



Luke 8:40-56

“When You’re Hot, You’re Hot!”

November 17, 2013
26th Sunday After Pentecost

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“Following Christ from City Center”

VA'2: LUKE 8:40-56 "WHEN YOU'RE HOT, YOU'RE HOT"

1) vv.40-42a JAIRUS' DAUGHTER: PART I. Mk. 5:21-43, Mt. 9:18-26
 Transition Sentence, Welcoming/Waiting Crowds, 3:15, 7:19-20
 40 Now when Jesus returned (i.e. from Gentle territory), 8:22 Departure, Gentile Rejection, Gerasene Demoniac 8:26-39
 the crowd welcomed him, for they were **ALL** waiting for him. In Great Demand As Teacher/Healer
 41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; High Status
and falling at Jesus' feet, he besought him to come to his **house**, Prostrate, 7:38, 46; 8:35, 10:39, 17:16, 20:43
 42 for he had an **only daughter**, about **twelve** years of age, and she was dying. //7:11-17, Daddy and Daughter

2) vv.42b-48 WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD INTRUDES. Mk. 5:24b-34

Only Intertwined Miracles, Stories Interpret One Another

a) v.42b-43 Woman with a Flow of Blood. Women: Jesus Confronts Death, Incurable Illness

As he went, the people pressed round him. Hopeless Case No. 1, Lev. 15:25-31, m. Niddah

43 And a woman who had had a flow of blood for **twelve** years Unclean Till Evening, Uterine Bleeding Likely

and could not be healed by any one, Marginalized, Permanently Unclean, Isolated

b) v.44 Woman is Behind Jesus: Touched and Immediately Healed. Num. 15:38-39

44 came up **behind him**, and **touched the fringe** of his garment; Touch (4x), Render Him Unclean?

and **immediately** her flow of blood ceased. Distinctive Blue Chord, Dt. 22:12

Deals With The *Less Urgent* First

c) vv.45-46 Dialog and Misunderstanding.

45 And Jesus said, "Who was it that **touched me**?" How Hopeless Jairus Felt!

When all denied it,

Peter said, "Master, the multitudes **surround you** and press upon you!" 5:5, 8:24

46 But Jesus said, "**Some one touched me;**

for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." Phenomena: Power //5:17, 6:19

Over Sea (8:22-25), Over Demons (8:26-39), Over Disease & Death

b') v.47 Woman is Before Jesus: Touched and Immediately Healed.

47 And when the woman **saw that she was not hidden**, she came trembling, Seclusion to Inclusion

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. Called To Testify, Sensitive Issue

Sharing The Good Things God Has Done Builds Faith

a') v.48 Jesus Confirms Her Healing and Blesses Her. 1) Healed, 2) Restored To Community

48 And he said to her, "**Daughter**, your faith has made you well; go in peace." //7:50, Hopeless Case Solved

Faith Risks = Full Speed Ahead! Faith Perseveres = Wait n The Lord!

1') vv.49-56 JAIRUS' DAUGHTER: PART II. God's Timing Was Not Jairus', Mk. 5:35-43

Jesus Ministers To The Ritually Unclean (Blood, Corpse, Gentile, Demoniacs)

a) v.49 Daughter Dead. Can We Affirm God's Sovereign Timing?

49 While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, Hopeless Case No. 2

"Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." End Of Hope, Death Notification

b) v.50 Jesus' Command To Jairus. Word Of Revelation → → → Command + Promise

50 **But Jesus on hearing this** answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, **and she shall be well (saved).**" //8:48

51 And when he came to the **house**, he permitted no one to enter with him,

except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. Inner Circle + Parents

c) vv.52-53 Crowd Opposing Reactions Versus Jesus' Word.

