

# A Nested Story:

*A Lesson of Faith in Christ Alone*

**Luke 8:40** Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.

<sup>41</sup> And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house,

<sup>42</sup> for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

<sup>45</sup> 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!"

<sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

<sup>47</sup> And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

<sup>48</sup> And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

<sup>49</sup> 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."

<sup>50</sup> But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

<sup>51</sup> 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.

<sup>52</sup> And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping."

<sup>53</sup> And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

<sup>54</sup> But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."

<sup>55</sup> And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.

<sup>56</sup> And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

(Luke 8:40-56)

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## A Story Within A Story

In the 2010 movie *Inception*, professional thieves attempt to infiltrate a target's mind in order plant an idea in their subconscious through dream-sharing technology. These ideas will then worm their way into the real world with the intended consequence, such as getting a competitor to dissolve the company. To do it, they must create layers of dreams in order to remain safe. So effectively, you have the real world and then a dream world within a dream world within a dream world.

In *The Princess Bride*, a grandfather begins reading a book to his grandson. It is a long book and so grandpa decides to edit it as he is reading so that boy will only hear the "good

parts.” Several times, he reads a kissing scene, and the boy is disgusted. “There’s kissing again, do we have to hear the kissing part?” Most of the time we are living in the world of the story, but from time to time we cut back to the grandpa and his grandson. The climax comes when the young boy is now totally emersed in the story, but grandpa abruptly slaps the book shut, just before the end. “What? What?” “No, it’s kissing again. You don’t want to hear it.” “I don’t mind so much,” the kid now changes his tune and we learn about the most pure kiss that left all others behind in all the world.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* gives us the narration of Captain Walton corresponding with his sister Margaret. In the letters, he narrates for Victor Frankenstein who then narrates his monstrous creation. The monster in turn tells the story of his first days of life living alone in the wilderness. Perhaps most interestingly of all, Shelley came up with the idea from a real-life tour of a castle Frankenstein in Germany where in the 1600s an alchemist had engaged in secret experiments, making *Frankenstein* in some people’s eyes, the first true science-fiction story.

All three of these are examples of an ancient writing technique that we find in ancient Egypt, India, and Greece. The *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, the *Odyssey*, the *Canterbury*

*Tales, Alice in Wonderland, Hamlet, Uncle Tom's Cabin*, they all employ a story within a story, sometimes called an embedded narrative or a nested story or a frame story. This is a literary technique where the inner story helps in one way or another to explain the outer story, or visa-versa.

## Luke 8:40-56 As A Nesting Story

**Luke 8:40-56** is, like the two former stories in Luke 8, a tale of consecutive miracles that Jesus performs one after the other. However, unlike the previous miracles, these two are told in **a unique way**—as a nesting story, a story within a story. It **begins** with a ruler of the synagogue who has a dying daughter, his only child. **Suddenly**, the scene shifts to a woman who has had a discharge of blood for twelve years unintentionally interrupting the exchange. This story must itself completely unfold before we are **taken back** to the original story of Jairus' daughter to learn what happens to her. The effect of this, when we read it properly, is deeply profound and greatly helps us understand some things about Jesus that we all have difficulties with from time to time.

Before we get to those stories, however, let's think about **our larger context**. First, I would argue that in its own

way, our story is actually a story within a story within a story within a story within a story! There are at least five distinct levels that our two stories are working on, which is incredible to think about.

There is the **level of the Luke-Acts**. In our story, the daughter “**fell asleep**,” that is, she died (**Luke 8:33**). In the Acts parallel, David fell asleep and his body saw corruption (**Acts 13:36**). This is put in contrast with Jesus whom God raised up and did not see corruption (**37**). Jairus’ daughter will be a type of this.

On **the level of Luke**, our narrative is the third of four miracles that lead up to the great confession of Peter in **Luke 9:20**. The central two deal with demons and disease (death-bleeding, read together as a single story), while the first and fourth both “nature” miracles, dealing with storms and food.<sup>1</sup>

At **the level of Luke 8**, these stories bring a conclusion to the introduction from **8:1-3**. That introduction told us about the twelve, who we see with Jesus on the storm, a for-

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<sup>1</sup> **John Nolland**, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, vol. 35A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 397.

merly demon-possessed woman, Mary, who saw her counterpart in Legion, and then two women, Joanna and Suzanna are paralleled by Jairus' daughter and the bleeding woman.

