

Luke 8:40-56
Loud Faith/Quiet Faith

Ever since the Fall, our world has been filled with tragedy. On an international scale as well as a personal one, despite the moments of joy and peace, there is the constant awareness of the frailty of life and the inevitability of death. God's grace allows us to rejoice in the fact that this world is not all there is - that there is something more. But it also gives us hope while we are still here. It gives us peace, and it gives us purpose.

In this passage, Jesus again demonstrated His Power over sickness and death. We see again His ability to supernaturally change the course of events, and even reverse the most irreversible of human realities. But more than that, we also again see Jesus changing lives and drawing people to Himself. He offers more than just the mere healing of disease or restoring to life. He offers eternity with Him.

This offer must be received by faith. But while all faith comes from God, it can manifest itself in different ways. Just as the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of Scripture to allow for God's thoughts and words to be communicated perfectly by individual writers, each endowing their work with their own style and personality, so too does the Holy Spirit grant the gift of faith to those whom God chooses. But in each case it looks a bit different.

Jesus had journeyed with His disciples across the Sea of Galilee, calming a storm along the way, bringing both relief and fear to His followers. Upon reaching His destination, Jesus encountered, or rather was encountered by, a demon-possessed man whom He restored to both his right mind and society. Again there was amazement and fear. The immediate consequence, though, was that the people in that region demanded that Jesus leave them. So He did and returned to the area where He had been ministering for some time.

Loud Faith

Luke tells us that people were waiting. "The people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him" (v. 40). In the previous passage, we saw people telling Jesus to go away. Here, people are waiting eagerly of Him to return. Many, no doubt, were sick and afflicted and hoped for healing. Some, perhaps, expected Jesus to teach. In any case, the crowd was large and expectant, for "they had all been waiting for Him" (v. 40). And Jesus made Himself available.

Let us begin with this. Jesus was no recluse. He was no wise man hidden on a mountaintop chanting a mantra waiting for people to ascend to Him. Neither was He some philosopher who was accessible only to the learned and scholarly. Nor was He some revolutionary, plotting away in some underground hideout. He walked, talked, slept, ate, and lived among common, everyday people. At times He sought solitude, to refresh Himself and hear more clearly His Father's voice. But most of His public ministry was just that - public. As Jesus Himself claimed, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret." (John 18:20).

Suddenly, through this crowd pushed a man. Many probably stepped aside to give him room. For he was no ordinary man, no typical person in the crowd. Everyone knew him. He was a leader in the synagogue. He was a person of great respect. Scripture says his name was Jairus, and that he was a 'ruler' in the synagogue. That meant he was one of those responsible for overseeing Jewish religious life in Capernaum. He was likely a Pharisee or scribe, a member of the sect that had clearly demonstrated its hostility to Jesus time and again.

And when this man approached Jesus, "he fell at Jesus' feet" (v. 41).

Think of the ruler of the synagogue falling at the feet of Jesus! What would cause such an event? Luke gives us the answer clearly and compellingly, writing that "he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying" (v. 42). He had lost all concern for what his friends and colleagues might think of him. He was desperate. He risked his position among the leadership of the synagogue and probably disgrace within his family and friends. Yet he did not care. He was bold, He was aggressive. He was committed.

No doubt he had heard of Jesus, which was why he "began to implore Him to come to his house" (v. 41). Jesus had done many miracles in Capernaum and the surrounding area. He had healed. He had driven out demons. At a nearby village, Jesus had actually raised a dead young man to life. Jairus had heard the reports; perhaps even witnessed some of them. This was his only daughter, she was dying, and no religious scruples would keep this father from the one man who could heal her.

Jesus went with him. Jesus stopped what He was doing and responded to this individual need. There must have been dozens of people shouting requests. Yet Jesus responded to this man. What a reminder that we have a personal Savior. No report is made of the others (save one whom we will soon meet). But that is not the point. Jesus knew this man's need, and He went.

It is interesting to think that Jesus could have demonstrated His sovereign power in many different ways. He could have created animals by His Word. He could have caused earthquakes or had rivers change their course. He could have flown around in the sky. He could have done anything, yet He chose to demonstrate His Messiahship by doing miracles that benefited people. He healed, He fed, He saved.

The crowd was large so movement was, no doubt, difficult. As Jesus went, He struggled, as "the crowds were pressing against Him" (v. 42). Jairus must have been increasingly frustrated that people just didn't get out of the way.

Quiet Faith

Then Jesus stopped. He had been interrupted. Jesus had been interrupted before. He had people come in through a roof while He was trying to teach (Luke 5:19). He had been awakened from a deep sleep by His own disciples (Luke 8:24). It is important to remember that interruptions in life are not always bad things. God works in all ways, and our schedule is not His schedule. Our timing is not His timing.

