

“Your Faith Has Made You Well” (Luke 8:40–56)

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What’s the hardest thing that we can face in this life? I don’t think it’s loss of money or income. We can always get another job or hope that more money comes in. Is it rejection from people we love? I don’t think so, though rejection from loved ones is devastating. Even if our family and friends disown us and unfriend us, we can always find new people to love and be loved by. I think one of the hardest things we face in this life is the decay of our own bodies—and also of the bodies we love.

Many of us know what it’s like to be seriously ill, or to have had—or to have right now—some serious injury or condition that keeps us from being completely healthy. When your body is weak or in pain, it’s hard not to think about it. Other difficulties in life are ones that we can forget for some periods of time. Even those who are mourning or hurting over a rejection can have times when they laugh or feel happy. But a body in pain stays in pain always. And sometimes illnesses or conditions keep some people from getting out, from engaging in life the way that others do. In those cases, health problems can isolate us and make us feel alone, unproductive, and unwanted.

Of course, this hits home when it’s happening to our bodies. But it also hurts us when our loved ones have these major health problems. And regardless of whether we’re healthy or not right now, or whether our spouses or kids or parents or friends are healthy or not right now, all of us will die. Before we die, we will lose many loved ones to death. And that reminds us of our own impending deaths.

I know I’ve mentioned this before, but I’ll mention it again: there’s an interesting book called *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*, by a French philosopher named Luc Ferry, who happens to be an atheist. He describes philosophy as basically an attempt to figure out how to live in a world in which we will all die. He says this of man (and of woman, too): “He knows that he will die, and that his near ones, those he loves, will also die. Consequently he cannot prevent himself from thinking about this state of affairs, which is disturbing and absurd, almost unimaginable.”¹ What is it that all humans want? “To be

¹ Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*, trans. Theo Cuffe (New York: Harper, 2011), 2–3.

understood, to be loved, not to be alone, not to be separated from our loved ones—in short, not to die and not to have them die on us.”² Ferry says that all religions and philosophies are an attempt to find salvation from the fear of death.

Now, this might not be a very cheerful way to begin a sermon. But the reality is that all of us will face health concerns and all of us will face death. Those are things that every human being deals with, and some of us are dealing with that right at this moment. And if that was all there was to the story—your body breaks down, everything and everyone you love will pass away, and you will die—there would be no hope. But there is hope. Christianity has something amazing to say about hope in the face of illness, decay, and death. Luc Ferry, that atheist I just mentioned, says, “I grant you that amongst the available doctrines of salvation, nothing can compete with Christianity—provided, that is, that you are a believer.”³ I suppose the reason he says that is because Christianity promises life after death to believers. It promises that death is not the final word. The problem for Ferry is that he doesn’t believe it. But he admits that French students in his generation weren’t exposed to Christianity and the Bible. He likely never bothered to read strong defenses of the truth of Christianity.

At this church, we try to think about why we should believe Christianity to be true. And the greatest reason to believe is Christ himself. And the best way to know Jesus Christ is to read the Bible, particularly the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—each one a biography of Jesus, focusing on his teachings, his miracles, his death, and his resurrection from the grave.

For most of the last thirteen months, we’ve been studying the Gospel of Luke. Today, we’re look at Luke 8:40–56. We’ll see here that Jesus performs two miracles that show he has power over both illness and death.

Let’s begin by reading Luke 8:40–42a:

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus’ feet, he implored him to come to his house, ⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.⁴

Jesus has returned from the eastern shore of Sea of Galilee, the Gentile region known as the Decapolis. Specifically, he was in a place called the Gerasenes, where he exorcised a large

² Ibid., 4.

³ Ibid., 261.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

amount of demons out of a man. On the way there, Jesus had calmed a storm. We looked at these two miracles last week.⁵

Here, back in Galilee, a man named Jairus comes to Jesus. Jairus was the ruler of synagogue. He would have been in charge of the services at the synagogue. He was something like a lay leader, the one who decided who could read Scripture at the synagogue. He wasn't a Rabbi or a civil leader, but he provided order and he would have been a well-respected leader in the community.

This man falls at Jesus' feet, which shows how desperate he is. His only daughter, about twelve years old, is dying. The Greek word that is translated as "only" is μονογενής (*monogenes*), the same word used of Jesus to describe him as God's only Son or, in older translations, his "only begotten" Son. This man's one, beloved daughter is dying, and he begs Jesus to help her. So, Jesus goes with Jairus to his house.

Now, let's read the end of verse 42 through verse 48:

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.⁴³ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!"⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Jesus has been drawing crowds because of his teaching and miracles. People are crowding him, pressing upon him. It's like he's a celebrity.

