

Matthew 9:18-34

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[0:00] While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, 'My daughter has just died, but come and put your hand on her and she will live.' Jesus got up and went with him and so did his disciples.

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, 'If only I touch his cloak, I will be healed.' Jesus turned and saw her.

'Take heart, daughter,' he said. 'Your faith has healed you. And the woman was healed at that moment. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and the people playing pipes, he said, 'Go away. The girl is not dead, but asleep.

But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand and she got up. News of this spread through all that region. As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, son of David.'

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' Yes, Lord, they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith, let it be done to you.'

[1:10] And their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, 'See that no one knows about this. But they went out and spread the good news about him all over that region. While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.

And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd were amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, 'It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.'

Good morning, everyone. Lovely to see you all again, especially in another week of sun. We'll see how long this lasts. Why don't I pray again before we start the sermon this morning?

Jesus, we thank you that you are so unexpectedly kind. As the powerful king of all nations, we would expect you to come to us with victorious judgment.

Yet instead, we find that you are a humble savior who cares for sufferers. And so, Holy Spirit, I ask that you would highlight the truth of your word for us this morning.

[2:19] And I also pray, Lord, that you would help me as I preach, that I would have an attitude of love and trust in what you alone can do. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Well, I hope to make two points this morning. And these are not necessarily tied to particular verses. They are just two points that I think the whole passage is trying to make.

So, firstly, good news, the law-fulfilling king reverses curses and brings blessing.

And secondly, have faith in King Jesus, for he is the source of all blessing and peace. You could say that the first point is explanation.

And the second, exhortation. I will start by explaining what I think God is trying to communicate in this passage. And I will finish by exhorting us to respond with faith in this great King Jesus.

[3:31] So, firstly, good news, the law-fulfilling king reverses curses and brings blessing. In the Bible, there is definitely some connection between sin and its consequences.

Whether direct in the moment consequences or indirectly more of a consequence of the original sin of Adam and Eve at the fall. Not always, but often we experience bad things because of sin.

Whether that be our own sin or the sins of others around us. In Deuteronomy chapter 28, a list of curses for disobedience is made alongside a list of blessings for obedience.

In Genesis 3, the ultimate curse for the man and the woman is that they will die. As dust, they will return to the ground. And this curse of death and all the things which lead to death have hung over all of creation since its very beginning, haven't they?

This curse is a result, a consequence of the original sin of our first parents. Yet, though, isn't it? These curses caused by the fall that we see being reversed by Jesus in this passage.

[4:54] It's these curses caused by the fall that we see being reversed by Jesus in this passage. A little girl is raised to life. Another woman with quite severe menstrual hemorrhaging is healed from her disease.

Two blind men receive their sight. Another demon-possessed deaf-mute man begins to speak. A lot of things going on that Jesus is doing to reverse the effect of death and everything leading to that in this passage.

So in verse 18, the synagogue leader, named in the other gospels as Jairus, rushes towards Jesus at the very moment where Jesus is talking about pouring new wine into old wineskins.

A synagogue ruler, likely very familiar with the old wineskin ways of law and sacrifices, is now confronted with a very personal challenge in his own life.

The curse of death that hangs over all people on the earth has now reached his own daughter. In a moment of very understandable shock and fear, Jairus doesn't really know what to do.

[6:05] He knows that his Jewish sacrifices aren't really going to do anything about his daughter's state. So he needs a solution and he needs one soon.

He knows that this miracle-working Jesus is currently residing in Capernaum. And so he goes and meets him. Now, not that it seems fair to do this, but if we were to measure Jairus' faith against that of the Gentile centurion in chapter 8, who we heard of a few weeks ago, we would probably say that the centurion has a lot more faith, doesn't he?

Because earlier the centurion, I mean, he didn't ask Jesus to go anywhere. He just asked Jesus to say the word and his servant will be healed. But here we see a man who believes Jesus can do something about this, but he needs to come and put his hand on her.

Isn't it encouraging then that we don't need to have a fully formed, doubt-free faith all of the time?

Because Jesus and his disciples went with this man immediately.

They wanted the help. Sometimes in those moments where faith is weak and we feel desperate, Jesus shows us just how strong indeed he is. Jairus is pouring new wine into new wineskins.

