

February 3, 2019
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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AUTHORITY OVER SICKNESS AND DEATH

Luke 8:40-56

A human picture of authority is generally skewed by the sin principle. For example, the ancients created mythical gods to represent authority. Those gods were mighty, powerful, larger-than-life gods like Zeus the god who controlled the sky, or Poseidon the god who controlled the sea, or Thor the Nordic god of thunder, or Diana the Roman goddess who controlled the animals. All of these imaginary gods and goddesses demanded sacrifices, or submission from their subjects. To offend them would certainly result in drought, or storms, or sickness, or some kind of judgment that was beyond the reach of finite human power.

In our educated and sophisticated world, ancient mythical gods and goddesses are relegated to the attic of children's stories or superstitions. We know what real authority looks like. Real authority is expressed by world despots like Napoleon, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, or other tyrants throughout history. Today, an authority might be Kim Jong-un president of North Korea, or Vladimir Putin president of Russia, or even a guy from the old television show called *The Apprentice* who regularly said, "Your fired!" and still says the same thing quite regularly.

Our concept of authority so often is connected with power, might, and traits that cause fear, because we live in a sin-cursed world. Sinners often require rule by the iron fist. But that is not the only possible expression of authority.

Also because we live in a sin-cursed world, we and our loved ones are plagued with failure, bad circumstances, sickness, and even death. When a friend or counselor helps you through the bad circumstances, do they ever demonstrate authority? When the doctor

prescribes a surgery or medication to alleviate your sickness, does He or she demonstrate authority? What if there was someone who could dismiss bad circumstances, sickness, demon possession, and even death by the word of His authority? Would that demonstration also prove might, power, strength?

No one who has ever lived or ever will live possesses the authority that God the Son possesses. He makes the so-called power of the so-called mythological gods look like child's play. And yet, so often when Jesus demonstrated His authority, it was not a display of might and power as much as a display of compassion, kindness, sympathy.

When Jesus manifested His authority over the lengthy illness that plagued the poor woman in our text, and His authority over the death of Jairus's daughter, it reminds us that the almighty, powerful, majestic Creator knows when one of the little birds He created falls out of its nest and He cares. "Of how much more value are you than the birds!" (Luke 12:24) Jesus said. And "if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" (Luke 12:28).

These three themes of authority, compassion, and faith flow through this story that combines Christ's authority over disease and death. He who is able and willing to manifest His authority to us does so because He is compassionate. Do you believe it?

A Plea for Christ to Exercise His Authority (vv.40-41).

Our text begins with the account of the Son of God returning to the crowd. The opening words, *Now when Jesus returned (v.40a)*, mean that it was when He returned from casting out demons. Jesus and the disciples had started out across the Sea of Galilee, we assume, to escape the crowds and get some much-needed rest (Luke 8:22). A great storm swept down upon the travelers which gave Jesus the opportunity to demonstrate His authority over the elements of nature. It shocked the disciples. It tested their faith.

Immediately upon arriving on shore in the country of the Gerasenes He promptly cast a legion of demons out of man. By this act of kindness, Jesus proved His authority over the spirit world. The

healed man had great faith in Jesus and desired to be with Him. Conversely, the observers of Christ's authority begged Him to leave them alone. And so we find Him back in Capernaum.

When Jesus arrived back in Capernaum, the crowd was continuing to wait for Him. There, *the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him (v.40b)*. No doubt there were some people in the crowd who waited for a chance to hear Him teach truth with supernatural authority. Probably the greater number of people in the crowd were present with hopes for healing. The news that this man from Nazareth had God-like powers to heal had swept over the whole area. People had faith that Jesus could heal because many had either experienced that authority themselves or they knew diseased people who Jesus had healed.

And so this waiting crowd presents a good picture of faith. People were gathered and waiting for Jesus because they believed His authoritative teaching and/or His authority to heal diseases and cast out demons. People welcomed Jesus because they believed Him. Sadly, that is not to conclude that the people believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Savior from sin. We know from the rest of the story that almost all of these people eventually abandoned Jesus because they would not trust Him to be Savior. In fact, it is possible that some of the people in this crowd would be found in another crowd several months later crying, "Crucify Him!"

Only saving faith is of eternal value. Many people believe the concept of Jesus Christ. Many people believe certain facts about Jesus. Many theologians believe doctrines about Jesus. But faith that saves from the slavery and penalty of sin is a dependance on Christ that is demonstrated not only in thoughts but actions.

In that setting of faith and quasi-faith, a man of authority begged the Authority for help. We are introduced to Jairus who ruled the synagogue. *And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue (v.41a)*. Jairus was almost certainly a rich, powerful, popular, and respected man in the community. Everyone in Capernaum would have known him because he was a *ruler of the synagogue*. He shared responsibility for all the ministry, teaching, and worship that took place at the synagogue. We must remember that the synagogue was the local expression of the national religion. All Jews were expected to attend, support, and learn the Scriptures at these

places of gathering. Ultimately, these religious institutions were overseen by and governed by the Sanhedrin, which was heavily influenced by the scribes and Pharisees.

