

Jesus Conquers Sickness and Death

Luke 8:40-56

We are going to Luke 8.

Luke 8:40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all 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. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.

So Jairus, was a ruler of the synagogue. He was a leader, used to calling shots and getting things done, a prominent person in the community. He would have been well thought of and pretty together.

But now that image is being shattered because he has a daughter that is dying. She had probably been sick for days and had been declining. Jairus was watching over her, and more and more fear grew in his heart.

There's nothing like the love a dad has for his daughter, and his daughter is so sick that she is about to die. His stomach is in knots, and everything he has in life seems worthless to him. He'd probably gladly give all of his money and status and success for the life of his daughter.

He's desperate. And he had heard that Jesus could heal. So, he runs to Jesus and falls at his feet and begs Him to come to his house.

Jesus can see the pain Jairus is experiencing. So Jesus, full of compassion, goes with him, and the crowds that are following Jesus (which are now swelling to the thousands) go along to see what happens.

So this is probably a big commotion. Jesus is mingling with the people, Jairus comes up in a panic, and Jesus says, "Let's go," and they start a fast-paced walk to Jairus' house.

The sirens are blaring, they're rushing in, they're making their way down narrow city streets with a huge crowd packed in tightly around Jesus. So there is zero social distance here, as they all want to be as close as possible to maybe witness a miracle.

But not everybody in the crowd was there to witness Jesus perform a miracle for Jairus. There was a woman in that crowd that wanted her own miracle.

Luke 8:43 And there was a woman who had 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.

So this woman has an incurable medical condition, forms of which are difficult to treat to this day. This is a type of condition which, in their day especially, could have easily caused her to lose her marriage, or to not be able to have children.

And it certainly meant that she was considered to be ceremonially unclean. According to Leviticus 15:25, she couldn't go to worship with the crowd, she couldn't touch people, and if she ever came into anyone's home, their furniture had to be washed for fear of contamination.

And this has been her life for 12 years.

And maybe in these days of Coronavirus we can get a little sense of what she is going through. We are all supposed to be treating one another like we are unclean these days. We're all trying so hard not to contaminate each other.

We're not worshipping together because we might be contagious, so we're all feeling at least a little distant from the community of faith.

And the social distance affects most of our interactions with loved ones. I saw pictures on facebook this week of families meeting with the grandparents on the other side of a window.

I went for a walk and passed some people on a trail in the woods, and we both walked into the woods on our side of the trail to keep that 6 foot distance. We're nervous about closeness and contamination. At Wegmans we try not to bump into each other, everybody is kept separate at the cash register. We're trying to keep an uncleaness from spreading.

There are no more hugs, not even Christian side-hugs, no handshakes.

Debbie has gone a couple of times to get groceries for her parents and just left them on the porch so we wouldn't contaminate them. And as we hear the longer estimates on

how long this could last, for example the governor this week said it could be up to 9 months, we think, "I don't know if I can do that." We are a couple of weeks into this and we're thinking, "When will this end?" We all feel that a part of our humanity is missing.

For this woman it has been 12 years. She has had to explain to everyone she has met that she is unclean, that she has this embarrassing problem, so that they won't come too close. She is probably very alone.

So she is desperate. So Luke tells us she has spent all of her money on doctors and they couldn't heal her.

Mark says it even more severely:

Mark 5:26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

It's not a surprise that doctor Luke was a little easier on physicians when he told the story. Mark hints at a lot of quackery among the physicians in their day - doctor Luke doesn't mention that.

So we have two crises happening at once here - Jairus's 12 year old daughter is dying, and a woman needs healing, she has been suffering as long as Jairus's daughter has been alive.

Luke 8:44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. 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."

So this woman comes up to touch Jesus. She doesn't want to trouble Jesus, she doesn't want this to be a big scene because her condition is embarrassing, and she knows that what she is about to do wouldn't be allowed by the religious leaders in her day.

If you were a woman, especially a ceremonially unclean woman, you didn't just touch a rabbi – it was a big taboo. But she thinks, "There's this huge crowd, they're pressing in on Jesus, I'll just reach in and touch him and get my healing and nobody will notice."

In the ancient world, there were a lot of superstitions about the supernatural power of great people and great rulers. Alexander the Great was believed to have power to bless whoever touched him, so people were constantly trying to touch his arm or his leg because they thought they could be baptized with his aura and power.¹

So she knows Jesus is a great man. And maybe out of a little superstition she thinks she can just touch his garment and be healed.

