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Luke 8:40-56

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Little Faith Goes a Long Way

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

“And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus’ feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him. And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Jesus said, ‘Who is the one who touched Me?’ And while they were all denying it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.’ But Jesus said, ‘Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.’ When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’ While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, ‘Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.’ But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, ‘Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well.’ When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl’s father and mother. Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, ‘Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.’ And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, ‘Child, arise!’ And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat. Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened” (Luke 8:40-56).

There are times when life presents us with things that are too big for us to handle; times where we are stuck in a situation with no way out and no light at the end of the tunnel. Disease. Death. Depression. Debt. Sometimes it’s not us but it’s someone we love, someone we’d gladly trade places with. The question is, can we really can trust

in God in these times?

In this story from Luke 8: 40-56 two very different people are confronted with problems far too big for them. One of them a synagogue official, a male, a man of great stature in his community, a man with a name – Jairus, a man with a family, a man of means, is confronted with something too big for him. His 12-year-old daughter is sick. They have tried to help her, but she grows worse, right on the brink of death.

There is someone else. A nameless woman. Jairus had 12 years of joy with his little girl that he feared might soon end; the woman had 12 years of suffering that she hoped would soon end too. For 12 years she has bled. Her problem rendered her a social outcast; walking pollution. She isn’t allowed in the synagogue. She has a theology based on superstition. She has no family. She has no money; it’s all been spent on the latest remedy. She has tried everything, but this thing is too big.

Luke brings these two very different people together because they each teach us the same lesson: We can trust Jesus for the things that are too big for us because nothing is too big for him. I want you to observe four lessons these two people teach us about trusting Jesus for things that are too big for us.

I. We trust him by coming to him despite the obstacles.

First, they teach us that we trust Jesus by coming to him despite the obstacles. Both Jairus and the woman did something that is so obvious we might miss it. They both came to Jesus. Trusting Jesus means we come to Jesus. Sometimes that’s the hardest thing to do, just coming to him. Why is it hard? Because there are obstacles. Notice the obstacles these two people had to face.

Jairus was part of the religious establishment. Remember that Jesus didn’t get along very well with those folks. Some of them were already plotting ways to kill him. As the chairman of the board in the local synagogue, Jairus would want to stay in good with the Pharisees. Perhaps it was even in his synagogue that Jesus had sparked so much controversy by healing on the Sabbath. But pain has a way of bringing us to our senses. And so, Jairus overcame his own pride and he came to Jesus. At this point his faith isn’t exactly mature. This was likely just a last ditch effort. “I’ve tried everything. Why not try Jesus?” And he’s not like the centurion who told Jesus, “You don’t have to come to my house. Just say the word

and my servant will be healed.” Jesus said that’s strong faith. But Jairus says, “No, you need to come to my house.”

The woman had obstacles too. By OT standards she was unclean. She was supposed to keep her distance from everyone. But she overcame her own sense of shame as well as her own fear that she might contaminate someone else. That’s why she tried to slip through the crowd and come to Jesus from the back side. “No one will see; no one will even know I am there. I’ll just sneak up behind him and see if I can touch his cloak.” She is superstitious. Like many in her day, she believed that a person’s power was transferred to what they wore. I liken this to a person today who somehow thinks rosary beads will help in prayer. This woman comes with her misguided faith; she comes despite her fear and her shame, and Jesus heals her.

There are two obstacles that will keep us from coming to Jesus. Either we’re too important like Jairus or we are too unimportant and uninformed like this woman. For some, like Jairus, it’s a pride thing. “I can handle this myself.” What’s amazing is that these people go through life and it seems they do handle it themselves. They do a very good job of it. They make a good living. They have a model family. Their kids get into the right schools. They never get in trouble with the law. Oh, they have a few problems and challenges like anyone else, but they always seem to get through it relatively unscathed. Their illusion of adequacy and control never really gets shaken, so they never really come to Jesus. But every once in a while, something comes along that we can’t handle, like a 12-year-old daughter, the joy of our life, about to die. Perhaps at that point we want to come to Jesus, but the temptation is to say, “It would be hypocritical for me to come to him now. I’ve always done it myself. Why change now?” But that didn’t keep Jairus away, and it shouldn’t keep us away. Jesus didn’t turn him away because he had ignored him up to that point in his life. Jesus didn’t say, “Oh yeah, right, Jairus. Come to me now when things are bad. And why don’t you have faith like that Gentile centurion?”