52 And all were weeping and bewailing her Jewish Professional Mourners

but he said, "**Do not weep; for** she is not dead but sleeping." 7:13, 22, Prophetic Word

53 And they laughed at him, **knowing that she was dead.** The Mocking Laughter of Unbelief

Based On Their Tested Worldview and Experience

b') v.54 Jesus' Command To Jairus' Daughter. Father Wills, Son Obeys, Spirit Energizes

54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." 7:14, No Prayer, Prayer of Command

Num. 19:11-12, Touch Corpse = Unclean For A Week

a') vv.55-56 Daughter Alive Again. Hopeless Case No. 2 Solved

55 **And her spirit returned**, and she got up at once; Proof 1, Resuscitation, Not Resurrection

and he directed that something should be given her to eat. Proof 2, Tobit 12:19 (not a ghost), 23:46

56 **And her parents were amazed;** Awe, Wonder

but he charged them to tell no one what had happened. Jesus Is Not A Magician! Called To Silence

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 8:40-56

Two interwoven miracles bring Luke’s essay (7:1-8:56) to a close. The essay opens with two miracles (7:1-10, 11-17), including the resuscitation of *a widow’s only son*, and closes with two more (8:40-42a, 49-56; 8:42b-48), including the resuscitation of *a father’s only daughter*. Each pair includes the polarity of Jew/Gentile and male/female so the opening and closing of the essay mirror one another. Four miracles end of the essay: 1) 8:22-25, Calming the sea; 2) 8:26-39, The Gerasene demoniac; 3-4) 8:26-40, Healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus’ daughter. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus exercises God’s rule over 4 *d’s* of the fallen world: disordered creation, demons, disease, and death on Jewish and Gentile turf. He is a powerful Savior for all, one worthy of trust. Such is Luke’s artistry.

Luke’s source is Mk. 5:21-43 which he slightly edits. The insertion of the bleeding woman within the frame of the raising of Jairus’ daughter is a tool to tell two stories at once and have them interpret one another. While the insertion technique is Markan, nothing prevent this from being the historical order as preserved in all three Synoptics (footnote 2). The links between the stories are numerous: *all* (vv.41//47), *falling down* (v.41//47), *daughter* (v.42//v.48), *twelve* (v.42//v.43), ritual uncleanness (v.43//v.49), *faith/saved* linked (v.48//v.50), *touching* (vv.44-47 [4x]//v.53), hopeless circumstances (v.43//v.49). The resuscitation is in a *house* (v.41//v.51), while the woman’s healing is outside on the road (see p.16).

The rejected Jesus (v.37) is welcomed home by crowds at the shore (v.40). The synagogue leader Jairus prostrates himself and requests Jesus to come and heal his sole daughter, a twelve-year-old who is dying. He agrees to go. Here the second story is inserted (vv.42-48), creating the dramatic delay. That the seams between the stories are sharp is seen in that the Jairus story may be read from v.42a to v.49 without a break. The inserted story of the woman with the issue of blood is concentric (a-b-c-b’-a’) with a dialog between Jesus and Peter at the center (c: vv.45-46). In b (v.44) the woman is *behind Jesus* and in b’ (v.47) *before him*. In b/b’ there are parallel references to *touched* and *immediately*. The story opens with the bleeding problem (a: vv.42b-43) and closes with Jesus’ confirmation of her healing and its removal of ritual impurity and restoration to community (a’: v.48). A uterine hemorrhage would have rendered her an outsider; whoever touched her was ritually impure till evening. Her chronic condition resisted available treatments. She is hopeless till she hears about Jesus. Against convention, she formulates a plan and sneaks up behind to touch a tassel at the corner of his garment and is instantly cured. Jesus experiences the phenomena of power passing through him and wants to find the recipient, “Who touched me?” The jostle of curious crowds is of different quality than the touch of *faith*; the exchange is not magical. When called out, she falls trembling before all and gives her testimony. She has not polluted him; the power of holy love through him has restored her utterly. Jesus claims her as family (*daughter*), praise her trust, and sends her forth in the peace of comprehensive wellness. Faith takes crazy risks!

Because of Jesus’ delay with a non-crisis, Jairus’ daughter dies, and since death is final, there’s no more need for the Rabbi. But he, with a sure word from God, calls for extreme faith from Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe, and she shall be well (saved).” Jairus has just seen the woman’s cure, but this is death. Jesus then goes in with his inner circle of three and the parents. The format is concentric (a-b-c-b’-a’) with a contrast between Jesus’ confidence and the mourners’ disbelief at the center (vv.52-53). At his touch and command she rises as her breath/spirit is recalled. To eat means she is not a ghost. Her parents marvel, and Jesus’ asks them to keep quiet. Jesus is God’s agent who gives life. Faith perseveres!

WHEN YOU'RE HOT, YOU'RE HOT!

“Who was it that touched me?”