Those self-appointed authorities would have been shocked to see one of their own falling at Jesus's feet. That is how we see this important ruler offering a humble request to the supreme Authority. *And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him (vv.41a-42)*. For Jairus to approach Jesus in this way indicates that he had to know something about Jesus.

Jairus's knowledge of Jesus would be expected because Jesus had made Capernaum His adopted home. Though He traveled from city to village throughout the area, He was probably in Capernaum quite a bit. We have Scripture records of Jesus presenting various evidences of His authority in the city. Early in His ministry Jesus had cast a demon out of the man who was in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:33-37). One would almost expect that the synagogue ruler witnessed this authority over the spirit world. And just moments after that astonishing display of authority, Jesus went to Peter's house in Capernaum and healed Peter's mother-in-law from a disease (Luke 4:38). Furthermore, the village of Nain where Jesus had raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11) was in the same region, about fifteen miles southeast. Had word of that stupendous event not reached the ruler's ears?

Based on what the synagogue ruler knew, he fell down before Jesus in a show of deepest respect. In that position of deepest respect and honor, Jairus implored Jesus. The Greek word He used is *parakaleo* which not only means to encourage but to call alongside. This is a great use of the word. The ruler begged Jesus to come over to his side and help him. That needs to be our attitude toward Jesus. In our hearts, we are falling down before Him in sincere worship. In our hearts, we should be calling out for Him to come to our side and help us.

Jairus honored Jesus while the ever-present crowd pressed and jostled. *As Jesus went, the people pressed around him (vv.41a-42)*. All those needy people were still there. They pushed, shoved, and jostled like so many shoppers on black Friday trying to get the best

deals. These people wanted help. Many of them needed healing themselves or were there as representatives for a friend or relative to plead with Jesus like this ruler did. And yet Jesus, with crowd in tow, followed after the one man who called Him alongside.

It reminds me that Jesus who is the Savior of millions who have trusted Him over the centuries is my Savior and your Savior. Personal attention is the Lord's expression of compassion. A man's daughter was in trouble. Ignoring the crowds, Jesus went with the man.

Faith in Christ's Authority (vv.43-47).

Along the way to the home of the synagogue ruler, a woman interrupted when she acted by faith. The woman had a great physical need. *And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone (v.43).* See Jesus following the synagogue ruler, jostled by the crowd, on their way to do a good deed. *And there was a woman.* There were no doubt lots of women in the crowd. Yes, but this was a particular woman with a particular need.

This was a woman like you and me upon whom the God of creation fixes His attention. In contrast to the synagogue ruler, she was poor, outcast, afflicted. She was plagued and bowed down by disease, the effect of the sin principle. She is a fair picture of us in our spiritual need. And maybe unlike nearly all the other men and women in the crowd, this woman acted according to what she believed. *She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased (v.44).*

Why did she touch the fringe of Jesus's garment? Was this kind of like magic? Maybe it was the way people thought the "spirit forces" worked in that day. In the early history of the Church we see that the sick people believed that even if Peter's shadow fell on them they would be healed (Acts 5:15). For many years charlatan television evangelists have mailed handkerchiefs they have prayed over to sick and diseased people who send them money. The poor deceived people fall for a trick of greed passed off as something akin to Jesus's authority to heal. They don't have it.

This woman, for whatever reason, believed that if she could touch Jesus's clothing, He would make her well. Matthew filled in a bit about the woman's motivation when he wrote, *For she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well" (Matthew 9:21).* We don't know why she believed that, but we do know that she acted according to her belief. What good would have come from her saying that she believed touching Jesus's garment would bring healing, if she never did it? Imagine her standing on the edge of the crowd and telling people about her faith. Someone surely would say, "If you really believe that, you had better start pushing your way through the crowd."

So, by faith, the woman shoved her way to Jesus because she acted according to what she believed. If you don't live it, you don't believe it. And just when her faith was strong, things didn't work out exactly the way she expected. Instead of being unaware that the woman touched Him, Jesus stopped the whole procession and presented a test. Jesus didn't ask who touched Him because He was curious. *And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" (v.45).* He was not unaware and, therefore, needed some information.

In His omniscience, Jesus knew exactly who touched Him. On the human side, Peter responded in perfect human wisdom that is always deficient when trying to comprehend divine compassion and power. But notice that when given an opportunity to publicly express her faith, the woman denied it by her silence. Even though she was already healed, already the beneficiary of the Lord's grace. She reacted like so many people today who desire forgiveness from sin but are afraid to acknowledge an intimate relationship with Christ.

Jesus was not going to allow the woman to remain secret. He created the opportunity to reveal His compassion and authority publicly. *But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me" (v.46).* An important principle is taught here. When Christ's power heals, a relationship is established. The divine power of Christ is not like soul-less electricity or even lightening. Christ's healing power is the outpouring of His soul. No one received His healing without being drawn into an intimacy with Christ. That is what compassion looks like, feels like. How can you

engage in acts of compassion toward others without giving part of your heart and soul?