At **the level of the four separate miracles** in Luke 8, we have a chiasmic relationship, that will only be apparent once we get into the story. But that relationship is quite amazing and surprising to think about once we can fully explain it.<sup>2</sup>

And finally, there is **the level of our story itself**. It is written very deliberately as a story within a story (indeed, a chiasm within a chiasm):

- A. One daughter, **twelve** years old, dying (Luke 8:40-42)
  - 2A. A woman bleeding for **twelve** years (43)
  - 2B. Touched the fringe of his garment, her bleeding stopped (44)
  - 2C. "Who touched me?" (45)
  - 2D. All denied it, but Peter blames the crowds (46)**
  - 2C<sup>1</sup>. "Someone touched me." (46)
  - 2B<sup>1</sup>. I touched him and was healed immediately (47)
  - 2A<sup>1</sup>. "Daughter" your faith has made you **well** (48)
- B. Your daughter is dead (49)
- C. Believe, and she will be made well (50)**
- B<sup>1</sup>. She is not dead but sleeping, **they laughed and scorned** for she was dead (51-53)
- A<sup>1</sup>. Child, arise (54-56)

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<sup>2</sup> **David M. Shaw**, "Restoring a Hemorrhaged Identity: The Identity and Impact of the Bleeding Woman in Luke 8:40-56," BBR 30.1 (2020): 71.

A. Calming the Storm (8:22-25): A miracle for *Jewish* disciples in a *private* setting

B. Healing the demoniac (8:26-39): A miracle for a *Gentile* in a *public* setting

B'. Healing the bleeding woman (8:42b-48): A miracle for a *Gentile(?)* in a *public* setting

A'. Raising Jairus's daughter (8:40-42a, 49-56): A miracle for a *Jewish* person in a *private* setting

The two stories play on each other. One has a twelve year old daughter. The other a woman bleeding for twelve years. One has everyone laughing and scorning Jesus, the other has everyone denying that they did anything. One has a woman whose faith has made her well. The other has a charge that if they will but believe, a dead girl will be made well. But the twist comes in who it is that is involved in both of these stories. For this is classic subversion and Luke, the doctor, wants and needs you to know just who it is that Jesus is for, who did he come to heal? Who did he come to save? In telling the stories as he does, this answer becomes astounding.

## Jairus and His Need (Luke 8:40-42)

It all begins “when Jesus returned” (Luke 8:40). Returned from where? From across the lake. He has just come back from this amazing boat trip where his power over nature and the supernatural evil entities of Bashan has been proven. In the former, it was done privately, before the twelve disciples on the boat. In the latter, it was done publicly, before the Gentile world.

“The crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.” He has returned to Capernaum, where he had just

taught his Sermon on the Plain, healed a centurion's servant, and possibly taught his parable of the Sower. Recall that the centurion sent some of the “elders of the Jews” from the city to speak to Jesus on his behalf, and that they tried to butter Jesus up, thinking that Jesus would help someone truly worthy (7:3-5). Enter now a man named Jairus.

“And there came a man named Jairus (“He Will Enlighten”), who was a ruler of the synagogue.” Perhaps he was one of those very men that was sent to Jesus by the centurion! Has he learned the lesson of who Jesus is?

Why does he go to Jesus? “And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house” (42a). Something is wrong there. But think about the earlier centurion again. As Jesus was on his way to his house, he sent more people, this time his friends, telling him not to trouble, if he will just speak the word, he believe Jesus can heal his servant from a distance (7:6). Jairus doesn't have this kind of faith.

Next, we learn what was wrong. “For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying” (42). Luke loves the number twelve. This is the very same age Jesus was when he entered the temple as a child (2:42). This number also began our chapter with the disciples. Now we find it here. Perhaps this refers to her nearly reaching, in



those days, the marriageable age. But I think better, it is here as a **contrast** that we are about to see.

