

Jesus, Daughters, Disease, & Death

The Authority of Jesus over Disease and Death

Scripture: Matthew 9:18-26

Sermon Series: *Matthew*

Topic: Authority, Jesus, Disease, Death

Matthew 9:18-26 (ESV)

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¹⁹ And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

²⁰ And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹ for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

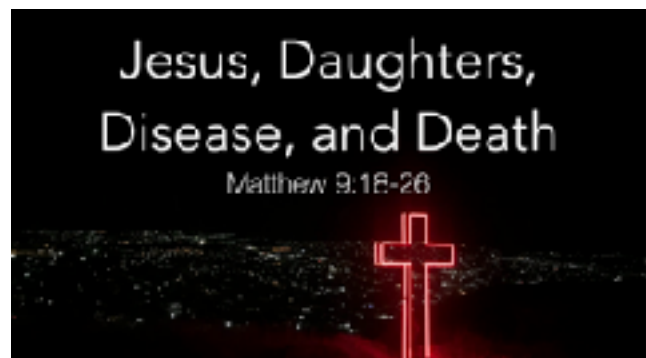
²³ And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶ And the report of this went through all that district.

Introduction

What is the purpose of this text? Why did Matthew write it? What does the Holy Spirit, who helped him to write want us to see in it?

There seem to be four essential elements to this text; Jesus, daughters, disease, and death.

Let's zoom out and look at the larger purpose of Matthew in writing this gospel. He putting on display for us the absolutely unique authority of Jesus. Matthew is building Jesus' messianic résumé. He is



heaping up evidence to help me and you to be absolutely convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is God's only Messiah and therefore we ought to put our whole spiritual confidence in him. Matthew is presenting us the reasons why he himself came to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and the Holy Son of God.

- Matthew has shown us his incredible authority as a teacher of the word of God (Mt 5-7:29)
- His authority over contagious disease (i.e. Jesus healed a leper Mt 8:1-4)
- His authority over distance (Jesus healed the centurion's servant from far away Mt 8:5-13)
- His authority over demons (Mt 8:14-17)
- His authority over disciples (i.e. who followed him and who did not Mt 8:18-22)
- His authority over severe storms (i.e. Jesus controlled the weather Mt 8:23-27)
- His authority over strongholds of evil spirits (i.e. Jesus cast out a herd of demons 8:28-34)
- His authority over sin (i.e. Jesus has authority to forgive sin 9:1-7, 8-13)
- His authority over religious rituals and routines (i.e. fasting 9:14-17)
- His authority over chronic disease and even death itself (9:18-26)

In this portion of Scripture, we'll find twelve years, three different scenes marked by three interruptions, two daughters, one messiah. Scene I begins in Matthew's house at the supper table, scene II takes place outside on the crowded street, and scene III starts inside a family house and concludes in the privacy of a bedroom where a 12-year old girl has died.

Scene 1: Reclining at Table in Matthew's House

The first scene opens in Matthew's house around the supper table. Two weeks ago we considered the question the Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples about a practice of Jesus and then last week we considered the question the disciples of John asked Jesus about the practice of his disciples, namely why they do not practice fasting. Jesus was in the middle of explaining that he is the long awaited Bridegroom of Israel and that meaning of fasting is now changed because of his arrival. Jesus is still explaining this new reality when suddenly he is interrupted.

Interruption 1: A Ruler Rushes In

Matthew 9:18-19 (ESV) ¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹ And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

While he was saying these things to them (v.18). Jesus is presently “reclining at table in [Matthew’s¹] house, with many tax collectors and sinners” (Mt 9:10). He’s still speaking with the disciples of John the Baptist when into the room rushes a ruler. This man interrupts Jesus while he is at supper and in the middle of a conversation.

“Behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him” (v.18). Matthew again uses his characteristic, ‘*behold,*’ to get our attention.² He is saying, Hey look! There is defiantly something to see here. Pay attention. Matthew tells us that a *ruler* came in knelt before Jesus. The word ‘ruler’ (*archōn* ἄρχων) simply means, “one who rules or governs—ruler, governor.”³

This account is also told in both Mark (5:21-43) and Luke (8:40-56) and they each give this far more attention than does Matthew. Mark tells this story in 481 words (almost 3x’s as much as Matthew) and Luke does so in 360 (which is about 2x’s as much as Matthew), while Matthew condenses his telling to 178 words. Matthew’s purpose is singular. His own aim is sharing enough to illustrate the authority of Jesus and thus, all other unnecessary information is left out.

