

**Intro.** [slide.1]

Each calendar year, we start in the gospels. We've been working through Luke's gospel and the stories of our Savior, Jesus the Messiah. These past couple weeks, we have been looking at stories in chapter eight where we have been witnessing the power and authority of Jesus. That's true for our story today, where the authority of Jesus comes face-to-face with the brokenness of this world in the form of disease and death.

We will look at the healing of two daughters and the different portraits of faith that are depicted within the story. We will see that throughout, it is Jesus who remains faithful. And we will end reflecting on our call to trust in his faithfulness even during the difficulty in our own lives. First, let's pray.

[slide.2.blank]

**Prologue: Some brief film history.**

The year is 1903. There is a man in his mid-thirties named Edwin Stanton Porter. He has an entrepreneurial and creative spirit leading him to tinker with this new technology of moving pictures. So, he makes a movie called *The Life of an American Fireman*, and it is different than the other movies of its day. First, it's a whopping seven minutes in length, whereas the typical running length at that time was only a minute. It also has a narrative arc with different scenes showing the story's progression. [slide.3] The most notable sequence comes toward the end when the firemen arrive at a two-story house engulfed in flames.<sup>1</sup> [slide.4] The film then cuts to a room inside the second story of the house, where a fireman rescues a mother. [slide.5] The scene then cuts back to an exterior shot of the mother, safely on the ground, who points back up to the room. [slide.6] Next, the camera cuts to a scene back inside the house showing the rescue of a child, before finally ending with one last exterior shot where the rescued child rejoins her mother. [slide.7]

You may think, No big deal. But back in 1903, this was a *huge* deal. This sequence was one of the foremost examples of continuity editing, where

scenes switch back and forth. But instead of adding confusion, it enhanced the story. The language of film was evolving as action and scenes could say, “And then *this* happened... and then, Oh! Watch *this*!” simply by the way directors used the camera. [slide.8.blank]

While this was exciting for early cinema, this wasn't new for storytelling. Nearly two thousand years before *The Life of an American Fireman*, the gospel writers did the same thing with our story of Jairus' sick daughter, and the anemic woman. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, *always cut* these two scenes together. They create a juxtaposition of two daughters in crisis and so shine a spotlight on the Great Healer in the center of the action. So, just as we might for a well-crafted movie, let's walk through this story scene-by-scene.

### **Opening Scene: The crowd welcomed him.**

Let's set up the opening shot. Jesus is just coming back from across the large lake, where, prior to this story, he had cast out a demon, which caused a ruckus throughout the town. The people in the Gentile territory of Gerasenes freaked out and promptly asked Jesus to leave.

Here on his return, we see quite the contrast. [slide.9] There's a large crowd, and they are all eagerly anticipating Jesus. Maybe the most eager of all is a man, named Jairus. All we know about him is from this story in the gospels. As ruler of the local synagogue, he would have been responsible for the worship, education, and chief administration of the building—which was central to the city. He is a significant community figure, which makes his actions that much more shocking. This prominent man falls at Jesus' feet, begging Jesus to come with him. Jairus is desperately grasping for help, and we find out why. His only 12-year-old daughter is deathly ill.

Put yourself in his shoes. Parent or no parent, when it comes to matters of health and safety, things like your social reputation or the size of your 401(k) are inconsequential. Jairus' faith is driven by helplessness. All he thinks to do is fall at the feet of Jesus. We don't read how Jesus responds; he simply goes. And the crowd follows. I'm sure a mixture of expectations

and emotions were swirling among them. But just as the camera starts to follow, we cut to the next scene.

### **Cut Scene: And there was a woman.**

[slide.10] We zoom in to an individual woman. Like Jairus, all that we know of this woman is contained in this gospel story. We don't even know her name. We *do* know that for about as long as Jairus had been a father, this woman had been battling for her health. For twelve years, she has suffered a chronic condition where she could not stop bleeding. She was physically drained. She was also financially drained. Luke, as a physician himself, recognizes there is only so much the practice of medicine can do. He writes that after spending all her money and time, the prognosis remained the same. She could not be healed.