Luke tells us that Jesus obliged. “**As Jesus went, the people pressed around him**” (8:42b). We need this detail to wrap our minds around what happens next. Jesus is **walking through town on his way to help a ruler of the synagogue**, an important and surely well respected Jewish leader of the community. Crowds are pressing him on every side, wanting a glimpse of his celebrity. But someone else was there.

## **The Nested Bleeding Woman Story (Luke 8:43-48)**

“**And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years...**” (43a). **Twelve again.** The reason I believe Luke told us the girl was twelve, is so that we might compare her to this woman. She has been bleeding for as long as this girl has been alive.

**What do we know about her?** First, this discharge of blood was almost certainly **menstrual** in nature. Sadly, like so many women, some whom I know, who have started to bleed uncontrollably since receiving a shot for Covid that they were told had no side-effects, this woman has had uncontrollable bleeding, but for twelve years. Women know

first-hand what this does to their emotions and over all well-ness of being just once-a-month. Imagine this non-stop for so long.

Second, we know that “she had spent all her living on physicians” but “she could not be healed by anyone” (43). As Philip Ryken rightly says, “The more things change, the more they stay the same! The woman’s illness had cost her everything she had: her money, her relationships, and her strength.”<sup>3</sup> She is broke and wounded.

But she is more than this. She is an outcast. Here, we need to turn to the law in the OT. Let’s look at the entire law pertaining to this.

If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 409.

clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge. "Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst."

(Lev 15:25-31)

Being “**unclean**” here is **not a reference to sin**. She isn’t sinning. This is *ritual* impurity created by a state that symbolizes death: Life (in this case blood) being poured out of the body. The Holy Place is a place of Pure Life. For it is God’s abode. Anything that points to the opposite, even if it is a natural bodily function, indeed, one necessary for us to create life ourselves, cannot come near the place where God is, lest life and death mix together. Death can only be here if it is in the form of a sacrifice, which then cleanses the temple and the people. That’s the idea. Therefore, she is an **outcast**.

Many people assume, without any other reason save this law, that this woman is **obviously a Jew**. Our minds naturally go to this law. But notice something about it. It gives regulations for what she is to do *once she is clean*. We are going to find something that few notice here in a moment. **Jesus never gives her instructions** to go and do anything to cleanse herself. And yet, recall the story of Jesus healing **the leper** (**Luke 5:12-14**). When Jesus healed that man, he told him to go and make an offering for his cleaning, “**As Moses commanded, for a proof to them**” (14). If she is a Jew, we have already been conditioned to expect that Jesus will tell her the same thing, for Jesus did not come to overthrow the Law. Yet, he never does. Why?

The only explanation that makes sense and that holds Jesus up as keeping the law is that she isn't a Jew, *but a Gentile*.<sup>4</sup> He didn't tell her to present herself at the temple because she wasn't under the law of Moses to begin with. Nevertheless, the Jews would certainly have treated her as someone doubly unclean. Curiously, many of the early Church Fathers believed she was a Gentile and even attributed the name **Beronice/Veronica** to her. Eusebius says that she was from Caesarea Philippi (Paneas) and that he saw a statue of her that

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<sup>4</sup> This is Shaw's thesis, and I think it is dead on accurate.

the Gentiles had made at her house in commemoration of her healing.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing who she is, we are now ready to see what happens. “She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased” (Luke 8:44). This “fringe” of the garment is the same word used to translate the “tassels” that Israelites wore on the four corners of their robes. It is worth hearing this law as well. “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God” (Num 15:38-40).