The interruption was caused by a woman, and this woman was sick, very sick. She "had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone" (v. 43). Luke, the physician, notes that her case

was, humanly speaking, incurable. Mark, in his narrative, adds that she “had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse” (Mark 5:26). The medical knowledge of her time was inadequate to her needs. There was nothing that anyone could do. She had lost her health, her money, and her social standing, for she was unclean.

In Leviticus 15, the Mosaic Law stated that the woman was unclean for as long as the bleeding continued. That meant this poor woman had been in a state of ceremonial uncleanness for twelve years. Anything she touched became unclean. Anyone she touched became unclean. Any house she entered became unclean. She was a social pariah. She may as well have been a leper. No wonder she had tried everything she could to be healed.

This is, I think, an illustration that like the woman, many people today, in their desperation to find some cure or fix for their ills, turn to a variety of means. In our culture, false remedies abound for the ills of our age. As ever, people try everything but, like the woman, find themselves worse off than before. Jesus need not be seen as the last resort.

The woman, knowing her uncleanness, did not approach Jesus directly. She was too embarrassed and ashamed. Instead, she “came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak” (v. 44). Matthew’s account informs us that she touched one of the four blue tassels that hung from the outer cloak that Jesus wore (Matthew 9:20). These garments were required by the Law,

“³⁸Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. ³⁹It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, ⁴⁰so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God” (Numbers 15:38-40).

The word used for ‘touched’ means to grab and cling. This was no subtle tap; she grabbed hold of the tassel for a moment and then quickly let go. These no doubt swung freely back and forth and would have been easy to grab without the wearer feeling any pressure on the garment itself. Or so she thought.

Instantly she felt the effects. Luke tells us that “immediately her hemorrhage stopped” (v. 44). It was a cure instantaneous and complete. The bleeding stopped and health returned. Her joy is difficult to imagine. Her suffering was over, but before she could process what had just happened, she heard Jesus say, “Who is the one who touched Me?” (v. 45). Jesus knew what had happened. And in His omniscience, He knew who had touched Him. God’s power does not work randomly. Jesus asked the question not to inquire, but to bring forth.

We can recall Psalm 50:15, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble;

I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”

Jesus wanted that the woman acknowledge the source of her healing. She had believed with her heart, but she had not yet confessed with her mouth (Romans 10:9). Why did Jesus insist on this? Did He want recognition? Was He starved of attention? Of course not. Two reasons come to mind. First, there was the practical reason of informing the people around that the woman was cleansed from her illness and no

longer to be considered unclean. He had healed her physically, now He was restoring her to society. Second, He also wanted to redeem her spiritually. The woman had been healed, and she needed to confess and bring glory to the One Who had done it.

If we have been restored, we must do so as well. Our best efforts to glorify God are weak and frail. He does not need our money or our labor. Our prayers are usually selfish and lacking power. Our understanding of and love for God is small and fleeting. We fail at every opportunity. The least we can do is acknowledge Him. We must confess Him before men.

Peter, ever the one to speak first, said “Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You” (v. 45). Jesus knew, though, exactly what had happened. He responded “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me” (v. 46). We must be careful here. Jesus is not saying that the healing took place without His intent, as if simply by touching His clothes the woman had called upon some power within.

Jesus was referring to the power through the Holy Spirit that He was given by God the Father to heal. He understood this experience, for it had happened many times before. For example, after choosing the twelve disciples Jesus returned from solitude and “all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.” (Luke 6:19).

The woman had already tried to leave. Knowing she could not hide forever (after all, if Jesus had the power to heal, He had the power to know whom He had healed), she returned. “When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him” (v. 47). Was the rabbi offended? Would He reverse the cure? Would the crowds condemn her for having touched the rabbi while she was unclean? One can only imagine what she was wondering. That she was afraid is clear from the fact that she was ‘trembling’.

Compassionately, Jesus quickly put her at ease. After she “declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed” (v. 47), “He said to her, ‘daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace’” (v. 48). See the heart of Jesus. This woman was probably not younger than He was. Still He tenderly called her ‘daughter’. Her faith was very imperfect (she thought she was unworthy to approach Jesus) yet He praised her faith. He saw the best in her.

Again, note that Jesus was saying that her personal response to her personal faith was the key. It was not magic. She had not received healing arbitrarily because she happened to touch a piece of clothing on a rabbi.