[7:27] He's letting go of his reputation as a powerful synagogue ruler and entrusting his power to the great high priest Jesus Christ. Verse 18 talks about how he knelt before him.

It's a demonstration of reverence and honor. He comes in desperation, not speculation. Jesus welcomes people who are desperate and have run out of options.

Jesus will not immediately fix all of our problems and worries, but he does know them. He understands them. And he comforts us in them.

Even if you know that Jesus cannot change your health issues or relational circumstances right now, isn't it still very helpful for us to bring them to him?

Inviting his presence into those situations. Now let's jump down to verse 23. I wonder, have you ever been at a busy week?

[8:32] We can feel the drama of the scene at the house. It feels like we're there, doesn't it? We can hear the clamor of the crowd busying the house, the peeling pipes leading people in dirges.

It's a commotion of distressed lamenting. People are sad and shocked, but they don't really know how to react. They don't know what to say to the synagogue leader's family.

Of course, nobody really wants to be mourning this child, but they want to pay their respectful condolences to this leader's family. Now, considering that context, we can catch the craziness of Jesus' claim in verse 24, can't we?

Go away. The girl is not dead, but asleep. Quite a laughable claim indeed at a busy week, isn't it? And perhaps quite anger-inducing for some people there. What on earth are you talking about? What a disrespectful thing to say in these circumstances. The girl's dead. Don't start making up stories that she's asleep.

[9:37] But when everyone is put out and the bedroom is quiet, Jesus takes her hand and the other gospels say that he speaks and he says, little girl, I say to you, get up.

And the girl rises. The little girl who was dead is now alive. And this is the first resurrection that we have seen in Jesus' ministry. A young girl who passed away before anyone expected was then raised to life again.

Now, do you know that Jesus cares, therefore, for the little children? You know, Jesus knows all the little children, even those who were lost before they left the womb.

Because when Jesus was physically present on earth, he responded to the request of a distressed father. And folks, he hasn't changed. He may not work any miracles in our circumstances, but he is present.

He is there. Invite him in to help you process. Invite him in as you mourn. Speak your lament and your confusions to him. Jairus is marked by desperation, not speculation.

[10:53] And that is indeed a sign not of lack of faith, but actually the doorway to real faith. When we are able to welcome Jesus into the most complicated circumstances that we end up in, that is a sign of real faith.

Jesus brings resurrection life to people in eternity. Anyone who has chosen to save, whether they were old enough to understand that or not, he will bring them to a new life. He will reverse the curse.

The covering that hangs over all the world, which is death, will soon be swallowed up. Now, in the midst of this hurry to visit a very important man's young daughter, another character interrupts the scene.

In verse 20, Just then, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. He said to herself, She said to herself, If only I touch his cloak, I will be healed.

This woman is unnamed in all of the gospels that she is mentioned in, and she is quite the sufferer. She has had menstrual hemorrhaging for 12 years.

[12:05] This is as long as Jairus' daughter has been living. And if the physical symptoms and side effects of that are not bad enough, there was an additional burden upon such a woman according to Jewish law.

Leviticus chapter 15 outlines the Israelite regulations of bodily discharges for both men and women. And this sermon is not a sermon on Leviticus 15.

I know that this may raise many questions, but it is outlined in that chapter that a woman who had been bleeding such as this would be considered ritually unclean for as long as that continued, as is anything she lies on or sits on during that time.

Anyone else who sat somewhere where she had sat would become ritually unclean. All that's to say, because of the uncleanness associated with her disease, this basically means that this woman must stay on her own.

Probably indoors, away from other people, and certainly nowhere near a synagogue. So this woman is having a very, very hard time.

[13:10] And after 12 years of this, I'm sure people probably knew who she is and why she is someone that they stay away from. And so for her to go out and reach out and touch Jesus is evidence indeed of a bold faith, isn't it?

And it's significant that she touches the edge of his cloak. This is probably the tassel of his cloak. We assume that most Jewish people at this time would have worn tasseled cloaks.

In Numbers 15, the Lord says that the Israelites are to wear tassels on the edge of their garments to remember all the commands of the Lord. So I guess you could call a tasseled cloak, like a sort of Jewish WWJD wristband sort of thing.

