

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



Matthew 9:18-26

Jesus and the Humble

6/16/24

Matthew 9:18–26

[18] While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” [19] And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. [20] And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, [21] for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” [22] Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. [23] And when Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, [24] he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. [25] But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. [26] And the report of this went through all that district.

So, starting in verse 18, one of the Pharisees, a synagogue ruler named Jairus (as we learn from Mark and Luke) comes to Jesus with a desperate need:

Matthew 9 [18] While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”

So Jairus's daughter, who is 12 years old according to the other accounts, has died.

To quickly address one issue: in Mark and Luke's Gospels, the story is that the synagogue leader's daughter is right on the edge of death when he first approaches Jesus, and they find out as they're heading to his house that she has finally died. Which doesn't make any difference when it comes to the point of this story - she has died by the time Jesus arrives either way.

But where this becomes an issue is around the question of how God's word could tell conflicting versions of the same account. Isn't it all true? Wouldn't one account be a lie if they conflicted?

If this is God's word, and it is, if it is all inspired, and it is, it wouldn't make sense for there to be any contradictions. So when we find what appears to be one, it can make us question a bit whether the Bible is reliable.

But this one is actually fairly easily explained. When Jairus says, "my daughter has just died" in Matthew 9:18, in the greek, it is literally, "**my daughter was just now dying.**" So in other words, Jairus left home when his daughter was on the edge of death, and though he hasn't heard confirmation yet, surely she must have died by now, he thinks. And then that will be confirmed as they're on the way to his house. So there's no contradiction here.

His daughter is on the edge of death, and Jairus, the powerful synagogue ruler, comes and kneels before Jesus for help.

Imagine the impact this would have had. Verse 18 begins with the phrase, "**While he was saying these things.**" "These things" are the things Jesus said in the previous passage. If you remember from last week, in the passage just before this, Jesus was speaking to the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees about why He and his disciples weren't fitting into

their religious system, specifically when it comes to the issue of fasting. He made clear that he wasn't coming to be the latest patch on their religious garment, but was something altogether different. He was bringing a whole new thing, vastly superior to the system of the Pharisees.

And the next thing to happen is one of the Pharisees comes and bows before Jesus.

Because he has no power over the death of his daughter. All of his knowledge and study, all of his religious zeal, all of his wisdom, as good as it was, couldn't conquer death. All of his wisdom could guide, but it couldn't save.

This Pharisee desperately needs Jesus and knows it.

So he kneels, humbled. Now whether he was one of the Pharisees that opposed Jesus before, we don't know. But now he's broken, and comes humbly to Jesus on behalf of his daughter when he knows he is totally powerless himself. The Pharisees generally thought they didn't need Jesus, but this one recognizes that he really does. He needs Jesus for the life of his daughter. And he's humble, so he gets Jesus's attention.

And this Father's Day, here's an application for the fathers among us:

As much as we've failed and fallen short, as men and as dads, we're given this example of a humble man who bows before Jesus on behalf of his child, and Jesus responds. So that's some real hope for us.

There are no guarantees that God will answer all of our prayers for our kids, but this guy here, in a desperate state, calls out to Jesus and Jesus goes with him. So dads, bring your kids to Jesus. He loves them even more than you do. So for your kids who are young and un-formed - take it on yourself

to form them in Christ by teaching them his word, keeping them in church, making life Christ-centered. Bring them to Jesus.

If your kids are wandering, or your kids who don't seem to want to respond to Jesus, or your kids have overwhelming problems and needs, Jesus responds in this story to a humble dad who asks for His help.

So work to bring your kids to Christ, and humble yourself, and confess your need, pray for your kids. Jesus seems eager to meet this need here.

And look at the content of Jairus's request: he says, "Come lay your hand on her and she will live." He believes that Jesus is legitimately powerful over death, He believes that Jesus is unlike any other teacher in his religious system. And because He believes, He makes the request of Jesus.

If we believed like Him, we would probably pray far more than we do. If we believed Jesus hears our prayers and is powerful over everything we are facing, we would pray more like Jairus.

And Jesus responds to the humble faith of this synagogue ruler:

Matthew 9: [19] And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

Now you might think, obviously Jairus got Jesus's attention. He was a prominent religious figure, probably a pretty decent guy, he had a name and influence and maybe money. He had power and authority, of course Jesus made time for him.

But the next thing that happens shows that Jesus didn't respond to him because he was such a big deal. And we know that, because next he responds to a woman who was the opposite of Jairus in standing in the community:

Matthew 9: [20] And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, [21] for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.”

So they are hurrying off to Jairus’s house, and a woman who for twelve years had a discharge of blood approaches.

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 not be able to be marry, 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 with a potential disease.

And this has been her life for 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.

Arthur Brooks, a harvard professor who studies and writes about happiness, says the four things that contribute most to our happiness are **faith, family, friends, and work**. And this would cut all four of those legs from the stool of her life.

She couldn’t experience all her faith had to offer because she was ceremonially unclean, this certainly would affect marriage and family, she couldn’t be too close to friends, and her possibility for having meaningful work as a mother or potential mother was gone. She had none of the ingredients that contribute to happiness readily available to her.

And remember that she comes to Jesus while He is en route to meet Jairus's need.

Jairus had it all - was the top dog in the synagogue, robust faith and meaningful work to do, he had a family, his standing would have gotten him many connections and friendships.

He is at the center of Jewish society, she is an outcast in Jewish society. She probably wouldn't have been allowed in the synagogue he led.

So the powerful religious man is bowing before Jesus, desperate for His power. And the outcast, the unclean woman is coming to Jesus, desperate for His power. And Jesus responds to both when they are humble and dependent.

