



Auburn Presbyterian Church

Passionately loving the Lord Jesus Christ and radiating that love to every individual

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“Holy Interruptions and Healings” Luke 8:40-56

Each month when we gather for the ministry of healing, we read a story of healing from the Bible, and learn more about God’s healing. We’ll do the same tonight. Please open your Bibles to Luke’s gospel story of Jesus, chapter 8, starting with verse 40. I’ll read from the New International Version. **O God, speak to Your people through Your Word, to give the food each one needs, for healing and strength in Your ministries.**

Now, listen with me for God’s Word TO US TONIGHT, as I read these words aloud.
[text]

Luke 8:40-56 (NIV): ⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, 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.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years,^a but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵ “Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

⁴⁷ 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.”

⁴⁹ While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher any more.”

⁵⁰ Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”

⁵¹ 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. ⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.”

^a Many manuscripts *years, and she had spent all she had on doctors*

⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

I don’t know what strikes you about this portion from Luke, but there is a lot here. It’s *two! Two! Two stories in one!* First, a man named Jairus comes to Jesus, begging—*begging!*—for Jesus help to heal his daughter. Jairus is called a “ruler of the synagogue”. In Palestine during Jesus’ time, a synagogue could be held if 10 men (yes, men only) could be found to gather together. They often elected someone we might call a “chairman”, who would arrange for the service or teaching time, find the speaker, and get word out to the village or town that the synagogue would gather on the Sabbath, or at other times. Jairus is that kind of “ruler”—a chairman of the group, helping to keep them organized.

Jairus pleads for Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter—his only daughter—who is dying. There’s hardly a more painful heartbreak than for a parent to helplessly watch as their child is dying. It’s awful. You can go nuts in this pain. And Jairus is on the edge, it seems to me.

Jesus says “yes”, and he is already on his way when this interruption occurs. He’s making his way through a dense crowd, almost a crush of people. And unknown to him, a woman who has had a hemorrhage for years has forced her way through the crowd—just to touch him. She just knows that if she can do that, God will heal her through that touch. And it happens, just as she had hoped—*instantly!* She can feel it! It’s an awesome sensation, deep inside. Something has happened, everything for her has stopped, and she’s just paying attention to that.

But Jesus has felt that touch, and mentions it to his disciples. None of them were that close to him at the time, but Jesus insists, and the disciples say, basically, “Duh—look at all these people crowding us. Of course, people are touching you!” But Jesus knows the difference between casual contact in a crowd, and deliberate, goal-oriented touch.

This woman is still close by, and hears this interchange with the disciples and Jesus. And obviously, it’s she who has touched him. In a mixture of guilt and joy, she blurts out, “It was ME! I did it!”

Then Jesus looks at her, separating her from the rest of the crowd. Their eyes lock, and he sees the mixture of fear and wonder flooding through her. She confesses to the touch, and what has happened—this instant healing that she barely dared to hope for. As he does so often, Jesus addresses the fear: Daughter, he says, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” What a comfort, what a connection. It’s a touch, it’s a look, it’s a word. This woman is FREE!

But the original problem reasserts itself—Jairus’ daughter. Someone, probably a servant, comes from Jairus’ house to say, it’s too late. The girl is dead. Now, that last part really caught me—“Don’t bother the teacher any moreXXX Who would dare say that to the head of the household? I think it’s Jairus’ wife who has come, standing ashen-face and worn out with grief and fatigue. It’s over.

But Jesus doesn't think so. He tells Jairus, "just believe". How can Jairus hear that? It's over, didn't you hear, Teacher? Thank you, but we failed. I failed. She's gone. Jesus, however, keep walking, and Jairus follows along.

When they reach Jairus' house, the funeral has already begun. Professional mourners had already been booked, and they are wailing and chanting songs of grief. Jesus walks right past them, taking with him only his inner circle of Peter, James and John, and the parents (which also supports my theory that it's the mother who had come to tell her husband of the daughter's death, and now has followed them back home and goes in with Jesus). As Jesus passes the funeral party, he commands them to "shut up—the girl is not dead, only sleeping". But these people—usually women, these professional wailers—have seen death close up, many times. They know what a dead girl looks like, and this is a dead girl. So they laugh at Jesus. No family members are laughing, I am sure, but these hired mourners snicker through their crocodile tears.