Now, the woman herself may not have been aware of such symbolism, but I think what God is showing us is that Jesus is the one who can heal the woman from this great physical suffering and this ceremonial impurity only because he has fulfilled the law.

Jesus can reverse the eternal curse and bring eternal blessing only because he has fulfilled the law. It is in the law that we find this rule, Leviticus 15, about not being able to go and sit anywhere or lie anywhere if you have this disease.

[14:30] And here is Jesus who came to fulfill the law and the prophets who is here to undo that. The touch on the edge of his cloak, this tassel represents the law.

The tassel's purpose was that people, it was a visible reminder of all the commands of the Lord that they may obey them. The woman hasn't remembered or kept all these commands, but Jesus has. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. A very important verse in Matthew. You see, in Jesus, God is providing a new way to be blessed by his presence.

This woman would probably have been nowhere near a synagogue or a temple for years. But listen to what he says in verse 22. He turned, he saw, he knew what was going on, and he said, take

heart, daughter, your faith has healed you.

Because she has boldly reached out in faith, she has been healed from this bleeding. She's no longer suffering, and she's now ritually clean. See, Jesus is able to redeem not just our souls, but also our bodies.

[15:43] This woman's body, as everyone's body is, is living under a curse. The way that men and women's bodies work is fallen. There's something just not quite right about the way our fallen bodies experience pain and suffering, and particularly so for a woman, as Eve had an additional curse laid on her, the pain and childbearing and everything associated with that.

We're made in the image of God, but in our fallen beings, there's just something not quite right about our bodies. But God and his son Jesus is not cursing anyone here like he was in Genesis, is he?

He's reversing that curse. He's blessing the woman with healing, and this is a surprising sign to us. The Messiah King, who perhaps would have been expected to be a powerful, political, victorious Jewish leader, is actually not trying to bring Israel back to what it was in its heyday or its golden age under Solomon.

He is indeed starting something new. This woman can now enter fully back into Jewish society. She could return to the temple to worship and sacrifice, but indeed she doesn't really need to do that. Jesus doesn't tell her to go and offer any sacrifices because Jesus' sacrifice will be sufficient for her. Jesus is the one who has reversed the curse.

[17:15] In the new creation, our bodies will be renewed and restored. They will not have anything which leads to death. This is because Jesus has lived a life where he has taken on himself the burden of suffering that humans experience.

He experienced the curse of death himself and a much worse death than any of us will probably ever experience. Jesus Christ is radically different to the distant view that many other religious people may hold.

He knows and he cares deeply about people's personal feelings and their intimate details. He cared for Jairus, didn't he? He cared for his daughter.

He cared for this unnamed, very sick and suffering woman. And this passage started by making a big deal of a father, Jairus, and his daughter. But doesn't this bleeding woman also have a father? Did you hear what Jesus said to the woman? Take heart, daughter. She, like all of us, is adopted by God the Father.

[18:21] We are not just God's servants. We are his sons and daughters. We can cry out to him because he is a good father. So friends, if you are a Christian, Jesus does not judge you.

He cares for you and he understands the difficult details of your life that perhaps most people don't understand. I mean, I would not know anything about menstrual hemorrhaging, but God is gently reminding us in this passage that he does know about that.

What comfort it is that God knows everything about our personal circumstances. Recently, I had some fairly personal, slightly embarrassing medical stuff going on.

Though I didn't really feel like I could be totally honest with most people about that. I find it very, very helpful to bring that to the Lord. Lord, you've humbled me in this. If there's anything to be learned from this, please teach it to me.

You know my body because you knit it together in my mother's womb. You know the number of hairs in my head and indeed you actually know everything about me because you created me. So would you help me please in this moment?

[19:33] Because you can see things that I cannot see and you know things that I don't know. Now let's move on to verse 27. Did you hear what the two blind men called Jesus?

Have mercy on us, son of David. Jesus is King David's promised descendant descendant of 2 Samuel 7 who would build a house for his name and establish a kingdom forever.

Even though they're physically blind, perhaps they spiritually see who Jesus is. This promised son of David who will build this temple where the bricks are the people of his church who live forever in this kingdom.

And look, they're asking for mercy. They're not asking for something that they deserve. They're not expecting that Jesus should restore their sight.

They don't deserve anything from him but they plead that they might bless them with his mercy. Again, this is faith.