Due to this woman's specific context and culture, we also know that she suffered emotionally, socially, and spiritually. According to the Torah—God's laws in the Old Testament—a person who has a discharge of blood is considered ritually “unclean” or “impure.”<sup>2</sup> This was true not only for the person, but every human or object that person touched or made contact with. Therefore, this woman was cut off from society and not welcomed to participate in the community life or the worship at Jairus' synagogue. She was poor, lonely, and insignificant. On the surface, she couldn't be more different than Jairus. But she shared one thing in common. She was *also* desperate.<sup>3</sup>

[slide.11] Desperate times call for desperate measures, and so this woman risks her energy, health, and honor by working her way into the thick of the crowd so that she might touch the fringe of Jesus' garment.<sup>4</sup> And it paid off! Something immediately happens. The woman feels a noticeable change. So does Jesus, and he stops the hurried mob. Everyone must be wondering what's happening. What is so important to pause a caravan bound for a miracle?

Then an almost laughable question comes from Jesus, “Who was it that touched me?” The disciple Peter, never short of an answer, pipes up. “Master, the crowds are pressing in on you.” You can almost hear the incredulousness in Peter's voice. “Are you kidding me? Do you see this cattle-stampede we're in? Who *hasn't* touched you!”

Jesus isn't satisfied with Peter's response. Something important occurred and he wants to give attention to it. [slide.12] The woman now realizes she's been caught and is terrified of what might happen. She had intended to slip by unnoticed. Now she cannot hide, so she admits to the crowd and to Jesus her story and how she was desperate for help, but also how she had been healed.

Jesus' response is sweet, brief, and powerful. He calls the woman "Daughter." [slide.13] While the woman expected rebuke, Jesus tenderly uses a term of endearment. Jesus also makes sure the woman knows it was her *faith* that made her well. [slide.14] Some use this point as a matter to commend the woman's great faith, since she risked everything just to touch Jesus. But Luke portrays this woman as having a small faith. She is secretive and full of doubt. Jesus makes clear that it is the woman's faith that has made her well *not* because it was perfect, but because it was imperfect. He wanted her to understand, that it wasn't her superstition or a religious act that held any power, but rather the trust that was found *within* the act. Jesus takes what little faith she has to offer and makes it stronger. He sends her off in a sweet benediction. She can now go forth in restored peace. [slide.15.blank]

### **Next Scene: Someone from the ruler's house came.**

The scene snaps back to the original crowd and to Jairus. He has been swallowed up by the sea of people. The camera had forgotten him. But Jesus hasn't forgotten Jairus.

[slide.16] It's at this moment that someone from Jairus' house shares news that his daughter is dead. It's a parent's worst fear. He wasn't even there by his daughter's side. It seems there is no longer any need to bother Jesus. Nothing more can be done. All is lost.

But Jesus answers before Jairus can respond. [slide.17] Looking at the father, Jesus speaks directly to Jairus' doubts and says, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."<sup>5</sup> He is calling on Jairus not to trust in the present circumstances, or how *he* envisioned things would go. Rather, the call is to *keep* trusting Jesus.

Surely, Jairus didn't have much faith left from the day's events. Can you imagine how bewildering it must have been? After patiently waiting for Jesus to return, bowing down in public humiliation, and then getting a large crowd mobilized toward the urgency of his daughter, Jairus is halted for a woman's decade-long health concern! In the Emergency Room, you attend to the person with the highest risk first, before moving to lower-risk individuals.<sup>6</sup> Yet Jesus reverses the hierarchy of the day and asks a religious elite male of privilege to wait for a sneaky suspicious woman.

Ultimately, we don't know if Jairus gave into his doubts or anger and resisted, or if he simply relented—too tired to do otherwise. All we know is the scene jumps to where they are standing at his home. [slide.18] A large gathering has followed Jesus for this very moment. But then something subtle yet astounding happens. Jesus honors the preciousness of this moment by forbidding anyone to enter, except a couple of his closest disciples, and the parents. I like how one commentator said, "There is a sacredness in great grief which demands protection from the rude gaze of mere curiosity."<sup>7</sup> Jesus refuses to turn sorrow into a spectacle.

