

“DON’T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE”

Luke 8:40-56

Key verse 50

“Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.’”

Two people come to Jesus by faith in this passage. They were different people, with different problems. They approached Jesus differently. Jesus helps them in different ways to come to the same conclusion: faith in Jesus. What does faith mean to you? We tend to associate faith with knowledge, since we are people of the Modern, enlightened age. Yet the faith Jesus wants has little to do with knowledge, and everything to do with trust. Jesus wants us to go from believing things about him, to trusting him personally in all areas of life. We are generally independent. Most of the time we get by on our own, and don’t want to depend or trust in anyone. But what about when debilitating health problems come? Or a family member is dying? There is one who is worthy of our trust. Jesus says: **“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”**

First, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace” (40-48). **“Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.”** (40) What a contrast the people of Galilee were with the people of the Decapolis! They were all expecting him, welcoming Jesus, talking about Jesus. One thing I’m so thankful for in our country is that we are still able to talk and worship Jesus. There are people in the world who cannot. Although culture is shifting away, I hope we maintain the spirit of welcoming Jesus, gathering in expectation of his coming, making an environment where crying out to him and coming to him isn’t weird, but totally ok. That was what was going on at that time, and one guy took advantage. **“Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.”** (41-42a)

Jairus was a man of standing in his society; people looked up to him, and he had to take care of them. The leaders of his religion were pretty negative about

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Jesus. He probably had to maintain an air of aloof reticence. But then the unthinkable happened. His only daughter got sick. I don’t have any daughters, but I know fathers who do. One friend said the birth of his daughter transformed his life, and he became a different person. We don’t know if Jairus had sons; it is unlikely. This girl was the joy of her parents, and now she was dying. This event was a terrible tragedy, but God was using it for good. Because of this event, Jairus had to make a decision. He had to come off the fence, regarding Jesus. He heard all about what Jesus had been doing. The stories gave him hope. Jesus gave him hope. So he humbled himself and fell at Jesus’ feet. He would probably have never humbled himself like this but for the sake of his daughter.

This was just the beginning step of a long journey for Jairus. Do you like Jairus? Can you relate to him? Some of us are at this point, when life takes a turn sideways. We’ve heard about Jesus from others. What will we do? Or maybe you know someone in this situation. There is plenty of room at Jesus’ feet. That is where the journey begins, and what amazing outcomes for all those who fell at the feet of the Messiah! In Luke’s gospel, Peter fell at Jesus’ knees (5:8). A leper fell before Jesus and was healed (5:12). A sinful woman poured out love on Jesus’ feet, for she was forgiven much (7:38). A demon-possessed man was completely restored, sitting at Jesus’ feet (8:35). In this passage, we find Jairus and a bleeding woman at Jesus’ feet (8:41, 47). Maybe one fellowship should be called, “At the feet of Jesus.” That fellowship will be full of transformed people! There is room at the feet of Jesus, no matter what you face. But this requires a humble decision. Jairus made this decision.

“As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.” (42b-44) Can you imagine bleeding for twelve years? Being exhausted every day, sickly and smelly? She didn’t settle. All indications were that she tried everything to resolve this issue, but no one could help her. But look at this! Squeezing through the crowd and touching Jesus’ cloak was enough! Immediately the bleeding stopped! Do you have a chronic problem? There is hope in Jesus! Some of us are dealing with sin problems

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in ourselves or others that never seem to go away. Don’t give up! Jesus is able to solve even the worst chronic problem. It may take 12 years, so we need to live by faith every day.

What a blessed woman. Who knew that miracles were available via drive up? How convenient! No, actually, Jesus wasn’t so keen about that. **“Who touched me?” Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.’ But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.’**” I have to imagine that Jesus knew exactly who touched him. But in this way Jesus made it clear that he isn’t a vending machine, to get our healing and move on. Why? I think the woman’s problem was much deeper than just a chronic bleeding issue. Luke points out that she had spent all she had on doctors (see footnote) but no one could heal her. Also, her bleeding made her unclean by the standards of old testament law. As a result, she was ostracized and abandoned. Her society, community and religion had failed her. The worst part was that she was completely cut off from any and all access to God. She was strictly forbidden from the temple. Maybe missing worship for a couple weeks might seem like a vacation, but twelve years with no word of God, no worship, no rest for her spirit? Jesus knew that the scars she suffered from were much deeper than just physical. Her hit and run style interaction with Jesus would always leave a question: What does God really think of me? Although she wasn’t bleeding anymore, her issue was unresolved, she still suffered from shame, fear and guilt. She wasn’t really clean. Jesus is not content to leave any of us like that.

“Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.” ⁴⁸ **Then he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.’**” (47-48) Again, this woman found a place of welcome and acceptance at the feet of Jesus. As she poured out her story, no longer caring what all the people thought, she began to feel clean for the first time in twelve years. She who had felt like the object of God’s wrath, was not testifying to the glorious power of God, and the beauty of Jesus, who had made her instantly well. Her trembling likely changed to joyful

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tears. Then Jesus made everything clear. **“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”** Now she knew exactly who she was, no longer defined by her condition or uncleanness. She is a Daughter of God. She is free now to live in peace. Jesus said, **“Your faith has healed you.”** People ask Pastor Ron, “How are you?” And he says, “Living by faith.” This is really the best answer, and the secret to peace. But don’t just copy his greeting; you have to really be living by faith, like Pastor Ron does.

Second, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed” (49-56). Let’s get back to Jairus. I’m not sure what he thought of while the woman was testifying. Perhaps Jesus’ love for this woman, who he called, “daughter,” filled Jairus with confidence. Maybe he was anxious to keep going. Whatever it was, suddenly his worst nightmare came true. **“While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ he said. ‘Don’t bother the teacher anymore.’”** (49) What a brutal blow. This guy is so insensitive! But there seems to be the work of Satan here, wanting to separate Jairus from Jesus. We have an enemy that is actively working to hinder our relationship with Jesus.

“Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.’” (50) This is our key verse. Let’s read it together. Jesus intervened to plant words of faith and promise in Jairus at this intense time. So what is Jesus saying to us?

Jesus says, **“Don’t be afraid”** – Jairus was afraid. Jesus helped him to realize his fear. Fear is a real problem. You can’t just ignore it. All fear is ultimately rooted in death, which is a seen fact. I mean, you don’t need faith to believe in death. Have you heard the latest statistic on death? 1 out of 1 people die. Out of the fear of death people do many things. We are selfish, keeping resources to live a little longer. We are petty, wanting to enjoy some short pleasure before we die. We are proud, wanting to be better than others and accomplish something meaningful before we die. Those are subtle effects. But there are also the more concrete fears, like anxiety, worry and doubt. But how to overcome fear? Jesus says: **“Don’t be afraid.”** It means that Jesus has a solution to our fear problem. He

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is challenging the fear of death. Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work and reveal through his own resurrection that death is not absolute. But is this knowledge enough to overcome fear? I can tell my sons there are no monsters in the closet, because there aren’t. I can tell them the light being off is just as safe as when it is on. But rational knowledge cannot combat our irrational fears, no matter how well we describe it or educate people. So Jesus didn’t try to explain. He simply says to Jairus and to us: **“just believe.”** Faith is the solution.

Jesus says, **“Just believe”** – Just believe what? Here, Jesus didn’t give Jairus some facts that he should dogmatically hold onto in order to overcome his fear. Rather, Jesus wanted Jairus to trust him. In this sense, faith is to trust Jesus. Back to my kids scared of the dark, it amazes me that by simply being in the room with them, their fear is gone. Jesus wanted Jairus’ faith to develop into such a trusting relationship with him.

In our individualistic culture, trust is a difficult concept. Generally people use relationships like kleenex, to get what they need in the moment, and then move on. So instead of friends, people have many coworkers: Just working together in a relationship only as deep as an activity. That is not the relationship Jesus wants when he says, **“Just believe.”** Such a relationship requires submission and surrender, to trust Jesus, putting our lives in his hands. Like children who may not understand many things, but trust implicitly, Jesus wants us to trust him. This is the real faith training that endures.