LUKE 8 : 4 5

Some things Jesus learned by question and answer, not divine revelation.

Consumer culture is about the craving for convenience. Quick and easy, no fuss, no muss, instant answers. In the Bridger Wilderness of Wyoming, hikers are asked for feedback. Here are some comments from the cards:

1. Trail heads need to be wider so people can walk holding hands.
2. Trails need to be reconstructed. Avoid building trails that go uphill.
3. Too many bugs, leeches, spiders and webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests.
4. Please pave the trails so they can be plowed of snow during the winter.
5. Chairlifts need to be in some places so that we can get to wonderful views without having to hike to them.
6. The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals. A deer stole my jar of pickles. Can I get reimbursed?
7. Escalators would help on steep uphill sections.
8. A McDonald's would be nice at the trailhead.
9. The places where trails do not exist are not well marked.
10. Too many rocks in the mountains.¹

But some things cannot be made convenient, easy and safe. One is Wyoming wilderness. Another is war. A third is the British Open at Carnoustie. A fourth is love and sex and marriage and parenting and dying. A fifth is getting near Jesus Christ. The disciples never knew what was going to happen. Jesus did not come to make our lives easier but fundamentally different, to draw us inside the loving energy of his Father's restorative reign, the kingdom of God.

¹ “To Illustrate: Plus,” *Leadership*, Summer 1999, 75.

The two stories before us today are embarrassingly supernatural. Is Jesus merciful? Yes. Safe and convenient? Never, because he's always in touch with his invisible partners, the Father designing a new circuit of access and the Spirit supplying the voltage. And yet I constantly get the verbal equivalent of comment cards that say, "Pastor Phil, make it simple and easy. Give me a sound-bite faith for a busy life. Tell me I can *have it all*, Jesus now, heaven later, and a great retirement in between." The Park Service is not paying for pickles; they're not killing coyotes or erecting golden arches, and I can't make Jesus any less wild and strange. As apprentices, Jesus invites us into the wildness of God. Please don't ask me for seven of ten commandments or a high-benefit, low-risk faith. It will turn your soul to mush.

TURNING TO THE TEXT

The Raising Of Jairus' Daughter and *The Woman With The Issue Of Blood* are a pair of miracles that travel together in the first three gospels.² Both are about women, one a dying twelve year old, the other a grown woman who for twelve years has been hemorrhaging her life away. A bleeding womb³ and a waiting tomb, both of which signaled ritual separation for Jews because such were considered loathsome, out of proper order, and therefore fearful. The unnamed woman has for years lived as an outcast because her condition rendered her ceremonially unclean and cut off from worship. Jairus touched his daughter daily; this woman had not been touched by anyone in over a decade. One story deals with chronic disease, the other with untimely death. Both are hopeless cases. But in the end, both get what they came for,

² Mark 5:21-43 // Luke 8:40-56 // Matthew 9:18-26.

³ The technical term *rhysis hematosi*s comes from Lev. 15:25-27, used for gynecological bleeding outside the menstrual period, and thus extending the "period of impurity" and ritual separation. There was within Judaism... a complex symbolic system of purity laws that divided life into clean and unclean. The issue was not primarily hygienic. It had to do with things that were considered loathsome and fearful. Dr. Jacob Neusner, says that "purity was a term for a basic, probably unanalyzable, religious experience.... The sources of uncleanness are varied: certain animals, the woman after childbirth, skin ailments (like leprosy), mildew in a house, bodily discharges, especially the menses and seminal fluid, sexual misdeeds, and the corpse ("The Idea of Purity in Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 43 [1975], 16-17). Leviticus is explicit here. If a woman is bleeding, not only her own person, but anything she touches, sits on, or comes in contact with is also rendered ritually unclean and must be restored to ritual purity through an elaborate cleansing ritual. Thus this woman was extremely isolated.

though not in the way either intended. Both women are restored to community, and both gain a testimony about what Jesus has done for them.