[20:41] They humbly believe that Jesus is able to do something but they don't expect him to do that necessarily. Yes, Lord, they replied.

They see that Jesus, their Lord and Master, they're subject to him, not skeptical of him. And in verse 29, Jesus' touch heals them according to your faith.

Let it be done to you. Just like the bleeding woman, it is the blind man's faith that heals them. Jesus is not here to heal everyone necessarily.

He is here to respond with spiritual blessing to those who have faith that he is the Lord. And that blessing may look different for different people. This king is not like the human kings we know because he knows his people.

If you were to give him a list of names and addresses to all the people living under King Jesus' constituency, he knows each of them. He knows all about them. And he knows what each of them need.

[21:46] Verses 32 and 33, a demon-possessed man has been made mute. And I think this probably also means that he has been made deaf, which is why he can't speak, nor can he hear.

And Jesus drives out the demon and the man speaks. Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel. We've seen some amazing things.

Sometimes miracles happen. But this, I mean, this is serious. You know, it's easy for us to overlook this when we're familiar with the Bible. These miracles are not just like, you know, our cat getting better after falling off a fence.

These people are having their whole lives changed for good, forever. This is a serious miracle.

Now, I want to move on to our second point.

Have faith in King Jesus, for he is the source of blessing and peace. We have come across a number of healing miracles over the past couple of chapters, haven't we?

[22:50] Jesus is certainly a miracle worker. But isn't it interesting how Jesus sternly instructs the blind men not to share what has happened to them?

Perhaps because news had spread so quickly about him after he raised Jairus' daughter. But here's a vital thing to remember when reading the Gospels. As much as Jesus performs many wonderful miracles, Jesus does not want people to perceive him as a mere miracle worker.

Jesus wants people to see beyond the miracle. He underlines that it is through faith that each of these people are healed. Jairus knelt before him in faith.

Jesus told the woman that her faith had healed her. He told the blind men, according to your faith may it be done to you. These people were not just healed for no reason.

Either they or the person who brought them had faith that Jesus could do something. So I know what you may be thinking. Well, I'm a Christian.

[23:57] I'm a person of faith. But I'm still struggling on. Jesus may be the curse reverser. He may be a loving king. But why do I not feel that in my life right now?

Folks, some churches make a really big deal of healings. And I do understand that because some healings may well happen today in the name of Jesus Christ. I've not really witnessed that myself. But that's not evidence enough to totally disregard it. But here's what I do know for sure. Physical healing is not the primary effect of the gospel. And so we ought not make it into that.

We all know faithful Christians who have endured inexplicable suffering for most of their life.

Perhaps you are one of those people. As we read a passage like this, we all know that Jesus does not promise healing and a suffering-free life to everyone right now.

And let's be really honest. Healing is not actually isolated to Jesus in the Bible. Elijah and Elisha, the twelve apostles, were all known for the healing and even the physical resurrection powers that God had given them.

[25:11] Healing itself is not the thing that makes Jesus special. It's what Jesus can do in us that is spiritual, inward, and sanctified that makes him eternally unique.

And so folks, in a passage with a lot of physical healing like this, we can overlook the greater spiritual miracle which is special only to Jesus. What we see happening physically in this passage is undoubtedly important.

But what is crucial is what is happening spiritually. Because you know, once we were all blind, we were unable to see spiritually, we didn't perceive very clearly the enormity of our sins and of Jesus' work as our saviour.

You know, once we were all spiritually deaf, some of us for years sat in a pew and heard sermons but never actually listened to them. We had all the information but none of the warning led to response and application in our lives.

And you know, we actually all once were dead in our sins. Like dry bones in a valley or like corpses in a grave. Only through the Spirit were we made alive to live life on the earth the way it was supposed to be enjoyed.

[26 : 35] You know, at the end of this passage there is a somber warning because those in the passage who have seen with their physical eyes their whole life, who have heard God's words and spoke it to others for many years are actually more blind than the blind men, more deaf than the deaf, mute man and actually have less life in them than Jairus' daughter because they have no faith.

All that they have is falsehood. Verse 34, but the Pharisees said it's by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.

Guys, let's beware of those little unsuspecting sins that over time just pile up into utter delusion. Ignorance, skepticism and hard-heartedness are the most deadly things.

