

According To Your Faith

Matthew 9:18-34

Key Verse: 9:29

“Then he touched their eyes and said, ‘According to your faith let it be done to you....’”

In the previous lesson we learned that Jesus is our Eraser. When we come to Jesus by faith, Jesus erases all our sins with his precious blood. He blots out our sins and remembers them no more. In today's passage we can find that Jesus is also our Reservoir. Jesus is the source of all kinds of resources, such as life, wisdom, love, power, blessings, and so on. But in order to receive these resources, Jesus requires us to meet one condition: we must have faith in him. Jesus blessed those who came to him by faith, saying, "Your faith has healed you," and, "According to your faith let it be done to you." Jesus wants us to have faith in him. Then, what is faith? Many of us know in our minds what faith is. But when we confront practical problems: coworking, raising disciples and children, and financial difficulties, faith seems to be abstract and theoretical. So many people think that faith is one thing and solving a problem is another matter. Their faith and practice do not match. But in this passage we learn that faith is not theoretical and abstract; it is very practical and real. Faith enables us to break through barriers to know Jesus better and experience his power. Faith enables us to grow in Jesus as we deal with life's problems. As our view of Jesus grows, our faith becomes all the more powerful. In this passage let's learn more about Jesus, and what Jesus wants us to do.

I. Jesus is the Life-giver (18-26)

The intertwined events of Jesus raising a dead girl and healing a sick woman are included in all three synoptic gospels. While the facts of the events are substantially the same, each gospel writer reveals a different aspect of who Jesus is. Matthew's account is concise and to the point: Jesus heals a chronic disease and raises the dead. Matthew spends only 9 verses on this story, while Mark uses 23 verses and Luke, 17. In addition, Matthew places Jesus' healing of the blind and mute men right after this event, while Mark and Luke do not. In this way, Matthew reveals Jesus' identity as the Son of David, the promised Messiah. Matthew further emphasizes that the Messiah blesses people based on their faith.

Look at verse 18. While Jesus was talking about the new work of God through the forgiveness of sins, a synagogue ruler came and knelt before him, pleading for Jesus to raise his dead daughter to life. According to Mark and Luke, the girl was

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alive but dying, and Jesus planted resurrection faith in the synagogue ruler. However, Matthew omits this part of the story in order to focus more clearly on Jesus' messianic power to raise the dead.

Generally, synagogue rulers were very conservative, adhering to tradition, and were not in favor of Jesus' new wineskin ministry. But this synagogue ruler was different. He had an open mind to Jesus. In fact, he brought the painful problem of his dead daughter to Jesus. As we know, a daughter is most precious to her father. When he comes back home after a day of hard work, just one glimpse of his daughter fills his heart with joy and refreshes him, and he says, "Ah! Life is worth living." The ruler's daughter was growing and blossoming at the tender age of 12. But one day, after a heavy, cold rain, she caught the flu. She got worse and worse, even though doctors did their best to heal her. Finally, she died. When a parent dies, it is very painful for the children. But when a child dies, it is unbearable for the parents. Many parents were so sorrowful in such a time that they became irrational. But what did the ruler do? When he heard about Jesus who heals all kinds of diseases and forgives sins, hope arose in his heart. He wanted to come to Jesus. But there was a great challenge. Jesus had not raised anyone from the dead. This ruler must have reasoned that Jesus could raise the dead, based on what he had heard about Jesus. So he could plead with Jesus by faith. He knelt before Jesus and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her and she will live" (18b). He had resurrection faith. Jesus heard his plea, got up, and went with him (19).

On the way to the ruler's house, an unexpected thing happened: a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus. We don't know exactly what kind of disease she had. But it was clear that she was bleeding chronically and was helpless to stop it. Mark tells us that she had spent all she had on doctors, but instead of getting better, she got worse (Mk 5:26). This aggravating problem did not last only one month, or even a year, but twelve years. Twelve years is a long time. Twelve years ago, we lived in a pre-9/11 world. As we know, to a woman, beauty is very important. That is why so much money is spent on trendy clothes, jewelry, cosmetics, hair-care products, plastic surgery, and so on, and why fashion models are the envy of many a woman. However, this woman could not even think about being beautiful. Her bleeding disease made her ugly, and socially outcast. As the book of Leviticus says, such a condition was regarded as unclean (Lev 15:19-27). If she contacted anyone, she would make them unclean. So she must have suffered from guilt and shame, and been deeply withdrawn. She was crying alone in her room every day. She cried over her disease; she cried over her loneliness; she cried because no one understood her. In fact, she was dying