But others are like this woman. They may be tempted to stay away from Jesus because of their deep shame. They feel unclean. They only feel safe with other people who have the same problems. Church is not a safe place because everyone there looks so good. They don’t really know how you are supposed to act there. Like this woman, they have their own superstitions and they’re afraid they may say something wrong. If that’s you today, be like this woman. Even if you have to sneak up behind him, come to Jesus. Even if your faith is a bit misguided,

come to him. We trust Jesus for things that are too big for us by just coming to him despite the obstacles.

II. We trust him by exposing ourselves fully.

The second thing we learn from these two people is that we trust him by exposing ourselves fully. We see this especially with the woman. At first, it seems like she would get away with her little secret operation. She touches his cloak and immediately she feels her body respond; she knows the flow of blood has stopped and she is healed. She probably wanted to shout with joy but she can’t risk such exposure. She slinks away, trying to get lost in the crowd. And then she hears this voice, “Who touched me?”

Why did Jesus say that? He knew someone had touched him because he says, “I was aware that power had gone out of me.” But still, why did Jesus ask this question? Obviously, he wants this woman to come forward and identify herself. But why? Why call attention to what she’s done? Why expose her to public embarrassment? Why not give her a little wink and let her go? Jesus cared too much for this woman to do that. He wanted to draw her out. He wanted her to experience more than just healing; he wanted her to experience him. He wanted her to know that it wasn’t his cloak that healed her, it was him. He wanted to mature her faith. He wasn’t a slot machine; he was a person. Healing wasn’t mechanical; it was personal. He wanted a relationship. But to learn this she had to come forward.

This was the moment of truth for this woman. She could have just slipped away and remained anonymous. But she was being called to expose herself to Jesus and to the crowd; a very scary thing to do. Certainly she would be embarrassed. Maybe she would be rebuked. But this woman, shaking with fear, came and fell at Jesus’ feet and told him the whole truth. I like how Luke puts it: “She declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.” Twelve years of pain just gushed out of her. In Mark’s gospel it says she told him “the whole story.” She told all about the doctors she had seen, about all the money she had spent, about all the ridicule she had endured. She told him about her little plan to sneak up behind Jesus. She told him how she felt her body instantly cured. She told him everything.

Look again at what Jesus says to her, “Daughter (when was the last time someone called her that?) your faith has made you well (that word literally means ‘saved’); go in peace (shalom).” Think about it. If she had not come forward and exposed herself she would not have heard these words. She’s affirmed publicly for her faith. As misguided as it was, it was real faith. She’s a daughter of Israel. And she is given her ticket back in society as he declares her healed of her affliction before all.

It’s one thing to come to Jesus; it’s quite another thing to expose ourselves fully to him and to others. If we’re

honest, most of us would like to remain anonymous. We would like to sneak away with the blessing of Jesus without really coming forward and telling the whole story. But in the long run, faith can't be kept a secret. We have to come out of the closet. We have to expose ourselves. Sooner or later, Jesus will call us to come forward. He'll call us to expose our need and our faith and our salvation to all. Without that, there is no real blessing. Have you been blessed? Do you secretly thank God for all he has done for you? Are you a covert follower of Christ? Are you a spy for Jesus? Maybe it's time you came forward and said publicly, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I was sick. I was hurting. I was helpless. But he has made me well."

III. We trust him by persisting in our faith when he delays.

The third thing we learn from these two people is that we trust Jesus by persisting in our faith when he delays. Let's focus on Jairus for a moment. He comes to Jesus with a desperate situation. Jesus hears him and heads home with him. Notice Luke mentions the press of the crowd several times. This is like an ambulance in a traffic jam. Imagine Jairus, frustrated by the delay: "Don't these people know that my daughter is about to die?" To top it all off Jesus stops and asks this question, "Who touched me?" Peter says, "What a goofy thing to say! Who isn't touching you?" And then he waits for this woman to come forward. Talk about frustration! Jairus is biting his fingernails, pacing, cursing as this woman takes what must have seemed like hours to pour out her story. "Wait a minute, Jesus, I was first in line!" But Jesus, so patient, listens to her ramble on.

Has Jesus forgotten about Jairus? I doubt it. Jesus knows exactly what he's doing. This delay was on purpose. Besides showing his concern for the woman, he accomplished two things. First, Jairus would learn something from this woman. Jairus' faith was about to be tested in a major way. He needed to hear this woman's story. He needed to see this woman's faith. He needed to hear Jesus affirm her faith. This big shot synagogue official needed to learn something from this unclean woman. It's interesting, the woman was considered unclean according to the laws of Leviticus. If anyone touched her, which of course Jesus did, they would be rendered unclean. But when his daughter dies, her corpse will be unclean as well. Would that keep Jesus away? Her story gave him hope.

