

Communion Service

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[0 : 00] In this chapter of Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, we have, one after the other, four great miracles performed by Jesus Christ. And they demonstrate Jesus' authority over, first of all, the great forces of nature, in that He calms a wild storm on the Lake of Galilee.

And then the second demonstrates His power and authority over the forces of evil, over evil spirits, in the rescue of a man who is demon-possessed and demon-oppressed.

And then the third thing, which we've read about, is Jesus' authority over illness and uncleanness, and then also His authority and power even over death.

And I want to look at these last two, Jesus' authority over illness and uncleanness and over death in this sort of intertwined narrative.

So Jesus just arrives back on the shore, the Capernaum side of the Lake of Galilee, and there's a big crowd there to welcome Him. And in the crowd is this man, Jairus, who is an important person in the community.

[1 : 18] He's a synagogue leader, but he's desperate. His 12-year-old daughter is about to die. And he goes to Jesus and he pleads with Him, please come with me and heal her.

So Jesus goes along with him. And as Jesus is going along the road, there's a crowd pressing around Him. It's just really sort of packed, this packed crowd all around Him, following Him along the road.

And in the crowd is this woman who has suffered constant menstrual bleeding for 12 years. Now this condition would have caused her physical weakness and discomfort, but also in that society, it would have cut her off from society, it would have excluded her.

Because in the Old Testament law, in the book of Leviticus, a woman with this condition is unclean. She's constantly unclean.

And anything that she touched was made unclean. Any person that she touched became unclean, according to the law, the sort of ritual purity laws given to the Israelites in the Old Testament.

[2 : 30] So that meant that, well, her uncleanness was contagious. That meant that she couldn't mix with other people, with society. So she was cut off.

She was excluded from society. And she's also desperate. She's been to every doctor and healer in the area.

And no one has been able to help her, to heal her. And she's heard about Jesus. She's heard about the great miracles and healings that He performs.

And so she decides to go and touch, just simply touch His clothes in order to be healed. And she wants no one to notice her. She's ashamed, embarrassed of her condition.

And also, it's very difficult for her even to go into a crowd like that, and in an obvious way. Also, at that moment, Jesus is dealing with the request of an important person in that community, the synagogue ruler, Jairus.

[3 : 37] How could she and nobody make a claim on Jesus' time and attention? And then, I'm sure she's also thinking, well, a religious teacher like Jesus isn't going to want to have contact with an unclean person like me.

So she thinks, well, if I just sneak through the crowd and touch His clothes, that's all I need, and I'll be healed. So she wants to get the healing with no fuss, with no one knowing.

So she goes and gets to Jesus, touches His cloak, and immediately she knows that she's healed.

Now, according to the law in the Old Testament, whatever an unclean person touched, that became unclean, or any body that they touched, that became unclean.

Uncleanness, impurity was contagious. So normally, in this situation, the uncleanness would flow from the woman to Jesus.

But instead of that, instead of the uncleanness flowing from the woman to Jesus, contact with Jesus makes the woman clean. It's as if there's this contagious purity and holiness coming from Jesus going to the woman.

[4 : 56] And it points to the fact that Jesus is so pure, so holy, that His touch makes the unclean clean. But then we read that Jesus turns to the crowd and asks, who touched me?

Peter objects. He said, look, there's all these people pressing around you. How can you ask who's touched me? Everybody's touching you. But Jesus knows what has happened. He knows that power has gone out from Him.

And that in itself is interesting because it suggests that there's a cost to Jesus in this healing. But it wasn't just a sort of a something that happened with no effect on Him, no effort from Him.

No, power had gone out from Him. And that is in keeping with the whole mission of Jesus. Jesus came to serve, and His serving was costly.

We see that all through His life, all through the Gospels, the account of Jesus giving Himself for others, being tired, being exhausted by the demands that the crowds made on Him, and yet willingly giving Himself, healing people, teaching people.

[6 : 00] And this healing here, this healing comes to this woman, but there is a cost to Jesus. He feels the power going from Him. And of course, Jesus ultimately came to give His life for others.

He came to give the ultimate service, the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of others, which was to lay down His life, which is what we're remembering here this morning in the communion service.

So Jesus says, someone has touched me. I know that power has gone out of me. And then in verse 47, when the woman saw that she could not go and noticed, she came trembling at Jesus' feet.

And she's no doubt terrified, because by pushing through the crowd, that means she's made everybody that she's sort of pushed past also unclean. And she's touched Jesus and made Him unclean, so she thinks.

And she probably thinks, I'm really for it now. I'm really in trouble now, now that I've been exposed. But she owns up. She doesn't keep quiet. She owns up. And before all the people there, she told why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly healed.