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the Lord:

**“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?**

2

**All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things came to be,
declares the Lord.**

But this is the one to whom I will look:

**he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.**

In the world around us, it's often the rich who are in and the poor who are out. The educated who are in and the uneducated who are out. Or, if you

view things through a Marxist lens it's the opposite - those with the least are in, the most oppressed are in, and the rich and powerful are out.

But this is one of the ways Jesus is so different than anything anyone had experienced. He isn't just the latest patch on their old garment, He is a whole new garment:

With Jesus, the humble are in and the proud are out.

It doesn't fit any of our normal systems. And don't try to make him do so, He's like new wine that will burst the old wineskins of earning your legitimacy through success or earning your legitimacy through oppression.

The humble are in and the proud are out.

And the need for Jesus is a great leveler. We are all in the same boat - we all need Christ. If our sins are socially acceptable or if our sins make us an outcast, we all need Christ. If we have wealth and power or poverty and want, we all need Christ.

And together when we take the Lord's supper, people from all walks of life gather around these tables, eating the same bread and drinking the same wine, because everyone is in need of Jesus. So around these tables will be the uneducated and educated, the well-dressed and more-shabbily dressed, those with a head full of theology and those who know only the basics, those with a history that is scandalous and those whose history seems more tame.

And we gather with a common need for Jesus. When we look at each other headed to the tables, we can all nod knowingly: yep, I need Jesus, too.

And - good news - all of those who are humble and repentant and come to Jesus receive a common welcome from Jesus.

We are more sinful than we could ever imagine, and because of the cross of Jesus, if we repent and believe, we will be more welcomed by God than we could ever dream.¹

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.²

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.

Matthew 9: [22] Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.

And you notice what he calls her. *Daughter*.

¹ A rephrasing of Tim Keller's famous quote.

² Edwards, The Gospel According to Luke, 255

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 and comes to you, 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.

What dad among us wouldn't give his own life for his daughter? That's how Jesus loves 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: love for the rich and the poor, 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.

And Jesus gives this woman far more than she came looking for. She just wanted a physical healing. Jesus does more.

1) Jesus Solidifies 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, and the holy grail.

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.

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 Jesus. If you wear a cross to remind

you of Christ, that's fine and good, but we are never supposed to have faith in those things.

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 says in verse 22 - Your faith has made you well. (Not my robe, not some other power, your faith in Me.)

2) Jesus Shows Her His True Nature

Jesus is not just a great man like Alexander the Great. She could have remained hidden from Alexander if she touched his robe. But she wasn't hidden from Jesus - verse 22 - "Jesus turned and SEEING HER said take heart..."

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 Fully Restores 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. Faith, family, friends, work - all are hers again.

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 2024, 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 we don't know why God allows the suffering He allows, we don't know how long it will be allowed, we don't know what He will do with it or when it will resolve. But there is 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.

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.

Imagine Jairus at this moment – he hears that Jesus was touched by an unclean woman. He’s a synagogue ruler. 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.”

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.

Matthew 9:[23] And when Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, [24] he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him.

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 with dirges and weeping and singing their sorrow. Everyone in a neighborhood was made aware of someone’s death by the presence of these loud, professional mourners.

And Jesus tells the mourners to go away. He isn't against crying tears in mourning, but it isn't going to be fitting today because of what Jesus is about to do.

And Jesus says she is only sleeping. But these people know what death is. 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.

We will need to cultivate faith amidst skepticism and ridicule.

Matthew 9: [25] But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. [26] And the report of this went through all that district.

So He takes her by the hand and 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. If we will believe in Him.

Jesus conquers death.

He is something so new and different, not just the latest religious teacher.

He is a King who is bringing a whole new kingdom where:

Matthew 5:3–4

[3] **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** (the humble are in)

[4] **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

Because

Revelation 21:4

[4] **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (ESV)**

And these are realities we are claiming to believe and be a part of when we take the Lord’s supper.

We believe the humble are in: and in taking this supper, we are saying our sin was so serious that Jesus had to die.

But we are saying our King has power over death, and because He died, we get life. Because His blood was spilled, our tears will be dried.

So if you believe you can take this supper rejoicing in that Gospel.

Prayer of Confession:

Father, we confess our reliance on our own understanding and efforts, often neglecting to turn to You as the source of true healing and restoration.

Forgive us for seeking solutions in worldly pursuits and failing to trust in Your wisdom and power.

Jesus, we acknowledge our tendency to hide our brokenness behind masks of self-sufficiency, fearing judgment from others. Grant us the courage to bring our deepest needs before You in faith, knowing that in Your presence, there is no shame or condemnation, only redemption. Help us to believe that on the cross you took our shame, our uncleanness, and even our death.

Holy Spirit, guide us into deeper faith and reliance on God. May Your presence empower us to live as beloved children, bearing witness to Your transforming power in our lives and in the world.

Assurance:

Ephesians 1:7 [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (ESV)

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- 1) How do the interactions between Jairus and the woman with the issue of blood highlight the universal need for Christ?
- 2) How does their approach to Jesus demonstrate the importance of humility and dependence in seeking God's intervention in our lives?
- 3) How does the woman's desire to receive a secret healing reflect on our desire to have our relationship with Christ be only private?
- 4) Jesus refers to the woman as "daughter," emphasizing His care and compassion. How does this portrayal of Jesus as a loving father figure contrast with common perceptions of God? How does it impact your

understanding of God's character?

- 5) What does the crowd's laughter at Jesus's promise tell you about the necessity of cultivating faith amidst skepticism and ridicule?