

The Life Restoring Power of Jesus

Matt. 9:18-26

Intro. After Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, He began His ministry of healing. He didn't heal just "the finest people," but He healed everybody who came to Him...lepers, gentiles, the demon-possessed and outcasts. Many were emotionally inclined to follow Him but changed their minds when they heard the cost. In **chaps.8, 9** Matthew focused on the authority of the Lord Jesus. He recorded one miracle after another to demonstrate Jesus' power over sickness, defilement, the forces of nature, and the spirit world. It's significant that no one ever accused Him of performing miracles that weren't authentic. But when Jesus forgave a sinner, His detractors reacted with rebuke. Despite growing opposition, many came to Him from every social category: sick and healthy / young and old / wealthy and destitute. Though compelling evidence identified Him as the Messiah, many found an excuse to reject Him. The simple fact is that every person must stop denying the truth God witnessed so convincingly...the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only hope for mankind!

So 35 studies later, we come to **9:18-26**. In books and films, the main flow of a story is often interrupted to insert a story within a story. That's what we have in the passage before us this AM. The main story is the authority of Jesus over death. But tucked within this theme is the story of a woman who dared to touch the edge of his cloak (otherwise called "the hem of His garment.") The setting is Capernaum. In keeping with His purpose, Matthew provides a Reader's Digest Condensed Version. More detail and color is supplied by Mark and Luke. I'll refer to some of those details as they relate to Matthew's shorter version. The passage divides into three sections.

1. A synagogue ruler in desperate need – vs. 18, 19 - While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

Notice the opening phrase...**While He was saying this**. In the previous verses Jesus answered a question asked by John the Baptist's disciples. They asked why John's disciples and the Pharisees practiced fasting, but His disciples didn't. In the first part of His answer, Jesus compared His coming to a joyous wedding reception where feasting was appropriate and fasting wasn't. Then by the analogies of the new patch on the old garment and the new wine in old wineskins, Jesus explained that His coming brought something radically new and superior...something incompatible with the old forms of Judaism. Conformity to a written law was being replaced by new life in the Spirit. This new reality was demonstrated by His extraordinary power to heal the sick and demon-possessed.

To grasp the significance of these analogies, think of it this way...While the Law of Moses made provision for a leper whose symptoms disappeared, the Law and the priesthood was powerless to heal anybody. Before Jesus came, there's no record of a leper being healed for about 1,500 years! So a ministry that healed everyone was completely outside the scope of anything the Law could envision or accomplish. The same was true with regard to forgiveness. The Law required contrition and sacrifice. The Jewish priest could only speak for God since God is the only One who can forgive sin. But Jesus granted forgiveness right on the spot and without any requirements beyond the faith of the sinner. Jesus has that authority because He is God! He is the One and only mediator between God and man. **I Tim. 2:5 - For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...** As we said last time, the old way under the system of Law said "*Do this and live.*" But under grace, the new way in the Spirit says, "*Live and do this.*" The terms of these two covenants are uncompromising and incompatible. To mix them is to destroy them. Imagine the contradiction of a church that preaches the Good News of the Gospel, but requires everybody to bring a lamb to sacrifice...the contradiction of preaching grace while insisting on circumcision or Sabbath keeping.

Now remember, at this time the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus couldn't know what we know today. The revelation of the New Covenant with all of its ramifications was progressive. The transition from law is a subject that occupies much of the New Testament Epistles. At this early date before Calvary and Pentecost, the new life in Christ was like a bud that hadn't burst opened yet...the glory of the cross with all of its accomplishments hadn't yet been revealed. So at this early stage, Jesus was preparing His disciples to expect change...something new and superior had come.

I often wonder if Jesus chose 12 ordinary men to be His apostles because they were like blank slates He could write on? The orthodox had too much learning and too many pre-conceived ideas. There were exceptions to the rule but most who were entrenched in Judaism reacted to Jesus with rejection and hostility. The fact that God chooses ordinary people instead of the high and mighty is stated in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. **Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. - I Cor. 1:26, 27**

So this new work of God couldn't be confined or even explained by the old forms of Judaism. Like a Tiger in a cardboard box, the dynamic of the Gospel couldn't be contained. Though anticipated in the prophetic Scriptures, the power and authority of Jesus was "*outside the box*" and revolutionary. To stitch His Gospel to the law like a patch would destroy the law He came to fulfill. To pour its expanding dynamic into an old brittle container would burst the container.

