



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Called to a Faith that Overcomes Fear (Luke 8:40-56)

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This account is the last of three examples used by Luke to emphasize the parable of the soils and the appropriate response of having God's word sown into one's heart. The writer concludes this section by using this intertwined account which highlights two examples that characterize a heart which holds fast to the Word in the midst of the choking cares of this life. In doing so, he contrasts faith with fear. He began with the disciples in the boat who are presented as possessing a faith that does not evidence itself in the midst of testing and ends with those, who in spite of their fear, respond by choosing to trust Jesus. This account also confronts us with two contrasting individuals who are both joined together in their common suffering and need for Jesus. The world, everything and everyone in it is marching down the path toward death. The pain of life is told daily in endless and inescapable details of sickness and anguish. The Fall of man has placed into the fabric of this world the fatal force of death. This is our destination; no matter how sophisticated we become, at best we can only delay the inevitable.

Jesus understands this, when standing before Lazarus' grave in John 11 (a man he would raise from the dead moments later) he responds to those who suffered this heart-break by weeping. He understands the sorrows of human history and the relentless pain of sickness and death that fill the human heart. He came as the answer to our fears and to give us hope that can be found in no one else. All others who make this claim are charlatans, frauds, and fakes. There is only one who can help us face death not as a foe but as a friend and it is Jesus. This is the witness of the gospel accounts. They declare Jesus as the one who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect and sinless life, and who demonstrated divine power over nature, demons, disease, and even death.

As we consider the vast differences of the two main characters, we find a man, the ruler of the synagogue and a woman who was an outcast - one rich and the other is poor. One was revered and exalted, and the other one was vilified and despised. One was used to being honored, and the other one was used to being scorned. One has a twelve-year-old daughter, the other a twelve-year-old disease. One leads the synagogue, and the other is forbidden to enter it. In these extremes you see Jesus embracing both individuals. In this we catch a glimpse of Mary's song of praise when told she would be the mother of the Messiah, the son of God. What she said, in Luke 1:52, is: "God, my Savior, "...brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of humble estate." Here is the perfect example, he brings down a ruler, and lifts up the outcast. In both extremes, when one comes to Jesus in need, we find him calling both to a faith which requires them to completely entrust their lives into his hand as he seeks their full restoration.

Luke 8:40-56: (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. (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. (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." (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. (48) And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

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

AN URGENT REQUEST

And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, - Jesus has just arrived back after a preaching circuit through the town and villages in Galilee. On the return leg of this journey, they sail across the Sea of Galilee, get caught in furious squall, dock on Gentile soil and are confronted by a demon possessed man. After being encouraged to leave this land from the inhabitants they are welcomed back to Capernaum by the crowds who had been waiting for Jesus' return. Among the many who sought Jesus there was a man name Jairus, an official of the synagogue. He would have been a man of great respect, known by the people in that area, and knowledgeable of the

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Scripture. As a ruler he held significant administrative responsibilities at the synagogue, such as: supervising all activities of the Sabbath, appointing teachers, and readers of the Scripture. As part of the religious establishment he would have known all that happened at the synagogue and specifically Jesus who taught in that setting and healed a man possessed by a demon (Luke 4:36-37). This man of importance was in this moment a man of great need and waited with the others for the return of Jesus as his daughter went from sickness to the point of death. With Jesus' arrival, immediately the crowds swarm him and this man of prominence throws himself at Jesus' feet. As he pleads with Jesus to come and heal his only daughter, we are again reminded of Jesus' availability. He is not distant from those who are in need, but immediately goes with Jairus to avert this tragedy. For Jairus all that remained was the speed in which they might arrive at his home. As they hurried through the crowd, we see him clinging to a flickering faith which might be extinguished at any moment.

THE UNCONSCIENABLE DELAY

And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years – Jairus was just one of many who had specific needs that sought after Jesus upon his return. He may have been the one who had the most critical and time sensitive need from a human perspective, but he was not alone in his desperation. In this combined account we find another who was equally desperate. While Jairus had a twelve-year-old daughter who was on the brink of death, this woman had suffered the physical, emotional, social and spiritual effects of her condition for the length of time this little girl was alive. This was a woman who was familiar with suffering. Coping with her chronic condition in itself would have been physically challenging due to the constant loss of blood. However for a Jewish woman this ritual uncleanness would have meant a separation from any physical contact from another person because her uncleanness would have been passed to another by her touch. Spiritually her growth would have been stunted because she could not have gone to the synagogue to hear the reading of the word of God. This condition not only had physical, emotional, and spiritual implication in her life, it had also driven her to the point of economic poverty. Her need was so great in her estimation that she expelled every bit of her financial resources in order that her condition might be remedied, but with no effect. Her life was centered on one thing; all that mattered to her was getting rid of the debilitating condition. This is seen in her flaunting social norms with a boldness and utter disregard for others that pressed around Jesus. This was her moment, all else had failed, and the implications of her action no longer matter. As she cuts through the crowd her mind is filled with only one

thought, if only I can touch Jesus I will be healed. Like Jairus she came to Jesus with a limited understanding of all that Jesus was willing to give to her.

“Who was it that touched me?” –Not a moment could be wasted in the minds of Jairus and those of Jesus' disciples as they sought to arrive in time to heal this little girl. Yet for the son of God, time is relative. In the midst of this hurried procession of people, Jesus stops to address the faith of a woman who had already been healed from a chronic condition. Catch this; he makes the little girl who is perilously close to death wait so that he can take the time to bring full restoration to the life of this woman. How does Peter respond to Jesus delay and this question? “Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!” In essence he says, “Are you crazy?” “What are you doing?” “Now is not the time for your eccentricities?” Peter understood the situation clearly, but what Jesus reveals next goes to the very heart of his nature when he said, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.” In this moment Jesus reveals that the dispensing of divine power involves an intimate interaction with Jesus himself. The power of God is not impersonal. When this power flows from God to us, he feels it because it is an intimate transaction with the divine. This is the end of all superstition. Make no mistake; no one receives power from God apart from his personal involvement, whether it is responding to the message of salvation, or daily walking by faith. The power to live for Jesus comes from Jesus and is personal. It is not tapping into some impersonal force, but it is the connection of a son, of a daughter with their loving God who lavishes upon them the power to live for him.

THE BOUNTY OF FAITH

“Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.” – For this woman, we find her receiving from Jesus more than she could have ever hoped. Not only was she physically healed, but by acknowledging him before the crowd Jesus brings full restoration to her spiritual, social, and emotional life. However, for Jairus, his fear becomes reality as he receives word his daughter is dead. Even while being dismissed by the bearer of this news as unnecessary, Jesus meets the crushing weight of this father's loss. He calls him to push aside this fear and to believe. Jairus trust in Jesus is rewarded as he comes to the realization that he journeyed with one for whom the finality of death is nothing more than sleep. Death is the enemy of all, no matter how we might seek to delay its effects in our life there is no escape. Like Jairus we have the opportunity to walk with the one who has defeated death, the one who has the authority to offer life eternal to all who would come to him.