So everybody is crushing in on Jesus in this narrow street. But all of a sudden, Jesus slams on the breaks and says, “Wait, someone touched me!”

Peter is there and says, “Master, see where we are? We’re in an alley with 4000 people. Everybody is touching everybody, it’s jam-packed here.”

Jesus says, “No this is different. Power went out from me.”

I don’t know what that means, or what that felt like. But it is clear that this is a healing that cost Jesus something. He felt power go from Him.

Now this woman feels that she is healed, she is headed away quietly, she is sneaking off having stolen a miracle from Jesus without having to face Jesus. And then she hears from Jesus, “Who touched me?” She is caught.

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.

So she is afraid.

She broke quarantine. She contaminated this great Rabbi, as well as who knows how many others in the crowd. They’re all ceremonially unclean because of her.

But she doesn’t hide the truth. Mark’s Gospel says she “told him the whole truth” (Mark 5:33). She tells Jesus everything. She doesn’t hide anything. She says, “This was my condition, I touched your garment, and I have been healed.”

¹ Edwards 255

And she is trembling. She's afraid. She has interrupted His mission and broken the cleanliness code and defiled the rabbi. And Jesus says:

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

And you notice what he calls her. *Daughter*. Because of the length of time she has been suffering with this condition, we can assume that she is older than Jesus. But he calls her daughter. He uses that word not because she is younger, but because of his degree of care and concern for her.

So if you're ever wondering how Jesus views you and your problems and your needs, just ask yourself how you would handle your daughter with those problems and needs.

We know that in our selfishness, people with problems can feel like a burden. They come to us with their problems, and we're quick to think, "Yeah, I got problems too."

But if your daughter has those problems, you treat them like they're your own problems. Your heart breaks for your daughter. You would rather suffer than your daughter. If it costs you something for your daughter to be whole, you pay the price.

That's how Jesus views us.

When we want to know what God is like, when we wonder what is in God's heart, the clearest place to look is Jesus, who is God the Son who took on flesh.

A major reason for the incarnation, for His becoming a man, is to teach us, in human terms, what God is like. This is what God is like: concerned for problems, a Father to those who come to Him, compassionate, caring. Rushing to the scene of suffering, responding to desperation. This is our God.

So this woman who is wondering "Am I a burden to Jesus, will Jesus be mad at what I've done, have I wrecked His day, hears Jesus call her *daughter*.

This is how God receives all who come to Him: as sons and daughters.

John 1:12 "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

When you come to Jesus turning from sin and unbelief, trusting in Him and what He's done for you on the cross, you are received as a child of God - because that's what you are. You become a child of God when you put your faith in Jesus, and He treats you only always like His child from that point forward.

So Jesus stops the ambulance.

But you have to wonder, why didn't Jesus just know what happened but keep walking? Why does he need to draw attention to her? Why can't he just let her have her healing and go home? Isn't he going to embarrass her here? This kind of healing is a pretty personal thing, and to expose the healing could be exposing her to a certain level of shame and embarrassment. What is he trying to accomplish by stopping the crowd?

God's always doing far more than we could understand with everything He does. But we can see a few things Jesus is doing here:

1) Jesus is Growing her faith.

This woman was at risk of having a really deficient faith. If she had a superstitious view of Jesus, that he was a great man so touching his garments had magical powers, she wouldn't really know who he was. Her faith could be left as a very superstitious one.

There is a hunger for superstitious forms of faith in the human heart. Many "brands" of Christianity have put an excessive amount of faith in artifacts: things like slivers from the cross, stones from the via dolorosa, the shroud of turan that maybe covered Jesus' body, and the holy grail. And those things are supposed to have some power.

There is also a lot of faith put in things like crucifixes and amulets. I have a friend from high school who wears an amulet around his neck because some great teacher said if you die wearing it you'll never perish in hell. So he thinks the amulet saves him.

We can have a misplaced faith in Christian artifacts but not know Jesus.

So you have Indiana Jones on the crusade to get to the holy grail because it has power to give life, but there is no pursuit of Jesus, no repentance from sin, just a desire to get the magical cup and a beautiful woman along the way. It's a faith in things, a faith in magic, a faith with the wrong object.

We don't have artifacts and amulets we wear like garlic to keep the spiritual vampires away. Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus. If you wear a cross to remind you of Christ, that's fine, but we are never supposed to have faith in those things. And Jesus wants this woman to connect with him and realize why she got this healing.