These stories highlight Jesus' ability to deal with what ails us. He has authority over *disease*, over *death*, over *doubt*. There is a fourth *d* we covered earlier: Jesus has authority over the *devil* and his *demons*.⁴ Jesus has power over all forces opposed to his Father's kingdom and masters each so we will know what the new world of the kingdom looks like. Dr. John Sanders writes:

“Jesus’ healings reveal God’s opposition to sickness. The people Jesus healed were not made ill by God in order to identify Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus is not going around *cleaning up* the diseases God has spread (as is the case if one affirms the doctrine God causes everything). Jesus and the Father stand against that which destroys the health that God, as our Creator, intends for us.”⁵

Jesus is for human flourishing in community with one another and in communion with Gd; he is against all that saps life and hope from people. Following him and knowing him and receiving from him aligns you with God's will and the deepest grain of the universe, though it may put you at cross purposes with everything else.

Jairus And His Daughter, Part 1 (vv40-42a)

We begin with a travel report, “Now when Jesus returned (i.e. from Gentile territory by boat), the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.” A cheer goes up as he lands. It was clear that the God of Israel was *with this man* and that *in him* God was visiting his people and putting the future kingdom on local display. In his popular book of a decade ago, *The God Chasers*, Pentecostal evangelist Tommy Tenny uses the image of bread to speak of Jesus' presence:

“The priority of God's presence has been lost in the modern Church. We're like bakeries that are open, but have no bread. And furthermore, we're not interested in selling bread. We just like the chit-chat that goes on around cold ovens and empty shelves.... It's simple why people leave

⁴ 8:22-39.

⁵ *The God Who Risks*, (Downer's Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 98.

churches- there's no bread.... I can tell you why people are flocking to the bars, clubs, and psychics by the millions.... If just one of them hears the rumor that there is bread back in the House of Bread, news will... leapfrog from one place to another almost instantaneously.”⁶

Jesus had no TV or radio, no websites or publicity agents, yet he always had a crowd waiting when he showed up. We only need church promotion as long as there is little or no bread in the house, but when the presence of Christ returns, and when the cheer of the faithful goes up, promotion and programs stop. People come because Jesus is near, because his presence is felt and lives are changed in ways that require God to explain. I signed up to follow Jesus, to be around him and learn his stuff; can someone please tell me how I ended up running a local franchise and trying to explain what a *Methodist* is? I spend time organizing Bible studies and picnics on the shore to keep church folk occupied, all the while looking across my shoulder and wondering, “When is Jesus going to show up again? This is getting hard, and I’m running out of ideas. I don’t think I can fake it much longer.” Reality set in!

One of those who waited on the shore was Jairus, leader of the local synagogue.⁷ He knew Jesus was a marked man and a questionable teacher, but that did not prevent him from humbling himself and pleading for help. Why? Because there are times when the welfare of your child matters more than keeping the authorities happy. In his book *One Church from the Fence*, Wes Seelinger writes:

"I've spend long hours in the intensive care waiting room... watching with anguished people... Will my husband make it? Will my child walk again? The ICU waiting room is different from any other place in the world. They can't do enough for each other... distinctions of race and class melt away. A person is father first, a black man second. The garbage man loves his wife as much as the university professor.... In the intensive care waiting room, the world changes. Vanity and pretense vanish. The universe is focused on the doctor's next report.... Everyone knows that loving someone else is what life is all about."⁸

⁶ (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1999), 19-22.

⁷ Robert Guelich, *Mark 1:1-8:26*, (Waco, TX: Word, 1989), 295.

⁸ "To Illustrate: Love," *Leadership*, Winter 1995, 38.

That was Jairus. Pride was worn away in the intensive care waiting room. His fear of what other leaders would say diminished. I do not believe God afflicted the girl with whatever her ailment was; I do believe God used it *after the fact* in the life of Jairus to draw him towards Jesus. Can you hear the mixture of desperation and faith as he blurts out his request at Lord's feet? When the fathers and grandfathers of this church fill this altar with cries for their kids and grandkids, something's about to happen. Where are the fathers who will cry out as Jairus did and get down and dirty with Jesus until he agrees to go back with them to their homes and bring healing?

Yet how many parents have prayed such desperate prayers as Jairus and not had them answered in the way they hoped? How many harden their hearts and blame God after the death of a child? We know divorce rates go up in families where a child has died.⁹ Psychologists tell us there is no greater loss, that the death of a spouse is often easier to live through than the death of a child. Such persons need special care and patience. They may need encouragement to forgive God for not rescuing their baby. Not that God has sinned, but disappointment and anger with God can be overwhelming.¹⁰

Mrs. Jairus stayed at the bedside; Daddy went to beg for help. Parenting, even the best, has limits. A daughter, just on the verge of womanhood, was about to be snatched away. There are some things we cannot do for our children and much we cannot protect them from. They are, finally, not ours. They are a trust, not property. Jairus is a reminder of our limits as parents and the fact that there are things children need from the Lord they can never get from us. The best we can do is intercede for them, then leave our most precious gifts in his hands.