Likewise, no one can receive the power of Christ unto the miracle of new birth without being drawn into the most intimate fellowship with Christ. Your new birth was not a cold and calculated process devoid of emotion. Neither is your walk of fellowship with Christ. If you are truly walking in fellowship with Christ through reading and meditating on His Word and through communicating with Him through prayer, there will very likely be times when you cannot stop the tears of sorrow and regret. And there will just as likely be times when tears of joy overtake you. Christ's power, displayed because of His compassion, is not lifeless. It is life abundant.

The woman expressed faith in Christ's authority to heal her, and there were some very obvious results of that faith. First, the recipient of grace showed respect. *And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, (v.47a)*. Why did Jesus embarrass this woman? Embarrassment was not His goal. Jesus's goal was to bring this particular woman into the public eye for His glory and Her benefit.

The recipient of grace testified. She was *falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed (v.47b)*. The woman showed public respect (fear) for Jesus. The woman expressed her faith. She believed in Jesus's authority to dismiss sickness. That is *why she had touched Him* in the first place. The woman acknowledged that Jesus had rewarded her faith—immediately!

Jesus said, "Great." That is the simple interpretation. More accurately *He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace" (v.48)*. Jesus restored the woman physically so that she could enjoy physical "wellness." Jesus restored the woman spiritually so that she could enjoy peace with God. Jesus restored the woman socially so that she was no longer an outcast, shunned because of her debilitating illness (the issue of blood would have rendered her ceremonially unclean all the time). Jesus affirmed that the woman's faith brought her restoration.

How did the disciples who were watching all of this feel? Just the night before (possibly) Jesus rebuked the disciples for lacking faith (Luke 8:25). And what about all the people who doubted Jesus? Faith in Christ's authority is the only window through which we can see the depth of His compassion.

Christ the Authority Challenged Faith (vv.49-56).

Now back to Jesus's original plan before He was so wonderfully interrupted by the woman in need. He was on His way with Jairus to heal the synagogue ruler's daughter. Along the way, the guy's friends showed up to tell Him that the situation was hopeless. *While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more" (v.49)*. The discouraging message that the man's daughter was dead was not just a lack of human comprehension. The girl really was dead. The situation was hopeless. And when a situation is humanly hopeless, stop bothering Jesus, right? No! When your situation is hopeless is when your faith needs to increase.

The Authority contradicted the messengers' hopeless message. Instead of turning around and heading for home, Jesus challenged the father to have faith. *But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well" (v.50)*. These words are absurd if Jesus does not have the authority to altar His own laws of life. There is no doubt the girl was dead. But Jesus was going to use this humanly impossible situation to encourage people to have faith in His authority. In the same way, your impossible situation is simply an opportunity to put full reliance in Jesus to do what is best in your life and circumstances.

The Authority contradicted the mourners. Jesus allowed privileged people to observe His authority. *And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child (v.51)*. The mother and father accompanying Jesus is understandable. Peter, James, and John were the leaders among the leaders of the coming Church.

The professionals mocked Jesus's authority. When the entourage showed up at Jairus's house, they saw that *all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is*

not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead (vv.52-53). It is very likely that the people weeping and mourning included professionals hired for that task. On one hand, Jesus spoke to the truly sorrowful to stop weeping and have faith in Him. On the other hand, Jesus rebuked the professionals for their foolishness. But everyone knew for a fact that the girl was dead.

Here Jesus introduced a new perspective on death of His people. The bodies of those who He will raise by resurrection are only sleeping in the grave waiting to be restored to life. Our souls live somewhere forever. Saint’s souls will be rejoined with a glorified body. This girl was not to that point yet.

The Authority contradicted the power of death. Christ gave life. *But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” And her spirit returned, and she got up at once (vv.54-55a).* Her spirit returned to her earthly body. Jesus the author of life gave life. And we who have faith in Him, though we die, will one day “get up at once.”

So too, Jesus demonstrated His authority over death and raised the precious daughter from the verge of the grave. And just to prove that it was not a hoax or slight of hand, Jesus commanded her parents to give her food. *And he directed that something should be given her to eat (v.55b).* Eating food is a pretty good proof of life. Dead folks don’t eat much.

Then Christ issued a surprising command. He commanded the girl’s parents to be silent about the matter. *And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened (v.56).* Again, this requirement must be because of the danger of the crowd trying to force Jesus to be King before His time. But also, the required silence might have been because the real focus of the Lord’s ministry was not that He was a great teacher, a healer, a wonderful doer of good works—though He was all of that and more. Rather, people needed to tell the good news that He was the crucified and risen Savior from sin. According to Mark’s account of this situation, Jesus explained the reason for the code of silence. *And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:30-31).*

Even while Jesus was on earth, His greater concern was that the testimony of the recipients of His grace would be about His work of providing the sacrifice for sin. How much more is our day the time for all of us who have received eternal life to tell everyone to fully trust the compassionate Christ who has all authority over all things, especially to dismiss sin and its effects.