

Part 31: Power that Changes Perspectives

Tyler Velin | Luke 8:40-56

August 14, 2022

In Charles Dicken's masterpiece, "A Tale of Two Cities," he opens up his first movement of his book, which is entitled *Recalled to Life* with these words: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way."

As we've worked through the book of Luke we have seen the ministry of Jesus displayed with even more dramatic tension than Dicken's could imagine. Anyone who lives life in this world often knows the pendulum of experience we have between the poles we just read.

Today we encounter a tale of two daughters. Two encounters with what was seemingly the best that could happen, and what was seemingly the worst. A portrait of astounding faith, and a portrait of realistic incredulity. But the tension between all of peaks and valleys is swallowed up in person, character and power of Jesus.

The hope of this passage is our hope too. To prepare us for life's trials, Luke has been showing us the authority of Jesus over the most powerful forces in our lives. Walking with Jesus doesn't remove the challenge of the world, the flesh and the devil, but it does promise a unique sort of triumph over it as we walk with the one who has total power over those things.

In our head we all want a text book answer for how we handle the sorrows, sufferings and problem of evil in our own days. Much good academic theology and philosophy can provide soul stirring and God-honoring answers for us. But God himself has not chosen to explicitly give us the answer, but instead to explicitly show us the uniqueness of Jesus in the midst of sorrow and suffering. Seeing who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he is still accomplishing in this world gives us renewed perspective and real hope in the midst of life's seemingly endless paradoxes.

Our main point today is going to be this: **When we walk with the one who calls the dead to life, we walk through suffering with distinct perspectives.** In other words, walking with Jesus is walking in this same world, with the same challenges, same sorrows and same enemies, but because of Jesus our perspective on the world is different because we see it through the lens of the cross.

We are going to see two perspectives in this text today, but much like last week, Luke the master historian is going to highlight these perspectives by building out some important context first. Let's dive into this together in **Luke 8:40-42a**.

If you recall last week, Jesus was just sent away from the Gentile territory across the way because his power was too disruptive. But here as he returns to Judea, he is met by crowds waiting for him. And it would seem that many are waiting for him on account of a specific need.

That is the need of a man named Jairus. Jairus' name is used because he was most likely well known among the Jews in the area as he was the ruler of a synagogue. These synagogue officials acted in many ways as today's pastors would. They attended to some of the logistical matters of the place and cared for spiritual issues in and among the people.

Jairus was therefore not only known by the people, but perhaps even loved by some of them. At this point there is conflict brewing between Jewish officials, of which Jairus would have belonged, and Jesus. But Jairus' actions here show there is no tension in his heart. Instead of vetting and judging Jesus like many other authorities had, he seeks him out, falls at his feet and begins to implore, ask heartily, and request that Jesus come into his house.

Why? Verse 42 tells us, he had a daughter, an only daughter, a 12 year old daughter, and that daughter was dying.

We are to encounter this request as nothing more than absolute desperation and fatherly affection. I have four children, and three daughters, and I cannot imagine the distress this kind of situation would cause in me. My oldest daughter is 7, her name is Addley, and I'm sure most of you have met her. And imagine your own emotions if your pastor's daughter, if Addley, were in the same situation as this young girl—dying with no hope of stopping the inevitable end.

We are so blessed to have a church who loves my family, and I know, because to a degree we have experienced it through our own miscarriage and potential miscarriage, that you would share this burden, that you would have a vested, urgent interest in seeing the situation fixed. But imagine how much more would my own zeal would be, my own fear, my own sorrow? Import that here to this situation. A young girl is dying, lives are at stake, speed is of the essence.

And to the father's joy, Jesus is willing to go. But immediately we encounter two problems. We see the first in **Luke 8:42b**.

The crowds posed a problem. The Greek word here is the same word Matthew and Mark use to describe the seed which was choked out by the weeds. It is a pressing, a squishing. Mark uses the wonderfully theological word to describe the effect of the crowds: they squashed him.

We all know the pain of trying to make a quick Costco run in Reserve Street traffic. But here it is not a \$5 rotisserie chicken on the line but the life of this young girl, and traffic is slow.

But then, it gets worse for Jairus. Read with me: **Luke 8:43-49**.