As United Methodists- and in line with ancient church custom- we practice this release most dramatically in the baptism of the children of Christian parents.¹¹ From the start we teach parents to let go and trust God, when it's easy and when it's hard, when healing comes and when it doesn't. Hope is now on the way as Jesus follows Jairus. But hidden in the crowd and sneaking up behind was an interruption.

⁹ <http://marriage.about.com/cs/parenting/a/unthinkgrief>.

¹⁰ Norma Dearing, *The Healing Touch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen), 52-55.

¹¹ The United Methodist official statement on baptism is *Of Water And The Spirit* and is found at [gbod.org.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera/entry_986/17/BWASWITH INDEX&INTRO.PDF](http://gbod.org.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera/entry_986/17/BWASWITHINDEX&INTRO.PDF).

The Interruption Of Faith (vv.42b-48)

I am privileged man. Most of my life has been lived near the center, not at the edge. When I read the story of the woman with the issue, I have trouble identifying with her. I am not a woman in a man's world. I know something of chronic disease, but not the desperation that comes from no effective treatment. It's easier for me to identify with Jairus- the religious leader with the sick child- because I've held my son during major diabetic seizures. Our story starts at the center with Jairus, a man of status, then moves suddenly out to the margins. It's not that God doesn't care for those at the center. He loves us as well, but sometimes we must learn patience while he deals with those who love around life's raw edges. All the while Jesus deals with this woman, there stands Jairus sweating, blood pressure rising. It's time for an important man to wait on an unimportant woman and to have faith stretched by patience. You see, friends, it's hard to enjoy someone's else's miracle when your daughter's dying.

Picture this woman with me. Twelve years of chronic uterine bleeding. Anemic, pale, listless, haggard, no Geritol for *iron poor blood*, no B12 injections for a boost. Today she might be cured with a hysterectomy and nutrition program. A woman in this condition could not go to the Temple or pray in the synagogue. She was untouchable, cut off from family, and if married, her husband would have divorced her. Her condition might be seen as a punishment from God for some secret sin, probably sexual in nature. To us it seems horribly unfair, but that's the way it was in the symbolic and religious universe of her day. But she'd heard reports, and in the midst of misery she hatched a plan of faith to get near enough to Jesus.

The collection of Jewish law and lore known as the *Talmud* offered eleven possible remedies for conditions such as hers. To us they sound like home remedies, but they represented the wisdom of the day. Here are five:

1. Drink wine containing powder made of rubber, alum, and garden crocuses. (If it tastes bad, it must be good for you!).
 2. Take a draught of Persian onions cooked in wine while someone commands you, "Rise out of your issue of blood!" (That stuff should shut anything down!).
 3. A sudden shock. (Scare them out of it!)
 4. Carry the ash of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in summer and a cotton rag in winter. (Who knows?)
 5. Carry at all times a barley-corn which has been found in the dung of a
-

white she-ass. (If it comes through that process unscathed, it must have magical powers!)¹²

Drinking vile potions and hunting through dung piles, home remedies and primitive medicine: that was her lot. This is the social reality behind the simple words of verse 43, "As he went the people pressed around him. And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind him...."

The devil, it seems, decided to close shop in one part of the world and open up in another. A going-out-of-business-sale was announced. One of the customers, being quite interested in the various evil instruments on display, noticed that of all the devil's tools, the highest priced one was called *discouragement*.

"Why is this one so expensive?" he inquired.

"Quite simple," replied the devil, "It's my favorite. With the tool of discouragement I can pry into almost everyone's life and cause all kinds of damage."¹³

In our day they jump off the bridges, shoot themselves, drink and drug themselves into stupors, bury themselves in porn, or lapse into deep depressions. They deeply discouraged pass us every day. "Empty people, filled with care, headed who know's where," says the song before it gives the answer, "People need the Lord. People need the Lord. At the end of broken dreams, he's an open door." For Jesus desperate people are never an interruption, only the next God-sent opportunity.