Consider Abraham. We call him the ancestor or father of faith. He had walked with God, and come to trust God more than his own understanding. One day God tested him by asking him to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. He did so, because he trusted God. This was the faith that God wanted from Abraham: a friend who trusted God implicitly. Abraham’s faith to trust in God no matter what pleased God. He said, **“I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you ... through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”** (Ge 22:15-18)

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This faith that simply trusts in God spills over to every area of life. When we trust God in everything, just believing, we find peace even with our enemies. This year I took Colossians 3:15 as my key verse, because I want to let the peace of Christ rule in my heart, and be an instrument of peace. He is on the throne; let the world be at peace. But I’ve found how easy it is to get distracted, looking at people or myself or my situation. Then instead of being thankful, I’m burdened and complaints come to mind. It is amazing how quickly I’m distracted from Jesus. Jesus says, “Just believe— trust me.” This is the solution. When I’m burdened by other’s sin problems, trust in Jesus. Remember how he died to forgive all my sins. Then I can bear someone else’s small weaknesses with grace.

Jesus said, **“and she will be healed.”** – This promise is unique to Luke’s gospel. Jesus gave Jairus this promise to hold on to. God’s Promise is always related to God’s will, which is why we must trust him first. George Mueller lived in the 1800’s, and is well known for his care and education of street kids and orphans. It is estimated that he cared for 120,000 students. Yet he never solicited support. Instead, he resolved to pray and ask God for his daily needs, trusting God to provide. It is said that his detailed journal records 50,000 answered prayers. Of course, people misunderstood his prayer life. He was asked one time, “What is your secret to get God to answer your prayers like that?” Perhaps he had great faith, or was more pious than others. George answered simply, “Have you prayed according to God’s will?” George described his faith as simplistic and childlike, simply trusting that if God says so, it will happen. Do you have a promise of God? Instead of trying to figure out how to get what you want, Jesus wants us to trust him. Jesus says, **“Just believe.”**

“When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother.” Up to this point, Jairus was leading Jesus. Now it seems Jesus has now taken over. Jairus is surrendered to Jesus, he is struggling to trust. I imagine that Jesus might have had to carry him some of the way to his house, as Jairus was in an intense battle of faith. By limiting those involved, Jesus prepares an environment of faithful support for Jairus and his wife at this very sensitive, delicate time. Jesus is the good shepherd.

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“Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. ‘Stop wailing,’ Jesus said. ‘She is not dead but asleep.’ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.” Here is the great limitation of knowledge, and why trusting Jesus is better. They all knew that she was dead, so they laughed at Jesus’ words. People say all kinds of things, and a wise man takes it with a grain of salt. As the Russian proverb goes: “Trust, but verify.” Yet when it comes to Jesus’ words, what we think we know gets in the way, and closes the door to true knowledge. The disciples were unique in that they had been trained by Jesus to get this point. Trust in Jesus comes before understanding. As the Bible says, **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”** (Pr 3:5-6)

Jesus said, **“She is not dead but asleep.”** Either Jesus is lying, or our understanding of death as the absolute is wrong. Verses 54-56. **“But he took her by the hand and said, ‘My child, get up!’ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.”** Jesus’ words here were not magic, or special. Parents all over Jerusalem and down through the ages have said this every morning to wake children. For example, at my home Amy leaves for work at 4:30AM, so I wake the kids up at 6:30 so they can get their ride to school. I say to them, “get up!” and eventually they get out of bed. These days, there is a race to see who is dressed first so they can lay on the radiator, which is so warm in the cold mornings. In the same way, Jesus tenderly woke this little girl from sleep. Death is not the danger or absolute that our reason calculated it to be. The parent’s astonishment is the life of faith. If our life of faith becomes nothing more than calculated reason, we are missing out on the dynamic life of faith that relationship with Jesus brings. I hope that you experience many such astonishing events as we follow Jesus. It begins when we trust his words.

Jesus wants us to believe that death is just sleep, from which we will awaken. A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out (Jn 5:28-29a). At this time we are in the season of Lent, preparing to

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celebrate Easter. There are many people who need to hear Jesus’ words, and come out from the power of death.

I don’t know where you are at in your walk with Jesus, or what faith you have. Some may be just starting your journey, finally humbling yourself at his feet. Others may have enjoyed the benefits of Christ, and are now ready to fall at his feet giving him glory through our testimony and receiving his blessing of peace. Perhaps some of us just heard that our daughter is dead, and are tempted to give up on Jesus. No matter where you are, Jesus wants you to trust him. Jesus says: **“Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”** May God help you hear this word of Jesus and trust him. May God grant us all resurrection faith this Easter time.