Mark and Luke tell us that this man was “*a ruler of the synagogue*”⁴ and his name of *Jairus*. As a “ruler of the synagogue” this man would have had significant influence and authority in the community. He would have been viewed as a local community leader. The only salient point about him for Matthew is that he is a ‘ruler,’ and what does this ‘ruler’ do? He comes in before Jesus and bows down before him. This man of authority recognizes and bows before the superior authority of Jesus.

My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live (v.18). We meet here the first of two daughters in this story. This daughter is in danger and her father wants Jesus to come and touch her which he is convinced will give her life. Perhaps this man had heard that Jesus had touched the leper and he had been healed (8:3). Perhaps he had heard that Jesus had touched Peter’s mother-in-law and she had been healed of her fever (8:15). This ruler wants Jesus to come and touch his dead daughter.

He does not have the faith that the centurion had, who believed that Jesus could heal from a distance. His faith may be slightly weaker, but he has faith nonetheless.

This is an extraordinary statement. I wish we could hear his tone of voice. Is this a condescending command of ruler who is accustomed to getting his way? Or is this humble, brokenhearted parental pleading of a ruler who recognizes Jesus as the Bridegroom of Israel?

¹ See Mark 2:14-15; Luke 5:27-30.

² Matthew uses this word 40 times in this gospel.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 477.

⁴ Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41.

It seems that his bodily posture of kneeling would point to the latter. This man is a devastated father, of a 12-year old⁵ "little"⁶ girl, who has just lost his only⁷ daughter.

Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is this man's only hope. His daughter needs life and he has *faith* in Jesus. He says, "*Come lay your hand on her and she will live.*" He sounds quite certain. He has faith that Jesus is so full of life that he believes a simple touch from Jesus would give to her the life that she does not have.

Where did this man get such faith? Did he get from discovering that no one else has what his little daughter needs? As a ruler, no doubt he was a man of some means and as a father there's no doubt that he would spared no expense to secure for his sick little girl the best possible care money could buy. Yet, presumably he had done this and still his daughter had died. There is no hope on earth other than Jesus. *This ruler has faith in Jesus and he acts on it.*

One wonders about the conversation that might have transpired between him and his wife. As this little girl's life expired and dad turns to run out the door, did his wife not question where he was going? Why is he leaving her in the moment of deepest grief? Why was he not helping to plan the funeral? What would your first reaction be if your daughter had just died?

Summary. This man, went straight to Jesus, interrupted his supper, interrupted his theological conversation about fasting, knelt down before him in humble desperation, and pleaded with him to come raise up his dead daughter. This ruler had faith that Jesus was the only hope for his little daughter. Her body and life itself was held in the authority of this young rabbi from Nazareth. These next words are amazing.

And Jesus rose and followed him (v.19). Jesus respond to this man's faith. He *rose* and followed him. There have been several risings⁸ in Matthew's gospel so far. Jesus forgave the sins and healed the paralytic who then "*rose and went home*" (9:9). Jesus called Matthew as he was sitting at his tax booth "*and he rose and followed him*" (9:9). Now this ruler pleads to Jesus for help and then Jesus "*rose and followed him*" (9:19).

Scene 2: Out in the Crowded Street

This ruler then begins leading Jesus to his house. Jesus and his disciples are following the ruler and the scene now shifts into the streets where a "great crowd"⁹ of people being following Jesus, no doubt with deep curiosity of what is about to happen.

Matthew 9:20-22 (ESV) ²⁰ And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹

⁵ Mark 5:42; Luke 8:42.

⁶ Mark 5:23.

⁷ Luke 8:42.

⁸ Peter's mother-in-law rose up from her fever (Mt 8:15). A violent storm rose up while Jesus was lying down sleeping in a boat, but Jesus rose up and put down the storm (Mt 8:23, 26).