Keeping all the commandments and being holy seems to be a key to this. Not as much for the woman, as for Jesus. Jesus knows that the heart of the commandments is to love God and neighbor. It reminds us of the Sermon on the Plain

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<sup>5</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 7.18.2-4. See also the *Acts of Pilate* 7, Hilary, *Exp. Matthew* 9.6-7; Ambrose, *Exp. Luke* 6:54-65; Augustine, *Sermon* 77.8; Jerome, Ps 106. In Shaw, 66-68. Some scholars think that the statue was not of her, but was actually a statue of Judea bowing to Emperor Hadrian that had been buried in a landslide and later rediscovered and attributed to this story. Nevertheless, the Fathers are in agreement that she was a Gentile.

just a few verses back, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (6:36). The tassels were reminders, though, to everyone. Curiously, in this sermon we are told that “all the crowd [Jews and Gentiles ], sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all” (6:19). This foreshadows what we will now see from Jesus.

“And Jesus said, ‘Who was it that touched me?’” (8:45). Does Jesus not know? It’s the same question we asked about the storm. Did Jesus not know that it was coming? Of course he did. He isn’t asking the question for his own sake, but for ours.

The center of this story comes next. “When all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!’” (45b). It is fascinating to me how this denial of the people is followed up by Peter, because this story is moving towards the great climax of the confession of faith, the opposite of denial, which will also come from Peter (9:20). But what he will be ready to confess in a chapter from now he is still not ready to do yet here.

Instead, Peter actually continues to show, in his rather bombastic fashion, how oblivious he truly is. Think about it. Jesus knows full well there is a crowd there, so what does Peter say? *It was the crowd, Jesus.* Sounds like pure sarcasm to

me. As Hendriksen says, “Peter’s remark revealed not only lack of insight but even lack of proper respect, the subdued reverence which this disciple should have shown to his Master. It was thoughtless and tasteless, crude and rude.”<sup>6</sup>

But I think Hendriksen is onto something when he adds this thought. “When he said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you,’ he committed the oft repeated error of interpreting Christ’s words in the most starkly literal fashion, as if Jesus had been inquiring about a merely physical touch. [Many Bible] passages ... show that the rule of literal interpretation is anything but safe unless it is presented with the proper qualifications [Mark 8:15, 16; John 2:19–22; 3:3–5; 4:10–15; 6:52; 8:56–58; 11:11–13]. To be sure, Jesus was not denying the literal touch, but he meant something far more than this, the touch *in faith*, the very effective touch. It was a touch *with a purpose*, not a merely accidental touch.” This is why I never teach people to see the “literal” interpretation, but rather the “intended” interpretation. What are the meaning of the words in the context? Whatever the intended meaning is, that is the literal meaning, even if that intended meaning is something symbolic or spiritual.

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<sup>6</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 458.

As we will see, the spiritual, that is *faith*, will become the touchstone of this entire nested story, just as it has been throughout these chapters on the miracles of Jesus. How ironic that this is the point and yet so many people not only do not see faith as anything major in the Gospels, but in the whole of the Scripture. Instead, for them as for the Jewish leaders, it is about their own *worthiness, works, and weight*. How good are you, not how bad are you. How important are you, not what kind of an outcast are you. This is precisely why we have the Gospels. To eradicate our pride and show us who Jesus really comes to help. If you want him as your Savior, you must come to the end of yourself.

The story works its way back out with Jesus asking the question again. “*But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me’*” (46). What an amazing word this is, and also rather perplexing. When you read it, you *shouldn’t try to make it say what it doesn’t say*. It is very clear. It means what it says. Power went out from him.

But perhaps this is said to *keep people from being superstitious about clothes* and such things.<sup>7</sup> Power didn’t come *from Jesus*, but the clothes, not from faith, but simply *by*

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<sup>7</sup> This is *Hendriksen’s* suggestion. See also next note.



*touching*. Does that kind of thing happen? Sure. Borneman and Lampert write about the [Mount of the Holy Cross](#), explaining its aura of legend, history, religious significance, and air of mystery. Its name is obscure, rooted more deeply in legends than in fact, legends that go back to the earliest Spanish explorers who told of a mystical mountain in the Rockies with Jesus' cross on it (and later, the supplicating Virgin and the Bowl of Tears). As recently as the 1930s-40s, [“Many miraculous healings were reported by either actual pilgrims or by those who had sent their handkerchiefs with those of the pilgrimage.”](#) The practice was only stopped by the military in 1950 which controlled the surrounding area.<sup>8</sup> People are superstitious.