[7 : 07] And in so doing, she gives honor and praise to Jesus for doing that. And Jesus speaks to her words of kindness and reassurance and comfort and acceptance.

He says to her, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. Now, we may wonder, why does Jesus expose this woman before all those people, all that crowd?

Well, I think there's at least a couple of reasons. One is that He exposes her for her own benefit.

She wanted no one to know about her. She'd been excluded for 12 years from society.

And she no doubt felt deeply that exclusion within herself. She felt that she was a nobody, that she was not important. But to Jesus, she is important.

And He wants her to know that. He wants to meet her personally. And He addresses her as daughter. A word of, it's a family word. A word of kindness.

[8 : 11] A word of gentleness. A word of honor. A word of love. Maybe you feel that you're not important. Maybe you feel excluded.

For whatever reason, it might be, could be all kinds of reasons. But you feel excluded. Maybe you're excluded from society. Maybe if you're young, you feel excluded in school. You feel excluded from the in crowd, from where it's all happening.

You feel you're not part of that. You feel you're on the margins and you're excluded from society.

Maybe even in the church, people can feel that. And you feel that you're not important. What we learn from this is that you matter to Jesus Christ.

You are important to Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what other people think of you. It doesn't matter how you feel in yourself. To Jesus Christ, you matter. You are significant. You are important.

But I think a second reason that Jesus exposes this woman before the whole, the crowd, is that He wants her to know that it's through her faith in Him that she was healed, that she was saved.

[9 : 20] Some people today think, if only I could touch some relic of Jesus, perhaps the Holy Grail or some wood from the cross, then I'll get blessing and salvation or healing from that.

But it's not touching some relic, some garment or some physical object associated with Jesus that brings us blessing. But it's faith in Him.

And Jesus wants this woman to know that. And yet, we see that Jesus accepts this muddled faith.

He's not harsh and critical about it, but gently tells her that it's by her faith in Him that she is healed.

Now, maybe some of us would be so concerned for doctrinal correctness that we would dismiss a woman like this and say, no, she's got it completely wrong, she's just wanting to touch the garment. That's the wrong way of going about this. Now, of course, sound doctrine, truth is important. It's very important. And Jesus does gently correct her sort of muddled understanding and faith.

[10:27] And yet, Jesus accepts her faith, muddled though it is. He accepts that, yeah, she might not have all the things sorted out in her head.

But even in the muddle, there's a seed of faith in Jesus. So she goes to Jesus. And we too need to have a kind of a gracious outlook for people who perhaps do have a muddled faith, whose faith is muddled with all kinds of other ideas.

But in that muddle, there is that seed of faith in Jesus. And today, just as much as then, it is faith in Jesus Christ that brings blessing and salvation to us.

A couple of years ago, our family was getting a 7 a.m. train from Glasgow to London. And we had to get a taxi to the railway station. And we were a wee bit late leaving the house.

But we still had enough time to get to the station to get the train, though we were a wee bit worried. And then just near the station, we got stuck in traffic. And we waited and waited.

[11:37] And the seconds and the minutes were ticking by. And 7 a.m. came. And we thought, well, our only hope now is if the train is late, if it's delayed in leaving. Then the traffic cleared.

We got to the station. We jumped out of the car, legged it onto the platform, just in time to see the train pulling out. We were too late. We'd missed it. Now, something like this happened to Jairus, the synagogue leader.

Except that it was something far, far more serious than missing a train. His 12-year-old daughter was about to die. And he'd gone to Jesus and pleaded with him to come and heal her.

And Jesus had set off with him back to the house. And every minute, every second counted because she was dying. So time was of the essence. And then there's this terrible, excruciating delay.

This woman with this bleeding problem comes to Jesus to be healed with her. And Jesus takes ages in speaking to her and dealing with her. And all the time, time is ticking by.

[12:42] And, you know, is there going to be enough time to get to his daughter in time? And Jairus is no doubt panicking. His daughter's dying. Every second counts. Surely Jesus could deal with this woman later.

Her situation, okay, it's serious, but it's not an emergency. It could be dealt with tomorrow. Maybe, we're not sure, but maybe even he was tempted to think, you know, I'm an important person in this community.

Who's this woman? She's a nobody. But then his panic turns to despair when a messenger arrives from the house with the news that his daughter has died.

And he tells Jairus, don't bother Jesus anymore. Don't bother the teacher anymore. It's too late now. She's dead. In fact, the messenger from the house is very abrupt in breaking the news to Jairus.

In any culture, you'd probably be a bit more sort of gentle in breaking bad news than that. And especially in this culture, the culture of Jesus, you would sort of be far more gentle and less abrupt than this in breaking such bad news.

[13:46] And that perhaps suggests that this messenger, and maybe others with him, didn't approve of Jairus going to Jesus. And the messenger no doubt thinks, well, okay, maybe Jesus could heal people, but there's nothing he can do now.

