

Pastor Kenneth Mars

Christ the King & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Cody & Powell, WY

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity

November 19, 2023

Text: Matthew 9:18–26

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We confess that Jesus is the Savior of all people, nations, tribes, and languages (Rev. 7:9). But when it comes to real flesh and blood people who are different from us, things become harder. Different cultures with unusual foods, music, customs, different histories, different socioeconomic status, different hopes and dreams. But in the end, we all need the same thing which can only be given by the same Person: the forgiveness of sins leading to eternal life promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's gospel reading from Matthew 9 provides a stark contrast between two people from two different ends of society. One is the 12-year-old daughter of a prominent, wealthy religious leader. The other is a mature woman with an incurable disease that has robbed her of her wealth, her standing in society, and her hope. Both need Jesus even though they come to Him from different worlds. Our Lord's ministry to these two people is also recorded in Mark's (5:22-43) and Luke's gospel (8:41-56). They provide additional details that will be considered this morning.

The first person in need is the unnamed daughter of Jairus; he's a ruler of a synagogue (vs. 18). Such a position afforded him a wealth, security, and dignity within the Jewish community of his day. But his socioeconomic status could not protect his daughter. Matthew goes straight to the heart of the matter without any details. Jairus begged Jesus, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live" (vs. 18).

Jairus throws all caution aside and begs Jesus, that controversial teacher and miracle-worker from Galilee, to save his daughter. He kneels before Jesus in

humble, desperation. Lord, save my daughter! I don't care what everyone thinks about you, Jesus. Nor do I care what they will think of me coming to you. Jesus, you are my only hope. Bring my daughter back from death.

Think about Jairus' request. It's humanly impossible. Bring the dead back to life. It's one thing to heal lepers, cool fevered brows, heal a paralyzed man, or even calm a raging storm by speaking to the wind and waves. All these things Jesus did in Matthew 8. But raise the dead back to life! That's something Jesus hasn't done yet.

It's often the case that our desperate situations drive us to Jesus. The psalmist, in Psalm 119:67, wrote, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." The very thing we would rather avoid, sometimes at all costs, is what God the Father uses to fulfill His good and gracious will of bringing about repentance and deeper faith and love for God. Our desperation, our neediness, never turns Jesus away. This is great comfort for us. Jesus never turns aside. And so, He agrees to go with Jairus because He is the Savior of the wealthy and respected segments of human society.

But this is where things get complicated. Mark's gospel tells us that a large crowd was following Jesus and thronging about Him (5:24). You have to wonder if Jairus was wishing the crowds would go away so that Jesus can get to his house more quickly. Don't forget, Jairus and his dead daughter.

In vs. 20, the second woman is introduced. "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." According to Mark's gospel, this woman had gone to many doctors and spent all her money on medical care. But nothing helped and her condition grew worse (5:25–26). And there was another problem she faced. According to Numbers 5:2, this woman was unclean and was required to live outside of normal Jewish society. Her persistent menstrual bleeding separated her from family and friends. Her quarantine had endured for 12 long, long years.

This desperate woman came to Jesus in an entirely different manner than Jairus, neither better nor worse, just different. Jairus came to Jesus openly and with dignity to beg Jesus' mercy. But this woman came to Jesus secretly hoping not to be noticed by anyone. Is it possible this woman thought she could be healed secretly without Jesus or the crowd knowing about it? Be that as it may, what is clear both came to Jesus, in different ways from different worlds, but they came to the same Lord and Savior. We must not miss that important point. And even more importantly, Jesus received them both. King David wrote, "A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

This bleeding woman knew she wasn't supposed to be in the crowd, nor was she supposed to touch anyone's clothing. Vs. 22 records her thoughts and reveals her hope, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well" (vs. 22). And sure enough, she is healed! The Lord knows it too. Mark 5:30 includes this wonderful description of what took place, "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments.'"

Maybe we need to stop thinking that we can predict or limit the ways in which Jesus can go about doing His loving work. To be sure, the Lord Himself has promised to create and sustain saving faith through His Word and Sacraments. We must cling to them as our greatest treasure for they give us Jesus and all His gifts, even as He promised. But our Lord can use His gifts in ways that far out-stretch our preconceived notions and ideas. The apostle Paul paused in the midst of his letter to the Ephesian Christians to remind them of the Father's ability to do His will in unexpected ways. Ephesians 3:20–21, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." We Lutherans reject the heretical abuses of the "name it and claim it" theology taught by the prosperity preachers of the past several decades. But we believe when we pray, "Thy will be done" in the Lord's

Prayer, the Father hears and answers our prayer. At times, He accomplishes His will in ways far beyond what we ask or think. Praise be to God!

The bleeding woman, now healed, was afraid because her secret actions are now the center of attention. But Jesus says, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well” (vs. 22). Jesus did for her what all the money in the world could never do. For not only was she delivered from her physical affliction, her sins were forgiven too. Body and soul delivered from sin and shame. She is now a Christian and an heir of eternal life.

In this regard, aren't we Christians are a curious people. When facing death and tragedy, we stubbornly confess that evil is defeated and we are victorious in Jesus. The martyrs of the Christian Church went to their death singing about their triumph over death even as they died. Throughout the ages, Christians have proclaimed that nothing could separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, not life, not death, neither things present nor things to come. May the virtue of Christian courage continue and grow among us here at Christ the King/Immanuel.

Jesus finally arrived at Jairus' house. He told all the mourners and the flute players to “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping” (vs. 24). The Lord of life is here to do the impossible. This girl's death is no more serious to Jesus than awakening someone from a nap. The Lord took the girl's hand and she arose from the dead (vs. 25). On the Last Day, you know, the end of time, Jesus will do the same. He will raise our bodies from the dead. And so shall we live body and soul in His eternal kingdom.

Jesus is the savior of all people. The barriers we raise in this life – money, race, sex, personal histories, failures and triumphs – have no bearing on the extent of Christ's love and victory. Our Lord would not be bound by a woman's uncleanness nor would He be silenced in the face of death. It is here that you must place yourselves into the Biblical text. Go to Jesus with whatever adversity or affliction you are facing: personal, relational, financial, spiritual. None of the situations you are facing can stop the gracious work

Jesus is doing in your lives. Go to Jesus in love and trust. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Jesus is our Savior, our living Savior. His steadfast love never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is His faithfulness (Lam 3:22–23).

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.