[slide.19] Jesus calmly dismisses the mourners around him. He makes an audacious claim that this young lady is only sleeping. Then, gently taking her hand, the voice that calmed the raging storm utters the impossible, as Jesus reverses death itself as if it were only a good night's rest. Here's how Tim Keller put it, [slide.20] "Jesus is facing the most implacable, inexorable enemy of the human race and such is his power that he holds this child by the hand and gently lifts her right up through it. 'Honey, get up.'"<sup>8</sup>

And just like the other daughter was instantly healed, [slide.21] this young daughter immediately wakes up as if it were only a dream. The people in the room were beside themselves.<sup>9</sup> Next thing we know, Jesus recommends brunch as this young lady's next course of action and tells those in the room that no one has to know what happened. Then the story ends. Cut to black. [slide.22.blank] Roll credits.

### **Post-Credit Scene: "Do not fear; only believe."**

What a peculiar and amazing set of events. On the way to see one daughter, another daughter unexpectedly shows up. Both are in deep need. And both are forever changed due to their encounters with Jesus.

This passage shows us, without a doubt, that Jesus is the Messiah who has come to seek and save the lost, and who has authority over all things. Jesus should have been doubly unclean in the healing of these two daughters—one for coming in contact with blood, and the other with a corpse—but instead *he* overcame disease and even death. Luke wants us to see *this* is the Lord in whom we place our trust.

I have a sense of what a few of you are going through but for the vast majority of you, I really have no idea. I am certain that in a group this size there are, trials, suffering, sorrow, and grief. So I want to conclude with two affirmations from this passage that you can hold on to, no matter what it is you are going through today or in the days to come.

First, it's important to remember that we trust in a Lord whose timing demands our faith. [slide.23] Both Jairus and the bleeding woman had ideas about how things were supposed to go. The woman waited year after year for her conditions to improve. She spent all her resources—her time, her money, her hope—on solutions that only left her worse off. Maybe, you also feel like you have tried everything and are without much hope. Or maybe, like Jairus, you feel lost in the shuffle and hecticness of life. If God is there, he must be delaying. You may feel like David's words in Psalm 40 are *your* words, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!" If that is you, take heart. As with the bleeding woman, Jesus sees you. As with Jairus, he hasn't forgotten you.

I'm reminded of our church's Stephen Ministry. [slide.24] This is a group of trained volunteers who gently walk alongside those going through deep loss. Our Stephen Ministers consistently show up and offer comfort and hope by anchoring the person suffering toward the steadfast love and promises of Jesus. They encourage faith.

Pastor Lou talked about the biblical definition of faith last month. He observed that there's a common belief that faith is transactional, beginning with the one who possesses it. But biblical faith is focused on the object a person puts faith *in*, [slide.25] "You look at scripture and you see something that looks more like trust. Honestly, the weakest faith in Jesus carries more power than the strongest faith in anything else."<sup>10</sup>

Faith isn't about superstition, or religion. It's not even the absence of doubt. It's trusting Jesus. That he is kind and good. That God has you where he wants you. And that despair is meant to lead to the realization that we are poor in spirit and utterly dependent on Christ alone.

Harriet Tubman, the Moses of the American Abolitionist movement, recognized this. [slide.26] She said, "It wasn't me, it was the Lord! I always told Him, I trust you. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I expect you to lead me. And He always did."<sup>11</sup>

The delays and hardships of life tend to expose a self-righteousness in us, where we feel like we know better than the Lord of the universe. God's word reminds us that his thoughts aren't like ours. Nor are his ways like our ways.<sup>12</sup> The Lord is calling you to trust beyond what you can see in the camera frame. That just off-scene, he is working all things for your good.

And this brings me to the second and last assurance. [slide.27] Sister and Brother, you can be certain the trust we place is in a Savior whose love goes beyond what we dare imagine.

The daughter who suffered from chronic bleeding was hoping, at best, for a hidden drive-by healing. What she also received was recognition, communal restoration, and an encouraged heart. Likewise, Jairus was seeking a cure for a virus, and instead he got a resurrection!