It's too late because the girl's dead. But he was making a big mistake because he was underestimating Jesus Christ. And Jesus hears all this, and he turns to Jairus and he says to him, don't be afraid, just believe, and she will be saved.

Now, if Jesus can say that in a situation of death, when someone has died, then no situation is too difficult for him.

I don't know what situation you're in this morning. Maybe you're experiencing trouble in your life, maybe even crisis or disaster in your life.

Maybe you're ill. Maybe you have trouble in your family, turmoil in your family. Maybe you're worried about money and your financial situation.

[14:55] Or you're worried about your reputation, maybe at work or wherever it is. Or maybe you feel guilt and shame over something that you've done, and you feel kind of polluted by that.

Or maybe you're afraid. Maybe you're afraid of death. And what lies beyond death. And Jesus' words to you in that situation are exactly the same as to Jairus here.

His words to you are, don't be afraid. Just believe. Believe in me. Believe in my power, in my authority. Trust me. Put your confidence in me. And he may not answer your prayer in exactly the way you expect or that you would choose.

But if you trust him, he will work out everything. Even the current crisis you may be in, he will work it all out for your ultimate good if you trust in him.

Well, they arrive at Jairus' house, and Jesus sends everyone out. And he just takes the girl's parents and three of his disciples with him. And it's really quite a contrast to the way he sort of publicly exposed the woman who was healed before the whole crowd.

[16:11] Now he's shutting the crowd out. And that's because it's a different situation here. It's for the girl's benefit. He wants her to wake up not to a room full of excited people.

He wants her to wake up to peace and calm. And so he takes hold of her hand and he says to her, Child, get up.

Now, again, according to the law, the Old Testament law given to the Israelites, contact with a corpse, a dead body, made a person unclean. So normally, Jesus takes the hand of a corpse. He becomes unclean through that. But that doesn't happen. Instead, life flows from Jesus to the dead girl, and her spirit returns to her, and immediately she gets up.

And Jairus and his wife receive their daughter back from the dead. And then we're told that Jesus tells them, give her something to eat. And he also orders the parents, don't tell anyone what has happened.

[17:14] And, again, this is Jesus taking care of the details. We see the compassion of Jesus for the girl and her parents. Of course, the fact that a girl who was dead is now alive again, that can't be hidden.

People will know about that. But Jesus is aiming to make it as easy as possible for the girl, so that there's not a sort of sensational thing going around the community about this.

He wants that to be kept sort of under wraps. And we see the compassion of Jesus here even in the details of this. But in these two cases, these two instances, the woman and Jairus' daughter, we see the authority and power that Jesus has over illness, over uncleanness, and even over death.

Now, according to the Bible, our sins make us unclean. Our sins pollute us.

We don't have the same ritual laws as the Israelites did in the Old Testament. But, nonetheless, we sin. We break God's commands.

[18:23] And that sin has the effect of polluting our lives. And also, our sins result in death. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death.

Our uncleanness means that we are not fit to come into the presence of God, who is pure and holy. And death, both physical and spiritual death, is the just punishment for our sins.

But here we see Jesus dealing with both of these things, uncleanness and death. He takes them away. And He can do that for us today if we come to Him in faith.

And the reason He can do that, why it is possible for Him to do that, is ultimately because He Himself died for our sins. And that is what we are remembering today, as we will eat the bread, symbolizing His broken body, and drink the wine, symbolizing His shed blood.

His blood, shed on the cross, purifies us from our sins. And He died in our place. He died for our sins. His broken body was for us.

[19:39] His shed blood was for us, for our sins. And so if we trust in Him, we can know that we are made clean by Him. And we are saved from death.

Of course, we will die. But that is not the end. There is resurrection to eternal life for all who are in Christ, all who trust in Him. So Jesus died for our sins.

And God vindicated Him. God demonstrated His approval of Jesus and His sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. And that is what we will celebrate and commemorate in a few minutes.

We're going to sing our next psalm just in a minute. And please remain seated for the psalm.

And after the singing, we're going to have the Lord's Supper. And while we sing, though, if you're kind of further back, I'd invite you to come forward to the front pews and these sort of side pews facing the pulpit if you'd like to take communion.

[20:54] And you're invited to take communion if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord, your King, your Savior, then you're invited.

Come and take the communion. So if you would do that while we sing this next psalm, if you're sort of further back, come forward towards the communion table.

And the psalm that we're going to sing is the same psalm we sung earlier, Psalm 57, verses 6 to 11. On page 74 of the psalm book.

My soul was overwhelmed. They spread a net for me. But they themselves fell in the pit, which they dug secretly. So the verses 6 to 11.

And the tune is Carlisle.