Here we encounter a living parable of our first perspective today: **Insignificant Suffering is Significant to Jesus**.

The truth of the matter is, this woman, and her suffering were relatively insignificant in light of everything which is going on. But it's the build out that Luke gives us here that again highlights the unique privilege of walking with Jesus as he shows us Jesus character towards this woman.

This woman, unlike Jairus' daughter, is not of any significant importance to this crowd of people. We aren't sure how old she is, but we do know that she has been suffering for the same amount of years Jairus' daughter has been alive.

What she has been suffering with was what Luke, who himself was a physician, called a discharge of blood. Medically speaking this would most likely be categorized today as something called "menorrhagia" (men-or-ah-jee-yah). It is essential extreme menstrual symptoms that perhaps could have been caused due to a bleeding disorder or an obstruction of sorts in the uterus which, to quote a physician I spoke to about this week said, causes you "to bleed like crazy."

She also informed me that this disease is remarkably treatable today with surgery or medicine and isn't particularly life threatening. This is underscored by Luke himself who tells us that she has been suffering with this for 12 years. She is suffering with it, but she's certainly not dying from it.

In contrast to the young daughter's situation, this is quite an insignificant issue. But to this particular woman, it's very significant. Isn't that how experiences work? We can often shame ourselves, and even balance ourselves out by looking at the experience of others, but there's a degree where whatever it is that is happening to us is innately personal.

I've never been a woman, I've never had to deal with these kind of issues before but I am married to one and I know how uncomfortable they are in the best situations. This has been ongoing for 12 years. And her experience was so dire that Luke informs us she spent all of her living to fix it. The Greek word there communicates that she lavished all of her resources, all of her property she poured out to physicians who could possibly help her, but none could. In fact Mark tells us that despite the medical interventions, the bleeding only grew worse.

Her exhausted situation is spelled out clearly for us in verse 43: "She could not be healed by anyone."

Her suffering would have been compounded by the unique relational and spiritual isolation this caused. Part of God's common grace given in the Law were measures used to prevent the spread of disease in a time prior to modern antibiotics. So discharges such as this would have made the woman ceremonially unclean until it stopped and she was able to cleanse herself.

For the ordinary Israelite woman, this was no big deal because the bleeding would stop, God's grace made a way forward, and they could go into the temple, and worship God. But for this woman not only was she not allowed to visit the temple because of her continual bleeding, but she was not even allowed to touch anyone without that person having to go through their own process of purification in order for them to rejoin the community. You can read more about this in Leviticus 15.

But it's this physical distress and communal isolation which creates the scandal of what happened in the crowd. She reached out, and risked defiling the religious teacher, and touched the fringe of his garment. And immediately she was made well.

Can you imagine what she felt like in that moment? When Sarah was pregnant with Ellie she had an underlying condition which could have caused her body to miscarry at any point. We lived under that burden for seven long months and I remember the floods of emotions when she was born and the danger was removed. Physical relief, the emotional un-doneness, and sheer gratitude interplayed in the most profound way.

This woman, the one who suffered for 12 years, the one who no one could cure, the one who couldn't be clean, couldn't be touched, and couldn't worship at the temple in a moment was made well.

And then the worst possible thing happens: The one she touched, the one she just made ceremonially unclean, realizes someone touched him and he wants to know who it was.

Peter in verse 45 tried to remind Jesus that everyone is touching him, he's being squished on all sides. But Jesus says, "Someone touched me for I perceive power has gone out of me."

Here we see something unique about Jesus, there was a real sense where Jesus was in full control of his healing power. It was only this woman who touched him who was healed, not anyone who touched him. Yet, somehow aware and knowing of his healing work, Jesus did not know who touched him.

Here is the sweetness of being saved by Jesus, he seeks to not simply stamp passports, but to save people, his people, people he knows. In Matthew 7 Jesus says he will send many away in the last day saying, "Away from me, I never knew you." But here we see Jesus solve that problem for those who seek Jesus in faith. Jesus doesn't save people without knowing them, he wants to know those who come to him in faith.

But this woman was fearful of being known, fearful because what would any other Rabbi do? Would they be upset at the cleansing they would have to do--the inconvenience of being touched by an impure person? Jesus was on an important errand to heal someone with something life threatening and she stopped it all with something that could have easily waited. And Luke said she had a terrible realization: "When she realized she was not hidden."