But she would have to be deceptive to make the plan work. Better to come up from behind and avoid direct confrontation. Everyone she touched on the way to Jesus would become ritually unclean till sunset and require a ritual to restore proper status. Her eyes were on the prize, and so she moved on. Faith brings hope and focus.

Let's not too quickly label the part about touching Jesus' robe as superstition as so many have. Persons were regularly healed according to Mark simply by touching the robe of Jesus.¹⁴ The Book of Acts says people were healed by the shadow of Peter

¹² William Lane, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1974), 192.

¹³ Brian Cavanaugh, *The Sower's Seeds* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 71-72.

¹⁴ Mark 6:56.

and by cloths taken from Paul's body.¹⁵ Through immersion in the presence of God, these persons had become living sacraments, human means of grace, and if for Peter and Paul, how much more for Jesus? Rather than label it *superstition* and *primitive*-which only betrays our prejudices, why not catalog it under more-humble headings: *Things I Do Not Yet Understand*, or *Experiences I've Not Yet Had?*

God the Father through the Spirit that rested on Jesus ministered healing to the woman without Jesus' conscious participation. This is just how full of divine love he was; when jostled it spilled out all over her. God gave her the gift of faith and him the gift of healing, and the two met in her touch. When she touched his robe from behind, something tangible happened. Love and life flowed through him into her, and Jesus was aware of it as it happened. The bleeding stopped; she knew it because she felt something as well. In the fifth century the great North African theologian Saint Augustine commented on the difference between the jostling of the crowd and the touch of the woman, "Many thronged him, one touched him."¹⁶ I cannot tell you exactly how faith operates in healing. Here it was the faith of the woman, also a gift of God. It is always wrong to accuse persons who are not healed of a lack of faith. Better to lay the blame at the feet of those who pray for them. Best of all not to search for blame but to ask God for direction in prayer.¹⁷

Jesus felt a bundle of spiritual energy exit his body. He did not know who it was, and so he asked, "Who was it that touched me?" He was on the way to Jairus' house because he believed it was the will of his Father, and when something unexpected happened on the way, Jesus recognized it as a divine interruption and a call to investigate. At times Jesus had supernatural knowledge and at times asked questions like everyone else. Peter and the disciples were aware of the jostling crowds, but Jesus was aware of another reality. "Master," said Peter with a certain annoyance in his voice, "the multitudes surround you and press on you." Jesus has discernment; Peter is without a clue. He thinks Jesus asked a dumb question. Not so.

¹⁵ Acts 5:15, 19:12.

¹⁶ Richard C. Hoefler, *There are Demons in the Sea* (Lima, OH: CSS, 1978), 138.

¹⁷ For a discussion of faith and healing, see Don Dunkerly, *Healing Evangelism: Strengthening Your Witnessing with Effective Prayer for the Sick* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1995), 75-83; Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1999), Chapter 8, "The Faith To Be Healed," 89-106.

Her plan worked, but now things were getting way out of hand. She hoped to get away with *behind-the-back* blessing, but God wanted *face-to-face* and wholeness. There in the middle of the street, face down in the dirt, with people muttering to themselves, "Oh my God, she's got cooties, and she touched me," she poured out her story. Jesus didn't have to say a lot because he listened long. Jesus adopted her into his new family with a single word, "Daughter." What does it do for an abandoned child to be adopted into a family and for the first time to hear themselves introduced *my son* or *my daughter*? Belonging, protection, safety, healing. He then bragged on her in front of his dopey disciples and the mob, "...your faith has made you well." To them she was an outcast, to Jesus a heroine of faith. To them she was nothing; to him she was noble. She had felt his power in healing; now he capped it off with a gift of peace that would carry her the rest of her days. "Shalom," he said over her with a rabbinic gesture of blessing, "Go in peace."

Are you willing to be interrupted? Jesus was. Henri Nouwen, probably the most widely-read spiritual writer of our day, made this confession when he was a professor at Yale, "You know, my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work."¹⁸

Interruptions are often opportunities in disguise. People matter, especially if they come from the margins of life. Gossiping about the Lord and putting people in touch with Jesus is the most important work any of us will ever do. Healing is inclusive; it is physical, psychological, communal and relational. It is vertical and horizontal. Faith and daring are gifts of God. The Spirit often works in unexpected ways, something with accompanying physical phenomena. It is important to listen after the fact. Physical healing needs to be followed by solid counseling and long-term affirmation. Jesus welcomes the unclean and marginalized of our day: social outcasts, AIDS carriers, the promiscuous and adulterous, criminals, the mentally ill and homeless, dope-heads, ex-cons, and the suicidal into his family. But we are not through yet. Jairus is still standing here. Is it too late?