[Jesus said this loudly](#), so that the woman would hear him. She knew that she was discovered. I imagine that his all-penetrating word may very well have been like [the Eye of Sauron](#) at that moment to her, she could not escape it no matter how hard she tried. [“No, Sam. I can't recall the taste](#)

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<sup>8</sup> [Walter R. Borneman](#) and Lyndon J. Lampert, *A Climbing Guide to Colorado's Fourteeners*, Updated Second Edition (Boulder, CO: Pruett, 1990), 68-71. Hendriksen died before completing his NT commentary and Simon Kistemaker took over the final duties. Curiously, his comment on Acts 19:11 says virtually the same thing that Hendriksen said about power coming out of Jesus. [“Luke gives no indication that the people worshiped Paul or that they idolized his handkerchiefs and aprons. Calvin points out that worthless things were chosen so that the people might not fall into superstition and idolatry.”](#)<sup>8</sup> [Simon J. Kistemaker](#) and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 686.

of food; nor the sound of water; nor the touch of grass ... I'm naked in the dark. There's no veil between me and the wheel of fire. I can see it with my waking eyes." You think I exaggerate? You think it is sacrilegious to think that someone like her might have felt this way about Jesus' gaze? Were not the **disciples just terrified** of Jesus in that boat? Was not the **entire city on the other side of the lake frightened to death** of Jesus when he cast the Legion into the pigs? "**Go away from us!**" And now Luke tells us, "**And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came *trembling*, and *falling down* before him**" (47a).

**What would he do to her** for her audacious and risky maneuver? She was an unclean Gentile woman! You simply do not do this kind of a thing, even if you are an upstanding Jewish ruler of the synagogue. Everyone knew that. This is part of the juxtaposition of the two stories. Do you feel it?

Nevertheless, **she would boldly see it through**. She couldn't escape anyway, so why not just get it over with. "**And falling down before him [she] declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed**" (47b). That takes guts when you think about who she is. And she told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So now what would Jesus

do? Would he destroy her like the Eye nearly destroyed Frodo?

The last verse of this nested story tells you. “And he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well (*sozō*); go in peace (*eirēnē*)” (48). We are reminded earlier in this same chapter now about who Jesus’ mother and brothers are. Who is his family? He calls her “daughter.” Not “daughter of Abraham.” Just “daughter.”

This is the only time in the Gospels that Jesus addresses someone with this affectionate term. Jesus is not Sauron. He is Love. It’s the exact opposite response that the people must have expected. I’m guessing she was completely caught off guard by it herself. In fact, it is the opposite response that many today expect, even some Christians. They think God is out to get them. Often because someone in their own life has been and they associate God with that person or people. Even though they believe in him by faith, they think he must think they are monsters for their sin, for their shortcomings, for their failures, for just being themselves. They expect him to be a monster in return.

In 1992, Pearl Jam debuted a their new single called “Brother” as Neil Young’s Bridge School Benefit concert. A

year later, they would change the title to “**Daughter.**”<sup>9</sup> “Daughter” tells the horrific story of a young girl who grows up dyslexic. As her mother reads her a story, the “**child tries to understand it, tries to make her proud.**” But she just can’t. She doesn’t understand and it causes her to act out. For it, “**the shades go down**” and we are not allowed to see what the mom does to this girl who, rather than being rebellious, is actually suffering from a mental disorder. But the mom beats her instead of helping her. A couple of years ago, Nancy Wilson from *Heart* covered it for a show on sex trafficking in South Africa, giving us even more kinds of suffering to think about with this song.<sup>10</sup> “**Don’t call me daughter. Not fit to.**” Years later, all she has left of her mother is a picture she keeps “**to remind**” her. “**Don’t call me daughter.**” That’s what a lot of people come to God with because of experiences, because of sins, because they know they are not worthy—for the right reasons or for wrong. They expect the monster. They expect Sauron and the Eye.

