

Waiting for a Miracle

October 21st, 2012

Luke 8:40-56

"⁴⁸And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." ⁴⁹While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.""

As we come to the end of Luke 8, we come to a pair of miracles that are the third and fourth we have observed in this chapter: Jesus calms the storm, Jesus casts out Legion, and here Jesus heals a woman with a chronic illness and raises a girl from the dead. That they appear one right after the other in such close proximity is probably Luke's way of showing us that the scope of Jesus' power and authority extends into *every* sphere of life.

And yet as I've pondered the two miracles recorded in this text, I've wondered to myself, "Why these?" The last words in John's gospel are: "²⁵There are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." So whenever one of the gospel writers record an instance of Jesus performing a miracle, they're not recording it for us just because it happened...there were lots of other things that happened that weren't recorded.

So when we come to the miracles of Jesus, it's not a bad idea to ask, "Why is this here? Why this one? What is He wanting to teach us?" Jesus' miracles aren't done simply to entertain us. They're redemptive, and they're revelatory. They show us particular things about Jesus, and what it means to follow with Jesus. So as I came to this passage, I thought, "What are we supposed to learn from this pair of miracles?"

I think the answer has to do with the issue of faith. Once Jesus has healed the woman and forced her to go public, He says, "⁴⁸Your *faith* has made you well; go in peace." And as Jairus hears the news that

while Jesus was dealing with this woman, his little girl has died, Jesus says, "⁵⁰Do not fear; *only believe*, and she will be well." So I think these miracles are intended to deepen our confidence in Jesus as we watch Him work, but also to show us something of the nature of faith, by which we connect to Jesus. So let's consider what we're told today specifically about faith in Jesus.

Faith Can Arise in Anyone

The first thing I think we're meant to learn from this passage is that faith can arise in anyone. That is, no one's past, no one's station in life, no one's race or social class or reputation can exclude someone from connecting with Jesus by faith. I think that's evident here from the striking contrast between the two people who demonstrate faith in Jesus in this passage: the bleeding woman, and Jairus.

One is a man; the other is a woman. One is rich; the other is poor (v.43). One is a respected member of society (a ruler of the synagogue); the other is a social outcast because of her illness (ceremonially unclean, and therefore excluded from the synagogue). One is used to being honored; the other is used to being scorned. One has a twelve-year old dying daughter; the other has a twelve-year old disease. And yet both connect with Jesus; He embraces these two people at such extremes. The lesson seems to be that no one is outside the bounds of the healing, saving, transforming power of Jesus.

And I touched on this last week, but I think it's worth mentioning here again: is there someone that you've lost hope for? Maybe it's you yourself, maybe it's a son or daughter, a mother or father, a sibling, a friend, a spouse. And it just seems, because of their love for their sin, or because of their massive self-righteousness, like they're a lost cause. I believe this text is given to us that we might not lose hope for such people. And I hope you'll be refreshed and encouraged to remember as

you look at these two radically different people connecting with Jesus, that there is no lost cause in Jesus' eyes.

Maybe it will take a crisis, like Jairus, or maybe it will take them exhausting every other option, like the woman, but don't lose hope for them. Keep loving them, keep praying for them, keep commending Jesus to them both by your words and your lives. Because the weaving together of Jairus' story with this woman's is meant to show us that faith can arise in anyone. No one is beyond the saving, transforming power of Jesus.

Faith is Undeterred by Hopeless Circumstances

A second lesson about faith that we learn here is that faith is undeterred by hopeless circumstances. I've been talking about lost causes, and as many differences as there are between Jairus and the woman, this is one clear similarity: both of their situations appear to be pretty lost and hopeless. And yet in the midst of those hopeless circumstances, they both cling to desperate faith in Jesus.

Luke highlights the woman's hopelessness in verse 43: "⁴³And 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." Some of you have tasted this, as you wrestle with chronic medical conditions and have visited doctor after doctor, with no progress. It's hard, it's discouraging, it's exhausting, it's infuriating. And for this lady it's been twelve years! And looking back on her condition 2,000 years, there are pieces to her suffering that we can't imagine because of what this condition meant spiritually.

Leviticus 15 tells us that this bleeding issue would have made her ceremonially unclean. That means no one has touched her in twelve years. No one has hugged her. No one has laid a hand on her shoulder to pray for her. No one has held her hand. She has not had physical contact for a dozen years. She's isolated and lonely in her suffering.

She can't be in crowds. She's not allowed to go to the temple or to synagogue to join God's people in worship. The only thing worse than suffering is suffering in isolation. There's no one to be with you, to talk to you, to share in the pain with you.

Jairus' hopelessness is seen in the way this dignified, honorable leader of the Jewish people prostrates himself before Jesus and begs for His help: "⁴¹Falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying." I have a 5 year-old daughter and a 4 year-old daughter, and what I am learning as they get older is that the stage where they seem so weak and vulnerable to you, the inclination to protect them from even the smallest form of suffering because they're small and fragile and defenseless, that you never actually leave that stage, do you? Whether 2 months or 2 years or 22 years, it's your baby.