⁹ Mark 5:24, 27, 30-31; Luke 8:42, 45.

for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

Interruption 2: A Suffering Women Sneaks In

Behold (v.20). There is something to see here. Matthew doesn't want us to miss this. Jesus is now interrupted for the second time. First, it was his supper, but now it is on his evening walk. Jesus is making his way down the street with his disciples amidst crowded "throng"¹⁰ of people and suddenly his journey is interrupted.

A woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years...(v.20). This woman has suffered for twelve years from a chronic "discharge of blood." She has been suffering for as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. Twelve years is a long time to suffer from a chronic disease.

Optional. Mark & Luke both tell us that during that time this poor woman had spent all the money she had by going from doctor to doctor trying to be made well, but in fact she had only gotten worse (Mk 5:26; Lk 8:43). Luke tells us that "*she could not be healed by anyone.*" She was desperate to be delivered.

A discharge of blood (v.20). almost certainly refers to a disorder of her menstrual cycle. The OT law contained regulations concerning such situations (Lev 15:25-33) and sadly it means that as long as there was a "flow of blood" (Mk 29), she was to be considered "unclean." Thus, she had been considered unclean for the past twelve years. In effect, this "chronic bleeding from the womb" rendered her "perpetually unclean."¹¹

She certainly endured physical suffering, but she would have also endured social suffering as well. Due to her uncleanness, she would have been isolated and lonely.

She would have been "cut off from the ceremonial observances of the community. She could not join in worship, and her contact with other people would have been restricted because even a touch from her would make people unclean."¹²

Came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment (v.20). This explains why she "*came up behind Jesus.*" Her "unclean" condition would have dictated that she avoid people and not to touch them at all, since her uncleanness would then be transferred to whatever and whoever she were to touch (Lev. 15:27). However, she—like the ruler—is convinced that Jesus

¹⁰ Mark 5:24.

¹¹ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 230.

¹² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 229.

is the source of all that she lacked. Her condition would not allow her to publicly go near Jesus. But the massive crowd provided the cover she needed. Amidst the throng, she could sneak up behind him and no one would know.

In fact, she was so convinced that Jesus could take care of her problem and stop her suffering, that she believed all she had to do was simply *"touch the fringe of his garment."* She believed that she did not need to touch his person, but merely his garments. Apparently there is a little confusion mixed in with her faith. She believed that the power of Jesus was not only resident in his person, but was also communicated to his clothes, for *"she said to herself, 'If I only touch his garment, I will be made well'"* (v.21). She has no doubt. She believed in Jesus. She has confident *faith* in him. She is certain that Jesus is the person who *will* make her well.

Where did she get such faith? Could it be that she discovered it after having spent all the money she had going from physical to physician trying to be healed and yet after exhausting her funds, she was not better but actually worse? *This woman had faith in Jesus and she acted on it.* She made her way through the crowd and successfully got close enough to Jesus from behind him and reached out and *"touched the fringe of his garment."*

Jesus turned, and seeing her (v.22). Jesus knew when this woman touched him. Her touch was ever so slight, and only on the fringe of his robe, and yet he was fully aware that someone had touched him. Jesus *stopped walking and turned around* to see what had happened. The other accounts tell us that Jesus asked the disciples *"Who touched me?"* Peter effectively said, *"Who touched you? Are you kidding? Look at this crowd pressing in upon you. The better question is Whose not touching you?"*¹³

Jesus was persistent and he looked for who it was who touched him. He turned because she was behind him. At first she tried to hide in the crowd, but then she realized that she could not remain hidden, so she came forward *"in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth"*¹⁴ (Mk 5:33). She was afraid, no doubt, because she'd been yelled at before for touching people and making them unclean. When such things as this happened, then they would have to go through the trouble of performing the purification rites in order to be clean again.

Optional. In the OT this meant washing all the clothes that you were wearing when you were touched, taking a bath, and then waiting until the next day before you could be considered clean again. It was a lot of work, a time consuming hassle, and often set back your daily plans. I'm sure the thought crossed her mind that she was about to get yelled at here in this moment, even if not by Jesus, then most assuredly by his disciples. The disciples got ticked off when little kids touched Jesus, how much more would Peter pop off when some unclean women touched him?.