Now what Jesus was saying finds demonstration in the next miracle He performed. Here we see that death, which is the greatest and final enemy of humanity, was no obstacle for the power of Christ. For nearly 1,500 years, the Law had its opportunity to eradicate sin / sickness / and death. But the system of law failed. Though God's Law is perfect, the difficulty resides in us...the law-keepers. **Rom. 8:3** declares - **For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.** The inability of the law as a system is declared again in **Gal. 2:21** - "...if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

So the text says, **While he was saying this...**(the teaching is now fleshed out and demonstrated) **a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died.** Mark and Luke identify this ruler by name. His name is Jairus (**Mk. 5:22 / Lk. 8:41**) **Jairus** was a common Hebrew name. It means *God enlightens*. Jairus was the highest ranking religious official in Capernaum. He was the supervisor responsible for worship and everything else that pertained to the local synagogue. Though he was a man of considerable position and prestige...he **knelt before** Jesus. The word **knelt** is from the Greek word *proskuneo* which **means to kiss, to fawn or crouch down / to reverence and adore**. In the NT, *proskuneo* occurs 59 x's in association with the attitude and posture of worship. So Jairus must have believed something that prompted him to approach Jesus with an attitude of respect and in the posture of worship. As we see in the rest of **v.18**, he was convinced Jesus could raise his daughter to life again. He said, **"...come, put your hand on her, and she will live."**

Now if we compare the Gospels and connect the dots, an interesting possibility emerges. Remember the centurion of **chap. 8?**...the man who had great faith in the authority of Jesus? Jesus spoke healing to the centurion's young servant without going to the man's house! What you may not remember is what the centurion's servants said about him. In **Lk. 7:4, 5** they said, **"This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."** Since the centurion built the very synagogue where Jairus was in charge, the two men must have known each other. They may have enjoyed a friendship like the one I enjoy with Dave Castle of Castle Bros. Construction who built our facility.

As we connect the dots, it's not hard to imagine the centurion telling Jairus the story of how Jesus healed his servant. So Jairus may have been impressed by things he saw and heard, but God may have spoken to him by way of a reliable witness....a Roman officer and friend.

So Jairus said, **Come and put your hand on her, and she will live.** There's desperation mixed with faith in his plea. **Heb. 11:1** says **faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** Jairus had never seen a dead person raise to life. Though he may have arranged dozens of funeral services, none of the deceased ever came back from the dead. Death is final. Those who die remain dead. With pain only a parent can know, Jairus helplessly witnessed the declining advance of his daughter's illness. He seems to have come to Jesus when her death seemed imminent and inevitable. But he believed Jesus could release her from death's grip. His faith in Jesus was unusual but valid. Here's why...no one ever died in the presence of Jesus Christ! Did you realize that? Dwight L. Moody was reminded of this early in his ministry. When asked to conduct a memorial service, he scoured the NT in search of some insight from the way Jesus conducted a funeral. But the fact is this...Jesus never preached a funeral sermon. He always interrupted the proceedings by raising the dead. This must have been so irritating for funeral directors!

Unlike the healing of the centurion's servant, Jesus didn't perform this miracle from a distance. **v.19** says, **Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.** It was important for this miracle to take place in full view of Jairus and all who gathered at his home. Jairus was a synagogue ruler and representative of Judaism. The nation needed to hear of this miracle and the power of Jesus. But en route to the home of Jairus, Jesus met a woman who was unclean and also in desperate need.

2. An unclean woman with superstitious faith – vs. 20-22 - Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

According to the Law, a woman in this condition was banned from the synagogue and forbidden from engaging in normal relations with a husband. She was unclean and anyone who touched her was unclean. Mark explains her crisis this way...**She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. - Mk. 5:26** For obvious reasons, Dr. Luke reflects a more generous attitude toward the medical profession. He wrote, **And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. - Lk. 8:43** This unnamed woman was an outcast and as bad off as a leper. **Lev. 17:11** says **"life...is in the blood,"** so life had literally been escaping from her body for 12 years. Her situation was desperate and hopeless. We often turn to God out of desperation and He never turns us away.