Jesus doesn't want the woman to be amazed by the power in his robe, but he wants her to realize that it is faith in Jesus, not in an object, that is saving.

So he risks embarrassing her so she can know, and the crowd can know where the real power is. Verse 48 - Your faith has made you well. (Not my robe, not some other power, your faith in Me.)

2) Jesus is Showing His True Nature

Jesus is not just a great man like Alexander the Great. She could have remained hidden from Alexander. But she wasn't hidden from Jesus. Jesus is being literally crushed by this crowd, but He notices the touch of this one woman on the tassel of His garment, and it's different.

Because God knows the heart, and can be totally aware of everything that is going on everywhere at all times. He is paying total attention to you, always, right now, even as He is paying total attention to everyone else. He is different and more than just a great man.

Because of who He is, we need to come to the same realization this woman came to: we are not hidden from Jesus. Our sin isn't hidden from Him, our hearts and motives aren't hidden from Him, and our need for His care isn't hidden from Him. We can't hide anything from Jesus.

So rather than fight against that, we come to Him confessing. Confessing our sins, our motives, our needs, our desperation. He knows them anyways.

3) Jesus is Fully Restoring Her

She has spent 12 years having to explain her uncleanness, having been removed from worship services, cast out of relationships. By publicly affirming her healing here, He is providing a path to her restoration. She is no longer unclean - she can be received now as part of the community.

She isn't only personally healed, but restored to the relationships she needs.

So because of what Jesus does here, she is totally, fully restored. What was lacking in her life was supplied, what she couldn't have she now has. But she also, by having faith in Jesus, now has everything infinitely and eternally better.

In fact, even today, in 2020, she is in the presence of Jesus with nothing lacking, having been made well by her faith.

So much so that she would tell us that if it took those 12 devastating years for her to come to know Jesus eternally, it would have been worth it.

So look what Jesus does with these twelve lost years!

At the end of them, she is restored to relationships, she is restored to the worshipping community, and she also knows Jesus like she never would have had she not suffered like that. She is better after the 12 years than she would have been had those twelve years not had happened.

And this is a picture of what God is doing with humanity. There's coming a day of total restoration of all things, when all things are made new. And He is not only going to get rid of our problems, but weave every problem into the fabric of the best of all possible worlds that He is bringing about.

So in history, all of the tragedy, all of the sin, all of the loss, all of the pain, is being used by God to bring about what will one day be a better world than we would have known had sin never entered into the picture.

Because now we know God better. We never would have known his mercy without our sin, we never would have known the kind of love He has for us without the cross, we never would have known how good it all is without living through the darkness now.

Jesus doesn't only fix what was ailing her, he makes her better in the end than she would have been had she never been sick at all.

And this is what God does with our suffering. The point of our suffering is not only so we could praise God when He ends our suffering. It is so we can know Him better than we would have had we not suffered at all.

Jesus wants to do more for us than just end our suffering, He wants us to come out of it knowing Him better.

So as we are quarantined at home, waiting for the affliction to pass, feeling the weight of what's outside, feeling the pressure of a strained job, the fear over our health, and we wonder what God is doing with this season of suffering, we can know this season isn't here just so we can one day not be suffering anymore. It is to do real good for us, to bring us individually and as a church out of this season knowing Him better than we would have had we never been through this.

Maybe it's a new love for church and the Christian community that He is cultivating in this season without gathering. Maybe it's a new faith in His rule and reign. A new ability to trust Him when the world is falling apart. A new knowledge of Him from what we've read and listened to over these months.

He hasn't allowed his people to be confined to our homes just so we can binge Netflix. It's so we can know Him better than we would have.

We just want our suffering to end, he wants it to accomplish something.

And He does accomplish something great with this woman.

OK, but remember, there's another crisis happening at the same time.

Imagine Jairus at this moment – he hears that Jesus was touched by an unclean woman. Jesus was his only hope. But now, this woman who is unclean, has polluted Jesus. And as a synagogue ruler, can he even have Jesus in his house anymore? Are his hopes vanishing?

And even if he is willing to break the cleanliness code and defile his house now with Jesus's presence, time is of the essence here. His daughter is almost dead at home, and now we're stopping. He is probably getting knots in his stomach – because they're delayed.

He could be thinking, "Her problem can wait, my daughter's can't."

Jesus stops the ambulance that can save a dying girl to heal a woman who has had a problem for 12 years. Couldn't he have told her to wait there and he'll be back in an hour?

But Jesus, the great physician, has ways that are higher than our ways and thoughts that are higher than our thoughts. His sense of timing is not ours.