But **Jesus calls her daughter.** He *will* call her that. This unclean, Gentile, lonely, outcast, woman. In the middle of a crowd. With all eyes on them both. He does not scold her or

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<sup>9</sup> **Pearl Jam**, “Daughter,” *Vs.*, Epic Records (1993).

<sup>10</sup> **Nancy Wilson**, “Daughter,” *You and Me*, Carry On Music (2021).

report her or chastise her for so rudely and inappropriately touching his garment. Instead, **he knows why she did it** and knows the lengths she went to do it. **“Your faith has made you well.”** Faith. That’s why the power went out. She came to him by faith. And **he sends her off in peace**. This is not a *peaceful easy feeling*. It is an objective **reality** that now exists between her and God through faith alone.<sup>11</sup> She has been ceremonially unclean for twelve years, a complete outcast of society. Now she is a member of the royal family of heaven. This is **a word of assurance to her that would have been a great comfort and encouragement from Jesus**.

## Jairus and His *Real* Need (Luke 8:49-56)

But, **it wasn’t just for her**. This is a *nested* story, remember? Just as abruptly as she disrupted Jairus’ request, now we are suddenly taken back to the first story. **“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’” (Luke 8:49)**. *Just perfect. What timing! Look what this woman did. She made it so that this man’s only daughter has died and now Jesus is too late to come and help.* Isn’t that **how we so**

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<sup>11</sup> See **Darrell L. Bock**, *Luke: 1:1–9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 799. See Bock

often think about God and his sovereign plans? It's too late now. God couldn't or wouldn't possibly help me now. It was the same lesson raised in the storm. Curiously, these two stories are linked together through themes of a private miracle that is performed for Jews, as opposed to the public miracles of the demons and diseases that are performed for Gentiles. The timing question is no accident. Jesus knows this is going to happen. And it will happen again, in John's Gospel, to Lazarus. And when all you can do is see with physical eyes, your hope is dashed to pieces. You are miserable and lost alone in the dark.

Until ... the Word of God sounds. "But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well" (50). *Well. Sozō*. It's the same word as just two verses ago! Believe. That is very similar to faith from two verses ago. The healed woman, healed by faith, was made well. She is now an object lesson. *But come on, Jesus. She's dead! Believe what? In a resurrection of the dead? You can't be serious.* Those had to have been the unspoken thoughts of everyone present, although some of them, namely the disciples, were actually present with Jesus in Nain when he had recently raised a man from the dead (7:15).

Jesus now **walks with them over to the house**. But when he arrived, “**He allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child**” (8:51). Like the boat, this would be a **private miracle**.

When we humans have **experiences that have never been challenged**, we treat the future as we have experienced the past. Indeed, it could be no other way, right? They’ve never seen someone raised from the dead. And so, because she’s dead, “**all were weeping and mourning for her**” (52a). But **Jesus interrupted their weeping** and said, “**Do not weep, for she is not dead but *sleeping***” (52b). Ah, **sleeping** again. Jesus was just sleeping in the boat. Another **link** to that story. Why was Jesus sleeping? Because he was exercising his sovereign dominion as king. That’s what king’s do. It is their prerogative, because they are powerful over all enemies.

Of course, this is a different kind of sleep for this twelve year old girl. She has stopped breathing and her heart has stopped beating. We call that **death**. Jesus calls it **sleep**. Why? Because, to him, he has power over the grave. He is the King. He is sovereign. Her soul is not gone. Her body has just expired.

But as I said, **they have no categories for this**. “**And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead**” (53). Who is

laughing? It must be the **father and mother and Peter, John, and James**, for they are the only ones who heard it. We might give a pass to mom and dad, but the other three have seen with their own eyes Jesus raise the dead. Of course, he hasn't said anything about doing that here. He has only said that she is not dead. But of course she's dead! Would you have laughed too?

But as they were laughing, Jesus took her by the hand and he called, saying, "**Child, arise.**" First, "**daughter.**" Now "**child.**" Jesus addresses her as if she can hear. He calls to her directly. Then **he commands her to rise.** This is the omnipotent power of the Word of God. It is powerful because He is powerful. Power comes from him. He is the Power of God. And his word is powerful to do all that he sends it out to accomplish. We saw that idea in the parable of the Sower earlier in the chapter.