In his sermon on faith, Lou used a metaphor that we are like we're a room that thinks it needs painting, but in fact needs a complete renovation. C.S. Lewis said something similar in his book, *Mere Christianity*. [slide.28] "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? [slide.29] The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."<sup>13</sup>

[slide.30] Jesus demands more than we are willing to pay, and so he pays it himself. And in return, he gives far more than we're willing to imagine. At the end of his life, Jesus was pressed in by another crowd. This time, it was an angry mob yelling for him to be crucified. He was made to bleed, and his bleeding did not stop. Jesus suffered and became weak and died, not in a room with loved ones, but alone on a cross and placed in a cold empty tomb. Jesus knows, better than any of us, that God's timing requires faith, and that the end of the scene is not the end of the movie.

It took Christ's sacrifice to redeem creation. *This* is the cost of the gift of your salvation. The same Spirit of Jesus that broke through death in Jairus' house also conquered death once and for all three days after his crucifixion when Christ rose again to new life. Jesus likened himself to a great shepherd, and said of those who trust him, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

This is the Savior—the one that has conquered death itself—who gently meets us in the moment of our greatest despair and says, "Daughter, Son, your faith has made you well. Do not fear; only believe."

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Primary source for this bit of film history comes from the following: Cousins, Mark. *The Story of Film*. Pavilion Books, 2004, pages 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> See Leviticus 15

<sup>3</sup> It's likely that this woman tried everything from prescriptions, home remedies, holistic alternative methods, and superstitious treatments. Reportedly, the Talmud provides 11 different cures related to bleeding. Some were medical, and others superstitious—such as carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag, or carrying barley corn found in the dung of a white female donkey. Considering her culture & desperation, we can assume this woman tried it all. See: Lake Sunapee United Methodist Church. "Worth the Risk: The Woman with the Bleeding." *Lake Sunapee United Methodist Church*, 2 Aug. 2020, [lakesunapeeumc.org/sermons/worth-the-risk-the-woman-with-the-bleeding](https://lakesunapeeumc.org/sermons/worth-the-risk-the-woman-with-the-bleeding)

<sup>4</sup> According to Hebrew tradition, the tassels on the corners of the garment (called *tzitzitot*) were of spiritual significance, in accordance with Numbers 15:37-41.

<sup>5</sup> Greek word is σωθήσεται. The original meaning for the word translated here as "be well" means literally to be "saved, restored, or made whole."

<sup>6</sup> I thought it impactful, when Tim Keller,, in a sermon, calls what Jesus does "malpractice"! Keller, Timothy. "The Timing of Jesus." *King's Cross: The Gospel of Mark, Part 1: The Coming of the King*, Gospel in Life, 9 Apr. 2006, [gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-timing-of-jesus](https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-timing-of-jesus).

<sup>7</sup> Lang, J. Marshall. *The Pulpit Commentary*. Edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, vol. 16: Mark & Luke, Hendrickson Publishers, p. 217.

<sup>8</sup> Keller, Tim. "Keller on Why Jesus Said the Little Girl Was Sleeping Instead of Dead." The Gospel Coalition, 8 Feb. 2011, [thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/keller-on-why-jesus-said-the-little-girl-was-sleeping-instead-of-dead/](https://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/keller-on-why-jesus-said-the-little-girl-was-sleeping-instead-of-dead/).

<sup>9</sup> The Greek word used here (ἐξέστησαν) means "astonished" or "amazed." More literally, it means to be "thrown out of position." It's used by Luke in Acts to capture the crowd's reaction after the pouring out of the Spirit in Pentecost (Acts 2:6), or how the household reacted when they finally let Peter inside after knocking at their door after his miraculous prison escape (Acts 12:16).

<sup>10</sup> Kaloger, Lou. "What is Great Faith | Luke 7:1-10." *The Gospel of Luke: Stories of Our Savior*, Tampa Covenant Church, 23 Feb. 2025, [tampacovenant.org/2025/02/23/what-is-great-faith-luke-7-1-10/](https://tampacovenant.org/2025/02/23/what-is-great-faith-luke-7-1-10/).

<sup>11</sup> Robert C Plumb, *The Better Angels; Five Women Who Changed Civil War America*, (Potomac Books, Inc., 2020), p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. HarperOne, 2001.