So Jairus' daughter is older than mine, but I still went there emotionally this week. And if you go there emotionally -- even if you don't have kids, you can do that, and the Bible actually calls us to that (Romans 12:15) -- you can feel the darkness and heaviness of what Jairus must be experiencing at this moment. And it's only compounded when he gets the report as Jesus deals with the woman: "⁴⁹Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." Every shred of hope is shattered at that point.

That's exactly where faith gets exercised: "⁵⁰Do not fear; only believe." And to the woman, in her miserable, hopeless plight: "⁴⁸And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." For both of them, their faith was undeterred by hopeless circumstances. By that, I don't mean that they didn't waver at all. I just mean that they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, the One who is greater than their circumstances.

The One who makes clean by just a touch of the hem of His garment, the One who raises the dead the way you or I might wake a little child

from an afternoon nap. Faith can be undeterred by the most hopeless circumstances, because it's faith *in Jesus*, whose power and wisdom and love is greater than any circumstance. If your faith is dependent on comfortable circumstances in order to flourish, then you have to ask whether your faith is truly in Jesus. That's one of the blessings of adversity in our lives. It will expose your heart and help you to see what you are truly believing in.

Faith Perseveres in Jesus' Delays

One final lesson that we'll look at today: faith perseveres in Jesus' delays. This is similar to what we observed a few weeks ago when we looked at Jesus calming the storm. There we learned that Jesus' love and grace are compatible with going through storms. If you come to Jesus with the premise that believing in Him is going to make you immune from suffering, life will teach you that your premise is wrong. Faith in Jesus does not and will not insulate you from hardship. Here we learn that Jesus' love and grace are compatible with what will seem to you to be unconscionable delays. Faith embraces that Jesus will not be hurried in doing what we're trusting Him to do in our lives.

Both the woman and Jairus see Jesus do something incredible for them...but they are both called to wait. True, the woman touches Jesus and is instantly healed, but she has waited twelve years. More prominent in this passage, though, is Jairus' wait. This must have been excruciating. Again, go there emotionally. Your daughter is on her deathbed, and Jesus is her only hope. You're not sure if there's enough time, but Jesus sets off with you. Yes! On your way, there is so much "traffic" of people pressing around, such a commotion, this trip is taking longer than it should. Will they make it?

Then all of the sudden, Jesus stops and starts talking to this woman. What is He doing?! Your daughter has a serious, acute condition that needs immediate attention. This woman has a chronic condition.

Surely she would wait another hour, right? This makes no sense. It is not only irrational; it's malpractice! If these two women were in the same emergency room, any doctor who treated the woman before the girl would be sued. And yet that's what Jesus, the Great Physician, does. He will not be hurried.

And as you're waiting for Jesus, you get the word you've been dreading: it's over. She's dead. Leave Jesus alone, there's no point bothering Him any longer. What must have been going through Jairus' mind? Why is Jesus doing this? He didn't even need to come with the man in the first place; like the centurion's servant, He could have simply said the word and the girl would have been healed. What accounts for such strange conduct?

"⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.'" Jairus, believe! Don't listen to these other voices, don't listen to your circumstances, trust that I know what I am doing, and that I do all things well. And by the time we get to the end of the story, we can make sense out of Jesus' delay. He withheld immediate healing, and allowed the little girl to die, so that He might do something even greater in their lives by raising her from the dead. Which do you think would have produced greater joy in the end: a healing from near-death, or a resurrection?

Jairus was at a crisis of belief because it seemed like Jesus was delaying for no good reason, but he didn't have all the facts. The next time you find yourself in such a crisis, when it seems like Jesus is committing malpractice in your life, remember Jairus and reassure your faith that there is some crucial information that you don't have.

This side of eternity, you might never get that crucial piece of information. You might not get the kind of resurrection Jairus did to explain your unconscionable delay, but for all of us in Christ, there is a resurrection coming that will make sense of every earthly, heartache-

producing delay. We know that because we have information that neither Jairus nor this woman had.

You know that the powerful Jesus who healed the hemorrhage and raised the little girl came from heaven to earth not only to work miracles, but to give His life for sinners and reconcile them to God. You know that before Jesus would wear the crown of glory as King of kings and Lord of lords, that first He would wear the crown of thorns, bearing our guilt and condemnation on the cross. If even the Son of God had to wait for His glorious coronation, if the silence of His Father on the cross was what preceded His enthronement at the Father's right hand, then you can find fuel your faith at the cross and the empty tomb:

"¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

If Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the upholder of the entire universe, the One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, wouldn't He know better than you how your life should be going? And if He loved you so deeply that He was willing to be crucified in weakness so that you, a hell-deserving sinner, might live by God's power and be raised to eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, wouldn't he be worth clinging to in faith even when His timing confounds your expectations?

If you're waiting on Him today, if Jesus seems to be woefully neglectful because of His delay in your life, if you're ready to give up, if you're slipping into impatience or bitterness or despair or fear, the answer, as it was for Jairus, is to trust Jesus. "Do not fear; only believe."

*O fearful saints new courage take
The clouds that you now dread
Are big with mercy and will break*

*In blessings on your head
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face*

*When tears are great
And comforts few
We hope in mercies ever new
We trust in You*