The Pharisees' eyes were more blind than the blind men because they were blind to the visible truth that even the blind men could perceive with their eyes closed. Their ears were too clogged up to hear the true words that were being spoken to them.

Ultimately, in their spirit, they were not living. They were dead in their sins. There was no spiritual life about them. This little girl was very obviously dead.

[27 : 58] But the Pharisees couldn't see that without Jesus they are also already in a worse place than her. You know, an application from this passage is to pray for healing, most definitely.

But I think the broader application is to say, Lord, help me to have faith that I might see myself clearly like the desperate, needy people in this passage and that I might see you clearly, the one who by fulfilling the law and taking on my sufferings has given me new life, joyful and faithful life, not skeptical and self-centered.

Surely God will not say no to that heartfelt prayer. The people in this passage already had everything they needed because they had faith, but Jesus in his mercy gave them even more than they deserved.

Let me say this, we don't deserve healing, but in his kindness, Jesus will give it to us in the end. We don't deserve our sins to be taken away from us, but if we have faith that Jesus can, he will.

Friends, I'm sure that there are people this morning who are suffering in some of the ways described in this passage, feeling the emotion of Jairus or the pain of this woman. I don't know your pain and most others may not, but let me remind us all.

[29 : 26] Is not Jesus the king who knows our pain, building his new Israel not with proud Pharisees, but with weak vessels and sick sinners? Is not Jesus the king who knows our pain, building his new Israel, his new kingdom, not with proud Pharisees, but with weak vessels and sick sinners?

This is a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. At the end of the day, all suffering will cease. It is through his own suffering on the cross that Jesus brings people into the kingdom.

Jesus came down to show us what the love of God is really like. Jesus is the greater king, the serpent crusher, who reverses the curse of Genesis 3. Adam and Eve broke that single law that God had given them, but Jesus fulfilled all of God's law since.

Loving God and others perfectly, without straying, he fulfills the law which Adam and everyone since him has failed at. In his once for all sacrifice of his own body to give resurrection to the bodies of his people, he will stop all suffering, the curse will be broken, and all we will know is his blessing. If the sin in us has such drastic consequences, then isn't the magnitude of Jesus' redemption even more dramatic? I said at the start, and I'll say it again, it is very difficult to separate sin from suffering.

[31 : 00] All suffering is a consequence of sin, either directly or indirectly. And so isn't this then good news? Jesus is the law-fulfilling king who reverses the curse and brings blessing.

Because the greatest blessing of all is being with him for eternity. It's like Eden, but it's better. No matter what suffering we experience in this life, we look forward to the great blessing which is common to us all.

No matter how bad our suffering may be in this life, none of us will miss out on the joy and glory of being in God's full presence at the end. Friends, Jesus' kingdom is full of blessing and peace. To be in his presence is the greatest blessing to be found. Greater than having all our physical health restored is to be with Jesus. That's where we're all going. So come and receive your king. You can be his citizen. Come and meet your father. Through Jesus we have become adopted sons and daughters. And you know, Jesus doesn't always answer prayers of healing, but let me tell you, Jesus never refuses salvation to anyone who truly turns to him in faith.

[32 : 19] Don't worry about your past. Because the law has been fulfilled by the lawgiver. Jesus has kept it. Let's keep our eyes on the things that are above.

Let's identify ourselves as citizens in this kingdom, bricks in his temple, sons and daughters of the Father, made alive through faith in what Jesus alone can do.

Our king knows everything about us and yet he still loves us. This is good news. The lawful filling king can reverse the curse and bring blessing.

So let's have faith in this king for he is the source of blessing and peace and all satisfaction in our lives. Let me pray. Let me pray. Jesus, we thank you that you care for your people and so we pray that you would help those amongst us who are struggling, who are finding it hard to have faith in you at the moment.

Lord, would you equip us to help each other to see the cosmic work of salvation that we are all the time getting closer to. Lord, please guard us against misinterpreting you.

[33 : 40] You are not the prince of demons but the lawful filling saviour. And Lord, because you are the king who blesses, you can help us to have faith in this good news.

In the hardest of days, Lord, let us not despair but remember this good news that you always remain our loving saviour, our good father and our deepest joy.
Amen.