¹³ Mark 5:31.

¹⁴ Including how long she'd been suffering, how much she'd spent trying to get well, and how many physicians she'd unsuccessfully seen.

I suspect Jairus might have wanted to yell at her for stopping the progress of Jesus. One can't help but wonder if this father did not feel the pressure of getting Jesus to his dead daughter as soon as possible. Certainly there was no time to waste on this 'unclean' woman's unsanitary health problems. But Jesus had time for her.

"Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well" (v.22). Here we meet the second daughter in this story. Jesus did not yell at her. He did the opposite. He spoke tenderly to her. He **"take heart."** This is exactly what he said to the paralytic. It meant, Don't worry. Be encouraged. Have confidence. Be bold.¹⁵ In short, it was as if he was saying, "Everything will be fine. It's all going to be ok." Jesus did not speak harshly, as she might have expected, but he spoke tenderly to her.

In fact, he called her **"daughter."** Sweeter words to her may never have been spoken. The whole world for twelve years had called her "Unclean," but Jesus called her "daughter!" He spoke to her as if she were related to him. Her who was unclean, now is related to him who is the holy Son of God?! How wonderful were the words to her.

Even better was what he said next, **"your faith has made you well."** There's no magic property in Jesus' clothes. Touching his clothes did not make her well. Jesus is the one who had power to heal, not his clothes. Mark tells us that this is how Jesus knew someone had touched him because, **"he perceived in himself that power had gone out from him"** (Mk 5:30). Power did not go out from his clothes, but rather power went out from his person, from his body. Jesus wanted her and everyone else watching to know that her faith in him was what made her well. Jesus also wanted the watching world to know that she had in fact been made well.

Her uncleanness did not overcome his righteousness. The righteousness of the Son of God is much powerful than the corrupting sinfulness of the son's and daughters of Adam.

And instantly the woman was made well (v.22). And so she was made well **"from that hour."**¹⁶ Two minutes with Jesus transformed twelve years of suffering into a day for smiling and singing. No more would she be called 'unclean,' from this day forward she was well and healthy and free and clean. She was the daughter who had been delivered and Jesus was her deliverer!

Scene 3: Private Bedroom in House

Now we move into the final scene. This scene takes place in the house of the ruler, Jairus, where the wake for his dead daughter has already begun. We move from the outer rooms of the house, filled with lots of people, to the inner bedroom where the little dead girl has been laid. In your mind, walk into this house with me.

¹⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 305.

¹⁶ See ESV footnote on the word "instantly." The Greek text is ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης (*apo tēs hōras ekeinēs*), which literally translated would be "from the hour, that one," meaning, "from that very hour."

Matthew 9:23-26 (ESV) ²³ And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶ And the report of this went through all that district.

Interruption 3: Jesus Breaks Up a Wake

Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion (v.23). This is the third interruption. This time Jesus is the one doing the interrupting and what is being interrupted is what we would call a wake. Inside Jairus' house is filled with "*flute players and a crowd make a commotion.*" Hear in your imagination the "*loud sound of people weeping and wailing.*"¹⁷ This would refer to the professional mourners that were customarily hired for Jewish burial services, which had to take place almost immediately upon death. Notice this had gotten underway even without waiting until Jairus had returned from retrieving Jesus.

The Mishna¹⁸ required, "Even the poorest man in Israel should not hire fewer than two flutes and one professional wailing woman."¹⁹ Since this man was well to do, there were more than two flutes and one wailing woman. However many there actually were, Matthew tells us that it was quite a "*commotion,*" which is word used to describe riots²⁰ and the uproar stirred up by mobs.²¹

"Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they laughed at him (v.24). Jesus tells the professional mourners to "*go away,*" the gig is over. Today is not a day for a wake because he was going to wake this girl up. "She's not dead, just sleeping."

They looked at Jesus as if he was nuts. They're professional mourners. They know dead people when they see them and they see them all the time. *They laughed at him.* The whole place suddenly goes from mourning to laughing. They were laughing at Jesus because in their eyes he looked ludicrous.