Jairus And His Daughter, Part 1 (vv.49-56)

Jairus is on an emotional roller-coaster. Wondering if Jesus will respond, elated when he does, waiting while Jesus listens to the woman's story, crushed by the news that

¹⁸ *Reaching Out*, quoted in Lamar Williamson, *Mark* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983), 112.

arrives, "Your daughter's dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." The messenger assumes death closes the door forever. Thomas Boston wrote: "Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger who cannot be diverted from executing his orders— not by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich nor the entreaties of the poor."¹⁹

A second assumption is that since a corpse was unclean according to Jewish law, and since anyone who touched it became unclean for a week, Jesus would not come near. Mourners are already hired. Hope is gone. It's wrong to label this messenger an example of unbelief; he's just an honest man delivering a tough message. But he's still wrong. Both of his assumptions, the irrevocability of death and the issue of uncleanness, do not apply to Jesus the boundary breaker.

Jesus' response to the news is fascinating. He ignores it! How can he do that? Because he has a word from God. John 5:19 gives us a clue how he experienced divine revelations, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, *but only what he sees the Father doing*; for whatever he (the Father) does, that the Son does likewise." Jesus was an obedient mimic. What he observed in the spiritual realm, he carried out in the visible. So he looks Jairus in the eye and seeks to strengthen what residue of hope remains at the bottom of Jairus' empty cup, "Do not fear, only believe." If I say that it sounds sappy and foolish, but if Jesus says it because he knows what's ahead, it's a call to hang on.

All his life Jairus had seen people die and not come back; he is now invited to trust Jesus against his whole lived experience. Jesus had a word from God and a public word of prophetic encouragement for Jairus. Remember, Jesus operates in the full gifting of the Holy Spirit; he hears and sees what others do not. His communion with the one he called *Abba/Father* was open in both directions, not blocked by the static of sin or the screaming voice of ego. What a bold Savior we have! Not some gentle Jesus, meek and mild, afraid; of his shadow, but a Jesus so full of the Spirit he would speak to the dead and tell them to get up! Jesus had seen people die all his life. No hospitals in Nazareth. Folk died at home. So prevalent was childhood mortality, it's likely Jesus had younger siblings that died of disease.²⁰ But healing the sick and casting out demons was minor league stuff compared with raising the dead! The rabbis had a saying, "God alone has three keys: the key to the rain, the key to

¹⁹ Albert M. Wells, *Inspiring Quotations* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1988), 53.

²⁰ "Infant Mortality in the Land of Israel," faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/infant.html.

motherhood, and the key to giving new life to the dead."²¹ The Father tossed the keys to the Son, "You did it with the widow's son at Nain. Let's do it again here. You say the word; I will do the deed. You represent me, and I back your act."

One way to certify death is that the paid mourners had arrived and were doing their thing. Each culture has its customs of grief, and the Middle Eastern variety is particularly noisy. The poorest Jew was not allowed less than two pipes and one wailing woman. Garments were torn over the heart. Psychologists call this *psychodrama*, a scripted way to bring to the outside what is unhealthy to leave inside. We Euro-Americans generally do not do this well. We say things like "Wasn't she strong?" or "Did he break down?" We are afraid of the pain expressed in open grief. We wrongly expect people to heal quickly and without community help. They knew better. We see Jesus walking with Jairus towards his dead child. Wouldn't that make a great painting? As the old spiritual puts it:

"I want Jesus to walk with me. I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey, I want Jesus to walk with me."²²

The word of Jesus in verse 52 is really no different than the earlier word of prophetic encouragement to Jairus, only this time his wife hears it as well, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." The mourners laughed. Did you catch the shift of emotions? One moment wailing, next moment laughing. They laugh because it's so ridiculous. But remember, Jesus has a word from God, and all they have is their experience to this point. Who's right? We will have to wait and see. It is a clashing of perspectives, one worldview against another. If nothing happens, then Jesus is a false prophet. If something does happen, then he, the wandering charismatic rabbi from Nazareth, is the one man on earth over whose head the heavens are open. He is a window into the ruling and over-ruling presence of God the King, and his word is more potent than all the reams of accumulated human experience. One word from God outweighs the whole world. Only a select number are allowed inside. Jesus then takes her hand as if waking her up from a night's sleep. He speaks not a prayer of petition but a prayer of command. He already knows what the Father wants to do through him and the Spirit, "Child, arise." He waited, and then she blinked! In *The Whisper Test* Mary Ann Bird writes of the power of such words:

²¹ Hugh Anderson, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1976), 157.