Matthew wrote, she **came up behind Him and touched the edge of his cloak.** The verb tense of the phrase **said to herself** is imperfect which means she kept saying to herself. Maybe you can remember a time when you tried to convince yourself to do something uncomfortable by repeating a phrase over and over again. *"I must go to the dentist...I must go to the dentist..."* That's what this lady was doing. She evidently believed Jesus had power to heal her condition. But she was conflicted. How could she touch Jesus without defiling Him? So acting in desperation she reached out and touched the edge of His cloak as Jesus passed by. There may have been something superstitious and magical mixed in with her faith, but Jesus saw faith. We tend to think God responds only to faith that is entirely pure and rock solid. But Jesus spoke of mustard seed faith. It isn't the size or the intensity of faith that matters as much as the object of our faith. Put another way...*how much we trust isn't as important as who we trust.* This woman believed power resided in Jesus. If she could just touch his clothing, she would be healed.

Like tiny pin prick to a big balloon, a little faith in our powerful savior results in the outpouring of His wonderful abundant blessings.

Mark adds more of the story. **At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. - Mk. 5:30-33** Jesus didn't ask who touched Him to gain information. The crowd wouldn't have known the miracle happened if He didn't pause to ask the question.

Some explain the woman's **trembling fear** suggesting she was a Gentile who had no right to approach a Jewish man...especially this Jewish man! Others say she knew she would defile anyone she came in contact with. Still others suggest she felt she'd stolen a miracle or touched the Messiah without His permission. Here was a woman humbled by her circumstances and tortured by the thought that she had caused them. Life had disappointed her and people had been no better. She may have expected to be shunned and sent away. But the promise of **Jn. 8:37** was fulfilled in the response of Jesus. **All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.** Don't you love that about Jesus? No matter how unclean and defiled a sinner may be, He doesn't drive us away. Instead, His arms are open wide to receive us as a gift from His Father. Matthew simply wrote, **Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," He said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.** Like other miracles, the woman's healing was immediate. What 12 years of doctoring and all her money couldn't cure, Jesus healed in an instant. With divine tenderness, Jesus said, **"Take heart, daughter."**

I don't have time to go far with this thought and I wonder if it's more speculative than profitable. But God's people in distress are called "the daughter of Zion" or "the daughter of Judah," 18 x's in Lamentations alone. This being the case, the Spirit of God may have embedded some prophetic overtones in the arrangement of this narrative. Think about it...Jesus was believed by a solitary Jewish ruler who stepped outside the mainstream of Jewish unbelief and rejection. While en route to raise a member of his family, He was met by a woman who believes Jesus has power to heal. Could it be that Jairus represents the Jewish minority who embraced Jesus and the woman represents the Gentile Church? Her story is parenthetical just as the Church Age is in relation to God's program for Israel. The Church Age is an interlude in God's redemption story...a parenthesis when God has momentarily suspended His plan to bring in Israel's kingdom in order to raise up a bride for His Son. After the Church is removed and the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven, God will resume His redemptive program with Israel. When the dead bones of Ezekiel's vision come to life, it will be like the resurrection of Jairus' daughter. Paul expressed it that way in **Rom. 11:15 - For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?** (So that's just a thought thrown in at no extra charge.)

To dispel any idea of magical power in His clothing, Jesus said to the woman, **"your faith has healed you."** By saying this He dismissed the veneration of relics / prayer cloths / and burial shrouds as though these items contain magical powers. The issue is faith...not faith in faith, but faith in Christ! He said to the woman, **"your faith has healed you."** Later the apostle John wrote, **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. - I Jn. 5:4b** If you believe the Lord Jesus has power to save you, thank God. Even faith to believe is a gift of His grace.

3. A noisy funeral and the Savior's touch – vs. 23-26 - When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, He said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep."

But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region.

In western culture, the atmosphere of a funeral is typically somber and quiet. But it wasn't that way in the Middle East. I find this amusing, but the Talmud specified that a man was legally responsible to provide at least two flute players and one mourner for his wife's funeral. The statute reads this way...*"The husband is bound to bury his dead wife and to make lamentations and mourning for her according to the customs of all countries. Also the very poorest among the Israelites will not allow her less than two flutes and one wailing woman."* (pre-recorded music was not acceptable!) The rented musicians and mourners created an atmosphere that was raucous and noisy. How much a family cared for their departed loved one was measured in decibels. The noisier the service...the deeper the love and grief. I prefer it the western way...don't you?

So when Jesus entered the house of Jairus, He was met by flute players and a noisy crowd. When the Gospels are compared, this 12 year old girl seems to have been near death when Jairus left home to find Jesus. Here's a question for tonight's discussion...Is it mere coincidence that the woman suffered 12 years and Jairus daughter was 12 years old?