Second, the delay would allow time for things to get worse so the power of Jesus would be seen by all. As Jesus is blessing this woman, Jairus gets news that his daughter has died. The woman's good news is Jairus' bad news. Her 12 years of misery are over. His 12 years of joy are gone. But Jairus' moment of despair is Jesus' moment of opportunity. Jesus says, "Don't be afraid (lit. "stop being afraid"), only believe, and she will be made well." By the way, those are the same words he used with the woman

("Your faith has *made you well*."). The bottom line is Jairus had to persist in faith when the situation was humanly helpless.

Do you ever struggle to understand God's timing? Why is it that what we think God ought to do right now, he chooses to do later, while what we think he should do later, he chooses to do right now? A big part of faith is accepting God's timing for events. We pray like mad for something, but he delays. What's he doing? Has he forgotten us? Perhaps he's trying to teach you something through the delay. Open your eyes. There may be someone near to you telling their story. Someone you need to hear from like this woman. Things may even get worse before they get better. Your prayers may seem to backfire. But God knows what he's doing. You have to persist in your faith.

Last weekend my daughter got married right here at CPC. We had a great weekend. We know that the marriage is more important than the wedding. I preach that to couples all the time. But, I've come to believe weddings are pretty important too. I think what made this special for us, besides the fact that it was our daughter and we love the guy she married, is that there was a sense that they had waited on God's timing. I mean, they fell in love three years ago. And when my daughter got out of college two years ago, it was like "What are we waiting for?" And I wondered the same thing. But now I understand it better. In the waiting, God works. He worked in their lives and in their relationship during that time.

Faith persists, even when he delays, even when things get worse, even when things become humanly hopeless.

IV. We trust him despite what others do and say.

The last lesson we learn is that we trust him despite what other people do and say. Both this woman and this man demonstrate belief in contrast to those around them. The woman stands in contrast to the crowd which presses in upon Jesus. The crowd jostled and pushed Jesus down the village street. They were out for some excitement and curious to see a miracle at Jairus' home. But the woman came close for a different purpose. Augustine said, "Flesh presses, but faith touches." She came close because she believed that Jesus could meet her deepest need. There are those who are like the crowd, following Jesus because it's the thing to do, but real faith comes out of desperate need.

This contrast is even more pronounced with Jairus. The messengers come and say, "Don't bother the Teacher anymore, your daughter has died." But Jesus says, "Don't be afraid, only believe." Jairus has to make

a choice: will he listen to the messengers or will he listen to Jesus and follow him home? Then when they get to his house, the place is already surrounded with professional mourners. It was customary back then to hire people to mourn at a funeral. They would chant and clap their hands. Jesus comes and says to them, "Why are you crying? The child is not dead, she is asleep." Jesus is not saying that she was alive; he's saying that her death could be described as "sleep" because it was temporary; he would soon raise her up. For the believer, that's all death really is – sleep (1 Thess. 4:13–15).

But look how these professionals respond – they laugh at him. They know what death is. They do this all the time! They're the experts on death. So Jairus had to make another choice. Who would he listen to? Would he listen to the professionals or would he listen to Jesus and follow him into the room where his daughter lay dead? It was that step of faith that allowed him and the four others to hear those words they would never forget, "Child, arise!" It was that step of faith that allowed him to see his daughter get up and even eat as proof that she was real, not a ghost.

There will always be people in our lives who laugh and scoff at faith. There will always be people who tell us to "get real." Some of them will be so-called experts. They'll know all the facts about this or that. A group of so called New Testament scholars tell us that Jesus couldn't have said even a small fraction of what the New Testament records that he said. A group of scientists tell us that they can explain how life came into existence; therefore, creation is a myth. A doctor tell us we can pray all we want but when it comes to cancer nothing will help but chemotherapy. This doesn't mean we ignore the experts, sometimes we need them; but when their counsel runs counter to God's promises, who will we listen to?

CONCLUSION

What are the things in your life that you are having to trust him for these days? Are you coming to him despite the obstacles? Are you willing to expose yourself fully to him and to others? Are you persisting in your faith when he delays and things get worse and look hopeless? Are you trusting him despite what other people say?

These two miracles are the capstone to a trip of episodes meant to teach us that Jesus is bigger than anything that threatens us or his kingdom. In the midst of the storm, Jesus cried out, "Be still" and the sea instantly lay flat. Confronted with a man filled with a legion of demons, with a word Jesus sent them into a herd of pigs and then into the Abyss of Hell. He is bigger than nature. He is bigger than evil. And now we see he is bigger than disease and death.

The great thing about this story is that your faith doesn't have to be perfect. It can be weak and misguided, but if it is directed to the right person, Jesus, not only will he accept that but he will nurture your faith into maturity. We can trust Jesus for things that are too big for us because nothing is too big for him.