crying, and wailing was going on as part of their funeral arrangement. How different it is in the West. We try to be as quiet as we can at a funeral. Matthew adds to the picture by recording that the crowd was noisy and playing pipes:

²³When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him (Matthew 9:23-24).

The word translated as *laughed* in verse 24, is a scornful belly laugh at the words of Jesus. The mourners ridiculed Him knowing what death looked like. They were not beginners at funerals. She was not asleep. This was no coma. They were witnesses as to the death of the twelve-year-old. What did Jesus mean by saying that she was asleep? Those who are of the household of faith never die, our body may be put in the ground, but we are very much alive at the point of departure of the body. There was no need for screaming, noise, grief, and wailing.

Soul Sleep

Some believe that, when a Christian dies, his soul sleeps and that he is unconscious until Christ comes for him or her at the rapture of the church. The Bible does have a few passages where Jesus talked about death for a Christian as “sleep.” In the case of when Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, He deliberately waited another two days before He even left for the tomb (John 11:6). The Lord waited so that He could prove to the skeptics that He had authority over death. Jews believed that the dead person’s spirit could remain around his body for up to two days before going on to the afterlife. Lazarus was not sleeping in the tomb. He was dead.

¹¹After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." ¹²His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep (John 11:11-13).

[Jesus said:] “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

The believer in Christ is never dead; he is separated from his body, a state that Jesus calls “sleep.” A person is only dead, according to the Lord Jesus, when he has not entered into a relationship with Christ (Ephesians 2:1, 5).

We are told that, at this moment in heaven, there are the spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). In another place, when Christ returns for His church at the Rapture, “**God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him**” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Their bodies were in the grave, but they themselves, the unseen part of our nature, i.e. our spirit and soul, are very much alive and with the Lord.

When a man wanted to follow Christ but first attend to his father’s funeral needs, Jesus said, “**Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead**” (Matthew 8:22). Dead people cannot arrange funeral needs. What Christ was saying was to let the spiritually dead arrange the funeral needs of his father. The most important thing for disciples was to reach the spiritually dead before they die.

When I get into my car, it is dead until I turn on the ignition. It will do nothing at all without my driving it. In the same way, the real me is composed of a spirit and soul that “drives” my body. The real person lives on beyond death. There is more to life than just this body of flesh.

At a funeral we bury something, not someone; it is the house not the tenant that is lowered into the grave. *Verna Wright*.

¹Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Paul the Apostle wrote: “**We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord**” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). He fully expected that, the instant his body released him, he would go immediately to be with the Lord. If you are a Christian, the body is seen by the Lord to be “asleep” until the resurrection of the dead at the coming of the Lord. To be “absent” from one’s body simply means to die because, at death, the spirit is separated from the body and moves into its eternal abode—either heaven with the Lord or hell, separated from God for eternity.

To the church at Philippi, Paul wrote from a Roman prison:

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you (Philippians 1:21-24).

Back to Luke’s testimony. The professional mourners were in unbelief. He put them outside. Why would Christ do that? Unbelief is not a good conductor of healing. The Lord just took Jairus and his wife, plus His three closest disciples: Peter, James and John. It was an intimate moment with the Savior. Can you imagine the joy of your only child coming back to life from the dead! He cares for us in our pain, He cares for us in our trouble. Jesus cares! ⁵⁴**But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!”** ⁵⁵**Her spirit returned**, and at once she stood up. Then

Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened (Luke 8:54-56). When Jesus took the daughter's hand and told her to get up, Luke tells us that her spirit returned (v. 55). What a wonderful sight as her eyes flickered before opening and looking into the face of the Lord Jesus. Many of us reading these words will one day have that experience of shutting the eyes of flesh and seeing the Lord Jesus as we pass into real life—eternal life. Where had the little girl been? Her body was dead and laying on the bed before the Lord and three of His disciples, but the real person, her spirit, was somewhere else—with the Father in heaven. Wouldn't you like to have known what she experienced? I bet she had some stories to tell to her family.

We may wonder why Jesus instructed the parents not to tell anyone about the miracle (Luke 8:56). Although it is not obvious, I will put forward a couple of possible reasons. First of all, it is possible that He was telling the parents to take time to be with their daughter at such a critical time when she had experienced the power of God. As humans, we are so apt to feel that we must take the news of God's power on the campaign trail of speaking at churches. Relationships are more important, and at twelve years old it is possible He was advising for Jairus' daughter not to become a celebrity. Also, I believe Jesus had a sense of timing. Later, we will read that Jesus knew that his time had come. At this point, He still had work to do. The news of Jairus' daughter being raised from the dead would add to the unwanted attention that he was getting from the Pharisees and those that sought to silence him. One of the miracles which the long-awaited Messiah was to perform was the raising of the dead. This news would undoubtedly cause greater scrutiny from the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Some of these men would be motivated by such news to put an end to the ministry of Jesus whom they believed to be a heretic.

When Jesus looked out at the crowds, I believe His heart was moved for all of them. Some of them followed Him for the truth that He spoke, and some came to hear Him speak out of curiosity or because they had heard of His power to heal. Whatever your reason for coming to Jesus, I believe He will meet you right where you are at your point of need, and invite you to come closer.

Prayer: Help me, Father, to move toward You with a heart full of expectation. I know that You see my needs before I ask, but I want to demonstrate my faith in bringing my needs to You.

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