No one hides from Jesus. You might think you can approach the holiness of God in the safety of a crowd and be overlooked. You might think you can gussy up the outside and convince him you're a safe bet and better than you really are. But Jesus, the Holy one of God, sees all of you.

This realization led this woman not to withdraw, but instead to show the humble honesty of feeble faith. Read with me, **Luke 8:47**.

She came trembling and fell down before him, and what did she do? She declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him. She probably shared about her bleeding, the duration of it, how no one else was able to fix it, and how she thought that if she could just touch Jesus' cloak, he would be strong enough to help.

Think of the potential fear this would have produced in her. The whole crowd heard why Jesus was moving: there was a dying 12 year-old of a well-loved and prominent figure who was dying. And this woman, who was not dying, who was not in a life or death situation, who could have easily waited, and who was ceremonially unclean, stopped this whole care team for this?

But notice what Jesus said: **Luke 8:48**.

Jesus calls her his daughter, and he affirms her faith, and he sends her away at peace. He speaks into her fears of being known, fears of being seen as insignificant, and fears of suffering and crushes them. How? By affirming her faith in him.

You might think your own fears, weaknesses, and sin in this world is embarrassing and shameful. And to be honest, your trials might not be as worse as someone else's. But no issue, no discomfort, no sin, is insignificant to Jesus when we bring it to him in faith.

Why would you touch Jesus? Would you be willing to risk humiliation before humanity to confess your most humbling need to Jesus? Many of us want Jesus like we want a new phone—it seems nice and I'd like to have it. But at the core of anyone who truly reaches out in faith is a keen awareness of a need to touch him—an exclusive, but often feeble, conviction that this man might be able to fix what the world on its own never could.

This woman and her seemingly insignificant need was seen as significant to Jesus on account of her faith.

But now consider the father.

Look at what happens while Jesus was still speaking: **Luke 8:49**.

Just as Jesus says to this woman, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." A person comes from Jairus' house and whispers, "Your daughter is dead." It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times. Because Jesus stopped to care for what was not life threatening, Jairus' daughter died.

And what did the people from the house say: "Don't trouble the teacher anymore."

Unless we see the person and power of Jesus in this text we will always believe this word of advice. We go to Jesus because we have a need, but it seems everyone else got what we didn't. We tried the Jesus route, and it didn't work. I went to the Lord with my sorrow, and nothing changed. I prayed for help, and it didn't come in time. I gave it a shot, now it's time to find something else. How many of us think what I'm sure the father did in this moment, "Jesus is not able to fix a problem as significant as mine"?

But this is not the end of the story. Jesus' power in the face of the world's danger is not limited as the powers of the flesh are. For even death itself is no match for Jesus. And here we see our final perspective this morning: **Significant Suffering is Insignificant to Jesus**.

Read with me: **Luke 8:50-56**.

So what do we see here? We see Jesus doesn't live in the same standards of tension we do. Jesus doesn't have to choose which people he has the capacity and time to care for and those he doesn't.

We would. We would have to choose. This is what ER doctors and nurses do every day. They choose, they triage who they should treat with limited resources and how fast they ought to do it.

But Jesus doesn't have to choose because even death itself is insignificant to Jesus. It's not insignificant to Jesus emotionally because Jesus cared for it. But it's insignificant to Jesus effectually because death has no power which Jesus himself cannot revoke, and revoke forever.

This is so incredibly important for us to understand because we still live in a world with these same problems. Diseases still go uncured, children still die. You and I will have times where we look at our

own lives and say, “He’s moving too slow! There’s not enough time! He’s not saving fast enough! Does he even care?”

We will together sit down at funerals with caskets far too small. We will grieve with those whose bodies waste away with incurable diseases. We will feel the burden of mental illness, suicide and sorrow. But look here: there is nothing this world can do which Jesus cannot undo. Let me say that again, there is nothing this world can do to you—there is no pain, no suffering, no trial, even if that trial is death, which Jesus is not able to undo.

That’s what it means to walk with Jesus. That’s why we touch his cloak, that’s what our faith is in. That’s why Jesus can say to us: “Do not fear, only believe, and she will be well.”