²² *The U.M. Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House, 1989), No. 521.

“I grew up knowing I was different and hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, classmates made it clear how I looked to others: misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, garbled speech. When asked, ‘What happened to your lip?’ I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. It seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced no one outside my family could love me. There was, however, a teacher in the second grade we all adored- Mrs. Leonard by name. Short, round, happy- a sparkling lady. Annually we had a hearing test.... Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone, and finally it was my turn. I knew that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back- things like 'The sky is blue,' or 'Do you have new shoes?' I waited there for words God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said in her whisper, 'I wish you were my little girl.'"²³

Charles Wesley got it right, “He speaks and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive. The mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.” You cannot hear from Jesus without having your life changed. I know. I’ve heard his voice, and it gives me a wild and glorious hope for this life and the life to come.

Proof No. 1 was that she got up “at once” and started walking around. I love what Jesus said next. From the supernatural to the practical in Proof No. 2: "This girl is hungry. Get her something to eat." In that world it also proved she wasn't a ghost since spirits don't eat. Jesus is not a magician manipulating occult powers; he is the visible agent of the invisible God, and they work in intimate cooperation. There in that room for a shining moment the kingdom of God was not faith but sight, a foretaste of what is ahead for us all at the resurrection of the dead. We have a God who loves frightened mothers and grieving fathers and twelve year old girls with most of their life before them. The mourners laughed at Jesus, but he had the last laugh. And just as one day the notice of my death will be delivered, so one day I too will hear the voice of Jesus, "Wake up, Phil. It's day one of my kingdom."

CONCLUSION

Jesus won each skirmish with death, but then came the right time for a different

²³ "To Illustrate: Acceptance," *Leadership*, Winter 1995, 39.

Luke 8:40-56 16

strategy, one to win the war itself. A white flag went up, and one Friday Jesus lay down all his weapons and voluntarily surrendered to his enemies. They delivered him by means of a cruel and bloody cross into the same experience from which he had rescued others. He gurgled in his own juices and was swallowed by death. It was dark and the earth shook. On the Sabbath Saturday it was silent and still as his body lay in state in Joseph's tomb. And on Sunday words he had spoken to others were spoken to him, "I say to you, arise." And the angels cheered as the risen Jesus was bodily raised, freed from space and time to spread his power and love and healing and hope wherever he wills. He's still touching folk, still being touched by them, and this is why we exist as his church- to seek and wait on act on his presence.

A minister once received a letter from a child, "Dear God, what is it like when you die? Nobody will tell me. I just want to know. I don't want to do it."²⁴ None of us do, but we will, and there is no better preparation than a life lived now in the love of the Lord and in love of anyone he puts in your path. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus, and in our own because of his, should free us to be the most loving, inviting, and confident people in the world. Perhaps even confident enough to pray for healing from time to time and to wait with reckless, patient faith on the surprises of God. What a foolish job we preachers have. We point to realities we cannot deliver. Like you, when the preaching is done, we stand with empty hands and expectant hearts.

Literary Elements That Tie The Two Stories Together (Green, Luke, 343)

Common Element	Jairus and his daughter (vv.40-42a, 49-56)	Woman with bleeding (vv.42b-48)
Falling before Jesus	v.41	v. 47
Daughter	v.42	vv. 48-49
Twelve years	v.42	v. 43
Desperate circumstances	v.42, v.49	v. 43
Immediacy of healing	v.55	v. 44, 47
Touching	v.53	vv. 44, 45, 46, 47
Ritual Impurity	vv.53-54 (Corpse)	v.43 (Flow of blood)
Faith/Salvation linked	v.50	v.48
All	v.40	v.47

²⁴ Ibid., 54.