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without hope. But when she heard about Jesus, a seed of faith was born in her heart. She believed Jesus could heal her and wanted to come to Jesus. However, it was not easy. She was ashamed of her condition. She must have feared rejection. She might have doubted whether Jesus would receive a person like her. But the power of faith within her enabled her to overcome these obstacles. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed" (21). With this faith, she came and touched Jesus.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 22. "Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed at that moment." It is amazing that Jesus accepted her as a daughter. She looked ugly and haggard, and was unclean. No one wanted to look at her. But Jesus called her "daughter." Jesus accepts anyone who comes to him by faith as his own precious child. Jesus comforted her like a father, saying, "Take heart." She might have felt guilty for touching Jesus without permission, and afraid that he would rebuke her. But Jesus' tender words assuaged her soul and planted God's love in her heart. Fear and anguish disappeared; she felt loved and treasured by Jesus, and protected by Jesus, as his own precious daughter. Then Jesus blessed her, saying, "Your faith has healed you." Jesus acknowledged her touch as the expression of her faith, and her faith as the means of her healing. When Jesus blessed her faith, she felt in her body that the chronic, aggravating bleeding stopped immediately. Healing power surged throughout her body. Her face became bright and shining and she began to glow with beauty, like a rose. She did not bring any good works to Jesus; she had no accomplishment to offer him. She was not worthy to receive blessing based on her merit. But when she just believed in Jesus, she was healed. Jesus credited her faith highly.

This woman illustrates the power of faith. She said to herself, "If I just touch his cloak I will be healed." The act of touching his cloak sprang from the faith in her heart. This kind of faith worked mightily. Jesus blesses those who truly believe in him from their hearts. However, as the book of Hebrews teaches, this does not mean that all of our problems will be solved. Some heroes of faith did not experience victory in this world; rather they suffered much. Still, the Lord blessed their faith; it was with spiritual blessings which are even more valuable than blessings in this world.

Look at verse 23. Jesus entered the synagogue ruler's house. He saw a noisy crowd and people playing pipes, making an environment to mourn the death of the girl. Under the power of death, people could not but sorrow and grieve. Jesus said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep" (24a). Jesus broke up their funeral service

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and drove out all the mourners. To Jesus, who has divine power to give life and to raise the dead, such people must go away. Jesus told a similar group of people that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Mt 22:32). To the living God, physical death is nothing more than sleep. We like to sleep, right? How pleasant it is to sleep after working hard, and to wake up refreshed and invigorated. Jesus views death like sleep. Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'" Those who do not have faith in Jesus, even though they seem to be vigorous, are nothing but dead men walking. However, those who have faith in Jesus are not under the power of death; rather, they enjoy eternal life even while living in this world. They can praise and thank God in any circumstances and live joyful and powerful lives. We Christians should think of death like sleep. It is just a short nap; we will wake up in the heavenly kingdom. Look at verse 24b. "But they laughed at him." To them, raising the dead was ridiculous. They did not believe that Jesus could do it. They were upset that Jesus told them to go away. Jesus paid no attention to the unbelieving comedians. He put them all outside. Then he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up (25). She began to walk around and asked, "Why is everyone crying? Can I have something to eat?" In this way Jesus revealed his messianic power to raise the dead. News of this spread through all that region (26), bringing great light to those walking in darkness.

II. Jesus is the Son of David (27-34)

Look at verse 27a. "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him...." There are so many miserable people in the world. But among them, the blind may be the most miserable. The world God created is so beautiful, from the majestic Rocky Mountains to the vast Grand Canyon to the rushing water of Niagara Falls and the golden shores of Lake Michigan. There are so many beautiful flowers, each with its own shape, color, and budding pattern. There are seasons of spring with its new life, summer with its bright sunshine, fall with its golden fruit, and winter with its white snow. What a beautiful world! Through the beauty of nature, we can appreciate God our Creator and find refreshment for our souls. But blind men cannot see any of the visual beauty of this world. To them, everything is darkness all the time. As these blind men were miserable, spiritually blind men are also miserable. They cannot see the spiritual world, the world of faith, or the glorious kingdom of God, where God reigns. They think the visible world is everything, and that there is no more. They live in spiritual darkness and under the power of sin and death. The spiritually blind may be more miserable than the physically blind.