Among the people pressing against him is a woman "who [has] had a discharge of blood for twelve years." In other words, she's bleeding both during and between menstrual periods. I guess there's a technical name for this: menometrorrhagia.⁶ It seems she had some type of hemorrhage that couldn't heal. Luke tells us that she "spent all her living on physicians," but "she could not be healed by anyone." There's some debate about whether "spent all her living on physicians" belongs to the original copy of the Gospel. There are some early manuscripts that

⁵ This sermon, preached on January 13, 2019, can be found at <https://wbcommunity.org/luke>.

⁶ <http://pennstatehershey.adam.com/content.aspx?productId=10&pid=10&gid=000100>

don't have these words, though most manuscripts do. Luke was a doctor, so if he wrote this, it's quite stunning (Col. 4:14). Mark says the woman "had suffered much under many physicians" (Mark 5:26).

Now, some of you here might be able to relate to this woman. You might be thinking, "I know exactly what that's like. I've seen many doctors who haven't been able to help me." We've all seen people who couldn't be healed, regardless of how many specialists they had seen and how much money they have spent.

But this woman's condition would have caused her greater problems than mere physical ones. This had been going on for twelve years, and I'm sure her condition was inconvenient and possibly embarrassing. But what made it worse was that in her Jewish context, this condition made her unclean. This is a hard concept for us to grasp, because it's so foreign to the way that we think. In the book of Leviticus, there are all kinds of instructions for how the Israelites should worship and live as God's people. There are many instructions on how to be clean. The things in the book of Leviticus that make a person unclean are not necessarily sinful, but they are the result of sin in the world. One of the things that makes a person unclean is blood, which, when it's outside the body, is usually related to death. Various conditions, diseases, and death itself are the result of sin in the world. And sin is our rebellion against God.

When God made human beings, he created them in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26–28), which means that we were made to worship God, to reflect his greatness, to rule over the world by coming under his rule, to love him and obey him because he's a perfect Father. But the first human beings didn't want to live for God; instead, they wanted to be like God, to be gods who lived for themselves. They didn't trust that God is good. They didn't do things God's way. So, God removed them from Paradise and put his creation under a curse, which is a partial punishment for this rebellion. This is our story, too, for we often don't want to live for God and do life on his terms. This is why we have health problems, diseases, and death.

The book of Leviticus specifically talks about a woman bleeding beyond the time of her menstruation. This is Leviticus 15:25–31:

²⁵ "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. ²⁶ Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. ²⁷ And

whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.²⁸ But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.²⁹ And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting.³⁰ And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the Lord for her unclean discharge.

³¹ “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”

This woman couldn't be touched or touch others. She couldn't worship at the temple and probably not at the local synagogue. She was isolated, and probably frustrated, embarrassed, and apparently broke from spending money on doctors who couldn't help. When Mark's Gospel says she suffered at the hands of doctors, it probably means that these doctors made things worse, not better.

This woman touches Jesus in the hopes that he can make her well. Like Jairus, she knew that Jesus was her only hope. She had probably heard that Jesus had healed many other people. In Luke 6, we're told that people came to Jesus to hear his teaching and to be healed of their diseases. We're told, “And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all” (Luke 6:19).

Perhaps this woman touched Jesus in this way so that her condition wouldn't be found out by everyone. She wanted to be healed quietly, secretly. So, she simply touches the edge of Jesus' garment.

But Jesus realizes someone has touched him. What this woman has done is not a secret to him. He senses that someone has accessed his power. This doesn't mean that Jesus is some kind of battery with a limited energy source. What it means is that divine power was flowing through him and he was aware of it.

The disciples can't believe that Jesus could discern that a specific person touched him and that power went from him to this person. There's a massive crowd—how can Jesus know that one specific person touched him? But Jesus is the God-man, and he has the ability to know things that mere mortals wouldn't know.

Jesus surely knew who it was who touched him. I say that because we're told that the woman realized that she wasn't hidden, that she couldn't hide from Jesus. Jesus probably asked, “Who was it that touched me?” in order to draw this woman into making a public profession.

Like Jairus, this woman falls down, trembling, but probably for different reasons. She trembles in the presence of Jesus, the Lord who healed her. Even though she was probably afraid of speaking in public—she had been isolated for a long time—she decided to confess what Jesus had done for her.

Then, Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.” She might very well have been older than Jesus, but he calls her, “Daughter.” She is part of his family. What made her well? Ultimately, it’s Jesus and his power, the power of God at work in and through him. But the instrument that she used to access this power was her faith. She trusted that Jesus could heal her. The doctors couldn’t. Only Jesus could fix this problem.

Does this mean that Jesus will fix all our health problems? If we trust him, yes, he will—ultimately. But not in this lifetime. He may heal some of us, usually through secondary causes—through doctors and nurses, through diet and medicine and surgery. Jesus cannot heal all illnesses without rooting out all sin in the world. Sin is the cause of illness. But if Jesus removed all sin, he would have to end human history as we know it. He would have to remove all sinners—or at least their sin. But God hasn’t done that yet because he is giving people a chance to turn to Jesus now, before that great judgment day when all of us will no longer be hidden, but will be exposed for all that we are, all that we’ve done, all that we’ve thought and desired. Our secrets will be laid bare. And only Jesus can cover up our sins.