Once inside, Jesus takes the girl's limp hand and arm, and commands her gently but firmly, "Child, get up!" She stirs, her eyes flutter open, and inexplicably, she rises! And Jesus knows that to continue her healing, she'll need food, so he tells the parents to feed the girl. They are astonished—it's hard to think astonishment is enough, in these circumstances. They start all talking at once, crying in joy!

Jesus, though, seems not all that impressed with what has happened. This is just a small part of what he's about, and he tells the parents not to talk about it, lest people think he's (just) a wonder-worker.

This Jesus is something! He heals chronic conditions, and raises the dead! And in the gospels, when he sends out the Twelve Apostles and then, Seventy-Two more. He commands them to preach and heal, and even raise the dead. It's like that little verse inserted in Paul's words about spiritual gifts in Ephesians 4:7-16:

⁷ (But) to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it^a says:

"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."^b

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held

^a Or *God*

^b Psalm 68:18

together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Paul lists some spiritual gifts here; in other letters, he adds other items to the “gifts list”, including healing. He is saying, when we become followers of Jesus, God gives us gifts for ministry, and we need each other for the FULL ministry JESUS performed to be evident today. But it’s ordinary people like you and me who get gifts for ministry, who become gifted because of God’s grace, so that we can take our place in the body, making it stronger and more productive—more like Jesus alive in the world today. Each of us is a cell in the body of Christ. We are never meant to live on our own. Yes, it’s us ordinary people who can be transformed into extraordinary good news gifters.

Well, what might God be saying to us tonight?

First, some of our most productive ministry for God will come during interruptions—often, interruptions in good activities. Isn’t that what happened to Jesus? He wasn’t off on vacation with nothing better to do when the woman with the hemorrhage reached out and touched him; he was on his way to save a little girl from death. And then, this interruption. And Jesus used this interruption to bring glory to God, AND to continue on to the mission to which he’d been desperately invited. The elastic thing here is “time”, and “patience”, which for people like me is a regular challenge. God works in the interruptions, if we will pay more attention to Him than to our schedules and expectations. We could all be surprised by God more often, if we would hold our expectations a bit more loosely.

Second, I think we learn that our expectations can also get in the way of God’s miracles around us. Jesus ran into this with his home town neighbors. He had gone to Nazareth, and people there were looking for a show from “Joseph and Mary’s son” to impress—actually, to entertain—them. And the text says, “Jesus could not do many miracles there, except he placed his hands on some a healed them.” Not bad! But still, the lack of faith—the iron expectations—of his “homeys” got in the way.

In our account tonight, the expectations of the funeral party got in the way of Jesus healing. He had to weave through the crowd and get out of their sight in the house with only a few of his disciples, to have a “clear place” to raise this girl from death. Our expectations limit our faith. As studies have shown, many times it’s not “seeing is believing”, but “believing is seeing”.

The Mayo Brothers, Doctors Will and Charles, were founders of the world-famed Mayo Clinics. Said Dr. Will: “I have seen patients that were dead by all standards. We knew they could not live. But I have seen a minister come to the bedside and do something for him that I could not do, although I have done everything in my professional power. But something touched some immortal spark in him and in defiance of medical knowledge and materialistic common sense, that patient LIVED!”

What might God want to do tonight through people yielded to Him? What might God want to do through you, with your gifts and your ministries, even if healing is not on your personal “spiritual gift list”? We live in a world that is much more mysterious that we like to believe.

Will we make room for God? Will we be open to interruptions that become ministry opportunities? Let’s be like Jesus, shall we?!

[This sermon preached to the congregation of Auburn Presbyterian Church, Auburn, California on January 19, 2007's Healing Service, by Rev. Kenneth B. Winter.]