"**And her spirit returned**" (55). You see? **Her spirit didn't die.** It just went somewhere else. Now, it returns and is united to her body. "**And she got up at once.**" Why? Because **that's what living people do.** They don't pretend to stay dead. They get up. They move about. They start living. That's the reason why a Christian does good works. They



have been brought to life from the dead. That's what living people do.

“And he directed that something should be given her to eat” (55). I think this is probably a foretaste of the fourth miracle in this series that leads up to Peter's confession in the next chapter, when Jesus will feed the multitudes. But it also proves something very immediate. The girl is not a ghost or a demon. As Jesus will do in his resurrected body, she eats. She is rooted right here in the material world. Their daughter has been returned to them. She is alive.

“And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened” (56). This is a rather funny ending to me, because what are they going to do? How could they possibly keep this a secret? Everyone in the town already knows she was dead. Are they supposed to keep her locked in the room for the rest of her life? But maybe it is more simple than that. When she walks out, Jesus does not want them to tell everyone about his role in this. Jesus wishes his identity to remain a secret until the cross and resurrection. Of course, we all know that this didn't happen. And yet, in God's providence, even as word got out, people were still confused, in fact even the supernatural world was

confused and it had to be so in order that the entire plan would be carried out for our salvation.

As we think about **why the Gospels embed** one story into the other here, it is important to look at Jairus. He had a need. His daughter was gravely ill. He wanted his only daughter resorted to health. Can't we all relate to this?

But this story within a story is here to teach us I think the most profound point, that **Jairus did not understand his true need**. His true need was to *believe* in the Son of God, not for a healing, but so that he would be well and at peace with God. Until a person does this, they will never know peace and they will never know true wellness. They will remain forever bound up in all **the anxieties and worries** and doubts and darkness that attaches itself to all people in this fallen world. This can be faith for the first time, or someone whose been a Christian a long time, but is struggling with believing God. We can pretend they aren't there. We can live our lives trying not to think about them. But death is the ultimate leveler.

But God has come into this world, revealing himself to us though his **Perfect Image**, Jesus Christ. God in human flesh. Curiously, **Veronica/Beronice** means "**True Image.**"

If that was her name, she reflected in her faith the very image of Christ, the True Image of God.

These stories are here to **teach you about who and how you approach Jesus**. I can't make you believe. You can't make you believe. But you can hear the word about faith and why you can have it, and that word can work its way into your heart so that you will believe. It is not through your worthiness, but through your wretchedness, not through your goodness, but your neediness. God is all-contained, perfect in every way, lacking nothing. He does not need you to be good to help you. He is Good. What you need is honesty. Honesty about who you are and what your real need is. Your real need is him, him saving you, him freeing you, him healing you, him releasing you, him showing his love to you through Christ and all his benefits.

**Jesus is not for the best people.** As Steve Taylor sang, **“Jesus is for losers.”**<sup>12</sup>

*Just as I am  
I am stiff-necked and proud  
Jesus is for losers  
Why do I still play to the crowd*

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<sup>12</sup> **Steve Taylor**, “Jesus Is For Losers,” *Squint*, Warner Alliance (1993).

*Just as I am  
Pass the compass, please  
Jesus is for losers  
I'm off about a hundred degrees*

*If I was groping  
Groping around for some ladder to fame  
I am ashamed*

*If I was hoping  
Hoping respect would make a sturdy footstool  
I am a fool*

*Just as I am  
I am needy and dry  
Jesus is for losers  
The self-made need not apply*

*Just as I am  
In a desert crawl  
Lord, I'm so thirsty  
Take me to the waterfall*

*Just as you are*

*Just a wretch like me  
Jesus is for losers  
Grace from the blood of a tree*

*Just as we are  
At a total loss  
Jesus is for losers  
Broken at the foot of the cross*

This is the story of the bleeding woman. This is the story of the daughter of Jairus. This is the story Jairus needed to hear. This is the story we all must hear.

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