Jesus didn’t perform miracles to eliminate all evil. He performed miracles to show his identity. He is the great physician who will heal all who come to him. He has not promised to do this now, in this life. But he will do it in the end.

Today’s story started with Jairus and his dying daughter. Then, we were interrupted by the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. Now, let’s go back to Jairus and his daughter. What happened to her?

Let’s read verses 49–56:

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.” ⁵⁰ But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.”

⁵¹ And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵² And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.” ⁵³ And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.

⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

After Jesus has dealt with the bleeding woman, a messenger comes, saying that the girl is dead, don't bother Jesus anymore, there's nothing that can be done. This messenger lacks hope. This messenger lacks faith.

Jesus says, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." This might have sounded like a bad joke. Apparently, Jesus said this before he took the parents and three of his disciples inside the house. Those who were weeping and mourning outside laughed at Jesus. They laughed because he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." "Yeah, right, Jesus. That's a good one!"

But Jesus was serious. The girl was dead, but only temporarily. She was about to be "woken up." (By the way, Jairus' name, in Aramaic, would have been Jair, which means, "God will awaken.") Jesus touched the dead girl—this would have made him unclean (touching a corpse made someone unclean; Num. 19:11). And at his command, the girl rises. Her spirit comes back to her. The "spirit" is generally thought to be the person's immaterial self that continues after death, though "spirit" (Greek: πνεῦμα) can also mean "breath." She truly was dead and is now alive. Jesus even tells people to give her something to eat—she's really alive, in a physical body that needs sustenance.

The people are amazed, and rightfully so, but Jesus tells them not to tell others. He knows that people want someone who can bring dead people back to life. But people don't want all of Jesus' teaching. He doesn't want followers who are attracted to him for the wrong reasons.

So, what do we learn from this?

First, Jesus has the power to heal. He can do what we cannot do. Of course, we have much better medicine and technology than people had two thousand years ago. But there are still many conditions that we cannot fix, or fix completely. And we will never solve the problem of death. Death is the shadow that hangs over all humanity. Only Jesus can fix that problem.

Second, we should know that Jesus has not promised to fix death right now. Even this girl, whom Jesus brought back to life, would die again. And God has certainly not promised his people that they won't have a physical death. We will die, unless Jesus should return before the end of our lives.

Jesus' bringing the girl back to life was a sign that he has power over death, that he can bring people to spiritual life, and that there will be a resurrection of the dead. All who trust in Jesus can never die spiritually, but they will live forever.

Jesus famously brought his friend Lazarus back to life. In talking to Lazarus's sister, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26). He is the resurrection. He is life (John 14:6). He will bring life to all who trust him. We have that life now, even though our bodies may wear out and die. But he will give us new bodies, bodies that are indestructible, that will never grow old and never die. Death does not have the last word for those who follow Jesus.

But that indestructible life will only come when Jesus returns. Christianity takes a long view of life, an eternal view. And that's so important to keep in mind. If there is no afterlife, Christianity is false and useless. But if Christianity is true, then it means we will live eternally, either with God or separated from him and all that is good and right. God promises his people not a quick fix, but an eternal fix.

Third, think of the ways that Jesus steps into our different problems. Jairus says his twelve-year-old daughter was dying. Twelve years in that case seems so short. We have a sense that people should live much longer.

The woman was bleeding for twelve years. Twelve years must have seemed like an eternity for her.

I'm sure there's no coincidence that the woman suffered as long as this girl was alive. God has a way of orchestrating events like this, juxtaposing things so they cast light on each other. Whether our suffering seems long, or lives are taken short, Jesus cares. And Jesus can heal.

Fourth, Jesus is for everyone. Jesus heals the outcast woman. He heals the beloved daughter of the well-respected Jairus. All who come to Jesus in faith are healed, regardless of their age, gender, skin color, ethnicity, religious background, how much sin they've committed, or how much money they have. The key thing is faith.

What does faith look like? It looks like trusting in Jesus, even when the odds seem impossible. It means believing that only he can fix our problems. Yes, if you're sick, go see a doctor, but a doctor can't give you eternal life. He or she can't make you right with God. No

amount of science, technology, money, or other human accomplishments can do that. Faith means humbling yourself, falling at Jesus' feet, and realizing that he is God, that he is King of kings and Lord of lords. Faith means coming to Jesus for the right reasons, accepting not just his healing, but also his teaching, his leadership, his path for us.

This life is hard. Illness, disease, physical problems are hard. Death threatens to swallow everything we love up. But death is not the last word, not for Jesus, and not for his people. Do not fear; only believe.