In fact, he rarely operates according to our sense of good timing. We tend to want our answer from Jesus on our terms and in our time frame, and we get mad at him if he doesn't deliver.

But He is God, who is infinitely wiser than we are, and for us to get mad because we don't get our answer when we wanted it is to say that we know better than our creator how to answer our prayers.

And then:

Luke 8:49 While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more."

They're too late.

Now the situation is hopeless.

People can heal disease. But they can't heal death. When someone dies, you don't call a doctor. You call a coroner.

Jesus is no longer needed.

50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. Just believe - trust me. She's going to be ok, even though she has died."

Which is a significant amount of faith Jesus is calling for here. He is calling this synagogue ruler to believe that Jesus is not just some faith healer, but He has power over death itself. He shouldn't even be afraid that the worst possible condition, the most hopeless condition, has now befallen his daughter.

So they kept walking. I don't know how far away they were, but I'm sure it felt like miles to Jairus.

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.

So they get to the house, and the mourners are there. This was a required part of a Jewish funeral in their days, loud, wailing mourners to mark someone's death. Everyone in a neighborhood was made aware of someone's death by the presence of these loud, professional mourners. It was like when a siren sounds, everybody knows there is trouble.

And Jesus says literally, "Stop wailing."² He isn't against crying tears in mourning, he is telling these mourners to be quiet, they don't need to mark her death anymore. This isn't going to be a house of death, but of life. We can turn the siren off.

And Jesus says she is only sleeping. But these people know what death is. This is what they do. So they laugh at Jesus.

Jesus had said, "**Luke 6:21 "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh."**

This is an ironic fulfillment of what Jesus said, and these are the only people in the New Testament who are said to laugh.

Everybody will laugh because of the claims of Jesus. We will laugh in derision and mock the claims that Jesus can bring life. Or we will laugh in joy because we experience that new life.

We will either mock the claims of the gospel, or receive them as life.

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.

So with a word, He commands her to rise from death.

Which is what He does eventually with all of his children. Though we die, we will live. Though we'll one day be buried and put in the ground, Jesus will come and awake us from our sleep, and receive us to feast with Him in the new creation.

² Morris, Leon, Luke: An Introduction and Commentary, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008), 180.

Jesus conquers death.

So in doing these miracles, He shows his care. He shows that we are not hidden - our sins, our problems, our uncleanness, our need.

He shows his willingness to heal even when it costs Him something: power goes out from Him, or He has to suffer public mockery. He is showing what kind of Savior He is.

He is one who gave His life to save us, and it cost Him everything. His whole life went out from Him on the cross when He paid for our sins. He was mocked, spit on, beaten, and laughed at. But He endured it all so He could call us back from death and give us new life.

He's the only one that can offer this kind of redemption.

So maybe you've been spending your life looking for peace, and you've spent your resources on many "doctors" to get you that peace. Thrills, the job, relationships, health, beauty, fame, money. And they all mistreat you, and none of them heal you.

Jesus is calling us all to run to Him.

Notes:

Jesus Conquers Sickness and Death

Luke 8:40-56

These intertwined miracles give us an opportunity to look into the knowledge, power, and compassion of Jesus. He is a God who responds to our needs and desperation the way a father responds to the needs and desperation of his child. This passage helps us to see some of His purposes in our seasons of sickness, fear, and longing. He is a God who not only restores what we have lost but who will one day bring about the best of all possible worlds.

I. A Desperate Leader

Jairus was used to being a leader in his community. But the sickness of his daughter brought him to his knees.

How does this pandemic season reveal our true need? In what ways does it humble us?

II. A Sick and Lonely Woman

This woman had experienced 12 years of social isolation, removal from worship, and a life's savings spent on false hopes. But in the end, she is healed, and has faith in Jesus.

Unbeknownst to her, the 12 years of misery were giving her the desperation that would send her running to Jesus and finding not only physical healing, but eternal life. Reflect on what this says about our suffering.

Even in her 11th year of suffering, this woman never would have detected any good purpose in it. But in the 12th year it all came together for her good. Reflect on what this says about our long-term suffering that seems meaningless and only

bad.

III. Jesus is Mocked

The mourners laugh when Jesus claims that Jairus's daughter is alive. The claims of Jesus will either be received with joyful laughter or rejected with mocking laughter.

Which claims of Jesus are easy to mock? Which of his promises are often belittled in our day? What would it mean to receive them with joyful laughter, even the ones that seem far-fetched at first?