But how do some people, how do we often respond to that? Look back at **Luke 8:52-53**. In the face of the world’s power, we laugh at claims of faith. Why? Because we know what a dead body looks like. We’ve buried people before, we’ve felt grief before. We know all too well the normal experience of the inevitable brokenness of the world.

But here is the one who laughs back at the impossible.

Jesus took the hand of the dead girl, which also would have made him ceremonially unclean, and he spoke to her. He called her to obey. Tenderly, kindly, graciously. And what did she do? She got up at once. Two weeks ago, Jesus spoke to the world, calling the waves to a stop and they ceased. Last week, Jesus spoke to the Devil, commanding demons to leave and they fled. This week, Jesus calls the dead to stand, and even the dead obey the call of Jesus.

And here’s the amazing thing. He told the parents not to say anything. Why? This was the most significant thing that had ever happened in the parent’s life. But Jesus knew that even this news was insignificant compared to what he had left to do. There was something greater and more significant which Jesus was going to accomplish and that’s what he wanted to be known for.

Jesus himself, the one who raised the dead, was going to lay down his life. He was going to die on account of our sin—the root cause for all our suffering, fear and death. But then he was going to rise again. He was going to defeat death himself by the glory of God the Father by crushing sin on the cross.

And what does that mean for us? **Romans 6:5, 9**.

It means if Jesus has dealt with our sin on the cross, we will rise. Really, rise. The cross is the ultimate proof that there is nothing this world can do which Jesus cannot undo.

You can laugh at Jesus, disbelieve and walk away to mourn with the world, or you can mourn right now that this world is hard, and that sorrow fills the air and believe Jesus, knowing that one day our mourning will turn to laughter.

How do you know? You might feel like the woman straining at something that seems to be passing her by. You might feel like the father grieving despite the hope he had. How do we know that Jesus is able to do this? Well because the same Jesus who stopped and cared in this story is the same Jesus we worship today.

And just as Jesus raised this girl back from the dead, anyone who has faith in Jesus already has resurrected faith. Anyone who is able to put away fear by the presence of faith in Jesus is one who has had Jesus himself touched your uncleanness, took your hand and say: "Child arise."

I can't perfectly answer why evil still exists. But I can tell you that I've experienced the touch of the one who has promised to remove it forever, and the one who in the midst of everything says: "Do not fear, only believe." When we see what it's like to walk with Jesus we can look at our world and all its power and remind ourselves of two things: 1. I have been saved, and 2. I will be saved.

We don't know why that day is not yet, we don't know when that day will come, but we can know the Jesus who walks in the midst of it with us reminding us: "Do not fear, only believe."

Job encountered trials galore. The world the flesh and the devil waged war against him. He tried to grapple with it, and he had three friends come and sit with him in the midst of it. And those three friends tried their best to help Job understand the problem of suffering and the hope of God, but they failed miserably.

But then something happened. God spoke. He spoke and confronted Job with his power so much so that Job found something stunning in the midst of what was humbling: peace. In the face of the uncertainties and trials of life Job concludes saying this: **Job 42:2-3**.

And right after Job says this, God rebukes his three friends. Why? God tells us in verse 8, "You have not spoken of me what is right."

You see the only thing that makes sense of our suffering is the word of God, and the only thing that brings us peace in our suffering is the power of God. And here Jesus is the power of God and the word of God in the flesh so that we no longer have to take God at his word, but we can know the one who came for us and walks with us.

In Jesus, God has come down in the flesh to replace the comfort of incomplete and insufficient friends. Jesus is the one who faithfully sits with us, and holds us to a right view of God in the midst of the storm. The world can't speak what's right in the face of suffering, but the person of Jesus shows it. He has shown that even when the world whispers the worst news in the world into our ear, Jesus calls us forward in faith knowing the cross changes everything.

For those who feel like this woman, set aside your feeble faith and throw yourself with confidence at the foot of the cross. For those who feel like the girl's parents, crushed by what seems insurmountable even though you've done the right things, you've prayed the right prayers, and hoped in the right place—do not cease to trouble this teacher for he has shown us there is always hope when we walk with the one who raises even the dead.

He has shown us on the cross that one day all will die, but for those who have faith in him, for those who bring their insignificant and their significant concerns to him their forever call will be, "Child, arise."