And, she was sent away in peace. A physical peace she had not felt for at least twelve years, a spiritual peace she had never experienced. Peace is the great gift of God. It is what all our fears melt away into upon receiving Christ as Lord and Savior.

Isaiah 26:3, “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace,
Because he trusts in You.”

Romans 5:1, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Fulfillment

For the several minutes while this drama was unfolding, Jairus must have been increasingly anxious. His daughter was dying, and Jesus was taking time for this unclean women off the street. His agony must have been unbearable. Then the worst happened. “While He [Jesus] was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, ‘Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore’” (v. 49). His heart must have dropped. This relative or friend, Scripture does not say, had just brought the inevitable news. It had taken too long to get Jesus. While Jesus was tending to the needs of an outcast, the only daughter of one of the city’s leading Jewish citizens had died. Jairus must have begun to ask all those “what if” questions. “What if I had started sooner?” “What if this woman hadn’t been here?” “What if Jesus had just ignored her?”

Jesus remained, as ever, calm. The interruption was part of God’s sovereign plan. It did not mean Jesus was unable to complete His task. Responding not to the messenger but turning to Jairus himself, He said “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well.” (v. 50). The challenge for Jairus was to act on faith - to believe. He was afraid, and he had to believe. Like the Old Testament men of faith - Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22), Moses fleeing Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14), and David facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17) - Jairus would have to trust God for something great. Faith is needed most of all in hard times. True faith can stand the test. That is the faith we need.

Psalm 112:7. “He will not fear evil tidings;

His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.”

It took some time for Jesus to get to the home of Jairus. People had already begun to gather as news of the girl's death had spread to family and friends. The events surrounding the funeral had begun. When Jesus arrived at the home of Jairus, “He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl’s father and mother.” (v. 51). Why? Scripture does not say. Was the house already too crowded? Would so many strange people around have startled the girl when she awoke? For whatever reasons Jesus chose these people to witness the miracle He was about to perform.

The scene within the house was chaotic, as befit a first-century Jewish funeral. “They were all weeping and lamenting for her” (v. 52). There was family and friends of course, and probably professional mourners. After all, this man was an important member of the synagogue, a leader of the community. His home must have been filled. Jesus spoke to this crowd over the noise, perhaps even raising His voice, “stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep” (v. 52). As with the widow at Nain whom Jesus told not to weep, this statement was the height of cruelty if it was not proved to be true.

The crowd must have been stunned into momentary silence. Then the people responded as one would expect. No doubt some of them had nursed the girl through her sickness. They had maintained a tense vigil while Jairus went to find Jesus. Surely, some had even watched her die. So naturally, “they began laughing at Him” (v. 53). They mocked Jesus. They derided His insensitivity. They chastised Him for mocking this family at this worst of all moments.

The girl was dead. The mourners said so. The family said so. When Jairus arrived he must have rushed to the bed where his daughter lay hoping for any sign of life. This was not a coma or some deep sleep. The girl was clearly dead. Ignoring the crowd, Jesus, “however, took her by the hand and called, saying,

‘Child, arise!’” (v. 54). He did not need to touch her but He did. Mark tells us that He spoke in the girl’s native Aramaic, perhaps using words she had heard many times before from her mother in the morning.

As always, the response is instantaneous. No sooner had Jesus spoken than “her spirit returned, and she got up immediately.” (v. 55). She was restored to life. The sickness was gone. She was well enough to stand up and walk around.

But Jesus was not finished. He knew the girl had been ill. In a moment of great tenderness, He reminded the parents that she might be hungry after her illness so He “gave orders for something to be given her to eat” (v. 55).

In one of Scripture’s great understatements, Luke tells us that “Her parents were amazed” (v. 56). No doubt they were! The word means “to stand outside oneself.” Sensing their natural response, Jesus “instructed them to tell no one what had happened.” (v. 56). Again we wonder why. Perhaps knowing that news would naturally spread anyway - it would be impossible to keep this event a secret since the house was full of people aware of the girl’s death - Jesus simply wanted to forestall the kind of disruptive force that impeded His Ministry. The injunction was a small one, Jairus had his daughter back.

We can look forward to the fact that happened in the house of Jairus will happen again. Jesus had redefined death as ‘sleep’. It is temporary. The hour will one day come when those dead in Christ will hear His voice and rise to new life. John 5:25-29,

“²⁵Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

Take Aways

Rejoice and praise God for the Savior He has sent. Like the characters in this narrative, some are men, others women. Some are rich, others poor. Some hold high position, others are outcast. Some come rushing to Jesus boldly and loudly, other only quietly seek to touch what they can as He passes by. Yet Jesus responds to all, meeting their needs with compassion and grace.