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The blind men in this passage desired to be healed by Jesus. So they followed him. We don't know how they followed him, but they followed him. They cried out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" Jesus went indoors. It seemed that he was avoiding or ignoring them. Needy people are usually very sensitive. When they are ignored, they tend to get discouraged and upset; they may get mad and curse others. But these blind men continued to follow Jesus. They were determined to bring their request to Jesus. They had a never-give-up spirit that comes from faith. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (28) They replied, "Yes, Lord." Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; and their sight was restored. They could see Jesus' smiling, affectionate face. When they went outside, they could see the bright, blue sky, the birds flying through the air, beautiful flowers and trees, and pretty women and handsome men going about their activities of life. It was a new world to them. Jesus warned them sternly not to tell anyone about what had happened. Jesus did not want unnecessary attention that would distract him and his disciples. Yet the men were so overjoyed about their healing that they went out and spread the news about Jesus all over that region (30,31).

While the men were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. Jesus drove out the demon and the mute man spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel" (33). However, the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons" (34). When they rejected the obvious truth about Jesus, they became liars--children of the devil (Jn 8:44).

Through today's passage we can learn who Jesus is and what Jesus wants us to do. First of all, Jesus is the Life-giver. Jesus demonstrated this by raising a dead girl to life. Usually people think that death is the end of life. This idea makes people lose hope, despair, and fall into a pleasure-seeking mentality. They try to have as much fun as they can before they die (1 Cor 15:32). They become like a cut flower in a vase, separated from the source of life. Outwardly, and for the time being, they look good. But as time goes by, they lose strength, wither, and die. However, Jesus gives us new hope, living hope. Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in him. Anyone who abides in Jesus receives life which flows from Jesus and is renewed day by day. So Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Jesus is our Life-giver! Thank you, Jesus!

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Fundamentally, Jesus is the Son of David. This is what the blind men called him. It is a messianic title. Later, in Matthew 11, John the Baptist asks Jesus if he was the one promised to come. Jesus answers, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (Mt 11:5). These acts fulfilled messianic prophecies, especially from Isaiah 35:5-6. Jesus fulfilled them all in detail through the events of chapters 8 and 9. Jesus became eyes to the blind, legs to the lame, ears to the deaf, life to the dead. In a word, Jesus becomes everything to everyone. Jesus is our Reservoir. All kinds of resources, whatever we need, can be found in Jesus.

How can we obtain these resources? Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has healed you." Jesus told the blind men, "According to your faith let it be done to you." These verses tell us that Jesus works through our faith. On the other hand, when there is no faith, Jesus does not work. When Jesus visited his hometown, he wanted to perform many miracles. But he could not, except to heal a few sick people. It was because of their lack of faith (Mk 6:6). However, when the centurion came to Jesus and said, "Just say the word and my servant will be healed," Jesus was amazed at his faith and blessed him (Mt 8:11). Jesus is willing and able to heal all kinds of people out of his compassion. But he requires us to have faith in him. Faith pleases Jesus and procures his blessing (Heb 11:6).

In light of this passage, what is faith? It is believing that Jesus is the promised Messiah who is able to do anything and that he has compassion on those in need. Faith is to trust in Jesus, rely on Jesus, and depend on Jesus. Faith empowers us to break through barriers to come to Jesus. Faith is the pipeline that connects us to Jesus, our Reservoir. If the pipeline is small, we can receive a small amount of blessing. If the pipeline is large, we can receive a great blessing. According to our faith, God blesses us. The problem is what kind of pipeline we have. If our pipeline is well-maintained by abiding in the word of God and prayer, blessings can flow like a river. But if the pipeline is blocked, the blessings stop flowing. What blocks the pipeline? It is sin. Isaiah 59:1-2 say, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." When we repent of our sins, and receive forgiveness from Jesus, the pipeline is opened and God's blessings flow into our lives once again.

Let's remember that Jesus is our Reservoir, and faith is our pipeline to Jesus. Let's have faith in Jesus in order to receive all the blessings he wants to give us. Jesus said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." Amen.