But when the crowd was put outside, Jesus went in (v.25). The phrase "had been put outside," translates one Greek word (*ekballō ἐκβάλλω*) which means, "to throw out, expel, to jettison."²² This is the same word used to describe Jesus "casting out" the whole herd of demons from the Gaderene man (Mt 8:31). This word is also used to describe what Jesus did in the temple when he overturned the tables of the money changes and "drove out" all of them (Mt 21:12). Jesus

¹⁷ Mark 5:38.

¹⁸ A collection of commentary by various rabbi's on how to apply the Law.

¹⁹ Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah : A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 386.

²⁰ See Acts 17:5, 8; 21:30.

²¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 498.

²² *Ibid.*, 208.

jettisoned from the house all of these mocking mourners. *What sort of authority does he think he has?*

After cleaning them all out of the house, then *he went in*. (Mark and Luke tell us the he only allowed Peter, James, John, and the girls' parents to go with him inside the room where the body had been laid).²³

Jesus *took her by the hand, and the girl arose* (v.25). Jesus did exactly what this father had asked him to do. He touched his little dead daughter and she lived. Jesus took her by the hand, and raised her dead body to life again. Here's a fourth *rising* to add to the three we've already seen in this chapter. Jesus raised this little 12-year old girl from the dead.

What *amazing authority* this Jesus has! *Raising this girl from the dead was no more difficult for Jesus than it would be for him to raise up someone from taking a nap*. Jesus is so full of life that dead people cannot stay dead in his presence. At one touch of his hand, life overcomes death; cleanness overcomes uncleanness; victory overcomes defeat; faith overcomes doubt; despair gives way to hope; darkness gives way to light; slavery gives way to freedom; commotion gives way to calm; mourning gives way to laughter; and sorrow gives way to joy!

The final verse of this portion of Scripture says, *And the report of this went through all that district*. I believe it did. When a woman suffering from 12 years of chronic uncleanness suddenly begins showing up at all the places she was previously forbidden to attend, that will make news. When a wake gets cancelled because the dead girl woke up, that will make news. When two daughters who were once separated from the people they loved are suddenly reunited with them, that is a report worthy of going through all the district.

Conclusion

Jesus does not mind interruptions. He doesn't yell or get upset when his conversations or his supper is interrupted. Evidently Jesus could see the God was at work in the interruptions.

Jesus responds to faith, even when it's weak and slightly confused. Jesus went with Jairus and turned and stopped and turned to see an unclean woman. He saw them both and both of them graciously received from Jesus exactly what they were seeking. Let your faith in him rise up this morning.

Bow yourself before him. Both this ruler and recluse bowed before Jesus. Both this man and this woman recognized Jesus was the only solution to their problem.

Jesus raises up those whom life has laid low. Jesus raised up an excluded and outcast woman. Jesus raised up a little dead girl. Jesus touched them both and their lives were never the same.

²³ Mark 5:40; Luke 8:51.

Jesus is willing to join you in your mourning. If you have faith in him, he has the power to turn your sorrow into singing. Reach out to him and he will reach out to you.

Jesus has authority over disease and even death. Jesus possess all authority in heaven and on earth. His authority is highest. He has authority to forgive sin and thus overturn death.

Let our faith arise in him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does this portion of Scripture teach you about Jesus?
2. What does it teach about mankind?
3. What does it reveal about yourself?
4. Do you think the ruler's request to raise his daughter from the dead was condensing command or faithful expectation? Explain your answer. Why do you think he believed Jesus could raise his daughter back to life?
5. What do you think the woman's life would have been like during the 12 years of her chronic illness? See Mark 5:25-34 for more information.
6. Why did she approach Jesus from behind and seek to touch him in secret?
7. What did Jesus say had caused the woman to be "made well?" (See 9:22). How might this truth be applied to those today who seek to sell special prayer cloths or other such garments?
8. Why do think Jesus chose to raise this little girl from the dead? This was the first miracle of this nature.
9. What stands out in your mind most from these three scenes? Why?
10. What questions do you have?
11. What is one thing that you learned?