Word of his daughter's death seems to have come to Jairus by way of a messenger when Jesus and His disciples were en route to his home. Because her death was imminent and because Jairus was a person of notoriety and wealth, the flute players and mourners had already been hired. They were on site and ready to make some noise. But Jesus threw them out! **He said, "Go away!"** The meaning behind this is significant. Just as fasting was inappropriate in Messiah's presence, so was mourning! There's was no valid reason to be unbelieving and fearful when Jesus was in the boat with the disciples/ there was no valid reason for fasting in His presence / and there was no valid reason for hopeless mourning in the presence of the One who has power to raise the dead! This reminds me of the striking contrast between the funeral of a believer and the funeral of an unbeliever. **I Thess. 4:13, 14 - Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**

When Jesus said, **"The girl is not dead but asleep,"** He didn't deny she had actually died. The girl wasn't in a coma or just near death. She was dead. We know this because: the messengers who came to Jairus affirmed she was dead – **Mk. 5:35** / professional mourners were hired to mourn death, not sickness – **Lk. 8:53** / and **Lk. 8:55** says, "her spirit returned" which can only mean her spirit had left her at death. Later Jesus sent this word to John the Baptist – **Matt. 11:4, 5** – ... **"Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.** So this 12 year old daughter of Jairus really died. Luke says she was his **only daughter**. In our clinical approach, we shouldn't overlook the deep sorrow of Jairus and his wife. Few losses are more devastating. Nothing puts greater stress on a marriage more than the loss of a child! The bond between parents and their children runs deep. But physical death is like sleep. In fact, that metaphor appears often in the NT. And like sleep, Jesus had the power to awaken her...and He did.

But notice this. When Jesus said, **"The girl is not dead but asleep" vs. 24** says, **they laughed at him**. If you remember the story of Abraham and Sarah, it was Sarah who laughed when God said she would give birth to a son. **Gen. 18:12 - So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"** The son she gave birth to was named **Isaac**, which means *laughter!* Sarah laughed because she was 90 years old. Who wouldn't laugh! Her body was worn out and dead with respect to pregnancy. Here the rented musicians and mourners laughed because they knew it was impossible for the dead girl to come back to life.

Now if this 12 year old represents Israel as some suggest, many skeptics laughed at the prophecies that promise Israel would be regathered to their land and re-established as a nation. But what seemed impossible happened in May of 1948. Ezekiel's valley of dry bones came together and stood up. At present, the reassembled bones are without breath. Israel is in the process of being regathered physically, but the nation has not yet been restored spiritually. Like Jairus daughter, that won't happen until in total desperation and by sovereign grace, Israel turns to the Lord. Jesus will then come to heal and restore His wayward people.

v. 25 - After the crowd had been put outside, He went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. Luke says, Jesus went into the room with Jairus and his wife and with Peter, James and John. Mark says Jesus said, "**Talitha koum!**" (which means, "**Little girl, I say to you, get up!**"). At His command, the girl who was dead, **got up. Lk. 8:55 - Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.** Luke then wrote, **Her parents were astonished, but He ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. - Lk. 8:56** Can we agree on this?...this gag order wasn't likely to be obeyed! Would you be able to keep secret news as thrilling and wonderful as this? Me either! I can't even keep a fish story to my self...even when the story is greatly embellished! **Matt. 9:26** says, **News of this spread through all that region.**

So what? A pastor friend asks that question at the end of each message. "So what?" "How can this portion of Scripture help me and what does it mean for my life today?"

Well just this...If Jesus can raise the dead to life by speaking a Word, and He can...there is no problem or crisis so desperate that He can't handle! Trust Him! Our lives are safe in Jesus. Our future is bright and secure because Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law / assumed the curse / overcome the world / and promised to return to take us to be with Him. He said, **Because I live, you also will live. - Jn. 14:19** Because this is true, Paul wrote, **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Rom. 8:38, 39**

But there's another lesson here. Jairus and the woman were desperate. Jairus knew Judaism and the Law couldn't raise his daughter. The woman who was hemorrhaging and defiled had been to one doctor after another. She had exhausted her finances and her condition remained unchanged. James MacDonald says. "*People often turn to God when their thing stops working.*" He's so right about that. These are shining moments for believers. We who know the Savior must be there...we must come alongside to point our friends to the One who can save them...the One who can help them face and endure life's disappointments. The centurion may have had that kind of ministry to Jairus. But this we know...God uses believers to reach the lost. So through Peter the Lord says to every believer...**But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. - I Pet. 3:15, 16** Let me ask...Who in your circle of friends is suffering right now? They need to hear the reason for the hope you have.