

Touching Desperation 8-15-04

Matthew 9:18-26 (NIV)

¹⁸While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live."
¹⁹Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. ²⁰Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."
²²Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment. ²³When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, ²⁴he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶News of this spread through all that region.

These two miracles both involve touch. In one, the needy person touched Jesus; in the other, He touched the one in need. Both were in desperate need of what Jesus alone can do. Both received what Jesus alone can give.

¹⁸While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus was speaking of the need to put new wine in new bottles. (Matthew 9:17) The analogy was that of the old religious system's inflexibility of form and function being like an old wineskin. Jesus was teaching according the very words they honored. They couldn't see the truth He taught, because they had so misconstrued the Holy Writ and made hard and unbending interpretations from the intellect and not the Spirit. They couldn't receive the revelation of truth that Jesus brought because it didn't fit their old religious boxes. Jesus came teaching at the leading of the Spirit of God, not the routine of ceremony and tradition. The inflexibility of religious patterns is what sent Jesus out to work among the dregs of society, to "sinners" such as the very author of this book we are studying. It is while He was teaching on this very problem that an old hardened wineskin came to plead for help.

We find in the other synoptic gospels that his name is Jairus. (Ee-ah'-i-ros = whom God enlightens) (Mark 5:22) He was a ruler of the local synagogue. That means he would have been in charge of assigning who was to speak, who was to read, the order of the service, the ministry of the elders, and the maintaining of the building. Previously, Jesus had looked on him with anger for his preference for legality over compassion when Jesus healed the shriveled hand of an attendee on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:5) Jesus was probably the last place Jairus turned. In fact, you might say that Jairus was not only an old wineskin, but also one that had burst. In his desperation to save his 12-year-old daughter, he went to the one Man that was ruining his reputation and pride. Jesus healed two people in the synagogue he oversaw, and both times it was the Sabbath.

You do realize, don't you, that when we are hardheartedly stubborn about compassion or the working of the Spirit, that the mercy of God will allow a situation in

Commented [notes1]: ¹⁷Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."
Matthew 9:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ²²Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet
Mark 5:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ⁵He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.
Mark 3:5 (NIV)

which we have to face our own condition? (Romans 2:4) This was what was happening to Jairus. He had most likely been with the other Pharisees in condemning Jesus for not functioning according to their hard and fast laws. When Jesus reminded them that God preferred mercy to sacrifice, (Matthew 9:13) Jairus probably bristled along with the other hardhearted legalists. But now Jairus was the one in need of mercy, and there was nowhere else to turn. Going to Jesus was an act of desperation. He had to humble himself to go to Him. (Daniel 10:12)

Commented [notes4]: ⁴Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
Romans 2:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
Matthew 9:13 (NIV)

Have you been there? Have you been so insistent on a doctrine and then faced a situation in which you had to change your mind? That is God's mercy. Have you been vigorously opposed to a person and then found you needed their gracious help? That is God's mercy. We are all people of like passion. (Acts 14:15) We make wrong judgments and sometimes come to the wrong conclusions, and God is trying to help us see the need to have compassion on people who are just like us. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) They are lessons in humility. Jairus kneeled. That is an act of worship. Imagine how humbling this was for the proud ruler of the synagogue.

Commented [notes6]: ¹²Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.
Daniel 10:12 (NIV)

Matthew gives us an abbreviated version of this story. In the other two synoptic gospels, Jairus is asking for help for his dying daughter and on the way there receives news of her death. (Luke 8:49) Matthew has shortened the story a bit, but the substance is the same. As in the other stories, Matthew is not so intent on all the details as he is to declare that through these miracles we see that Jesus is king over all things, even death.

Commented [notes7]: ¹⁵And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:
Acts 14:15 (KJV)

Commented [notes8]: ³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ... [1]

In Matthew's account, Jairus asks for Jesus to place His hand on her. Perhaps he had seen Jesus heal the leper with His touch. (Matthew 8:3) That may have been working on Jairus' legalistic heart. If Jesus' touch could heal an unclean leper, maybe it could raise his dead daughter as well. A dead body was considered unclean, (Numbers 19:11) but if Jairus understood the truth that what is most holy couldn't be defiled, then he realized Jesus' touch would have to bring his daughter to life just like it made the leper clean. (Exodus 39:37)

Commented [notes9]: ⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."
Luke 8:49 (NIV) ... [2]

Commented [notes10]: ³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.
Matthew 8:3 (NIV)

¹⁹Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. Jesus didn't hold anything against those who could not see the truth. He didn't even point out their previous opposition to Him in the past. He didn't even use the opportunity to preach to him. He just got up and went with him. Sometimes, all we need to say is said in our actions. He had already heard Jesus tell the religious leaders that mercy was important to God. (Matthew 9:13) Jesus' action reinforced the lesson. Even the way in which Jesus encouraged the man in Luke and Mark's accounts showed forgiving mercy. (Luke 8:50)

Commented [notes11]: ¹¹He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.
Numbers 19:11 (KJV)

Commented [notes12]: ³⁷Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.
Exodus 29:37 (KJV) ... [3]

Commented [notes13]: ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
Matthew 9:13 (NIV)

Have you been so angry with God that you refused to speak to Him in prayer for some time? Did the affects of this fallen world cause you such pain that you were angry with the Savior for allowing them? When we fall into that trap, we separate ourselves from our only source of help. We cut ourselves off from the only One who is willing to feel what we feel and bring us through the pain to spiritual growth. We should be like Jairus and humble ourselves and run to Jesus. He won't hold your

Commented [notes14]: ⁵⁰Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."
Luke 8:50 (NIV)

mistakes against you if you will turn to Him for help. He is merciful! He will get up and go with you. (Acts 26:18)

Turn on the sirens! Jesus is on His way to save a life. Get out of the road; this is important business.

²⁰*Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.*

This woman had a condition that made her and everything she touched unclean. (Leviticus 15:25-27) For twelve years people had avoided her touch. Mark tells us she spent all she had on doctors and only got worse. (Mark 5:26) Luke, being a doctor, pointed out that no one could heal her. (Luke 8:43) Isolated and crushed in spirit she thought she saw one chance to be healed.

²¹*She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."*

The Jews had a tradition that when the Messiah came, the very tassel of his clothes would have the power to heal. They took the final threads of their clothing and brought them together in the form of a tassel according to the Law. (Numbers 15:38-39)

It was tied in such a way that the five knots remind them about the five books of Moses. Every time they saw it, they were reminded that they were God's covenant people. You get an idea of how the Jews felt about these tassels in Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees for making their tassels long. (Matthew 23:5) It was a thing of pride. A long tassel was as if to say, "I'm so cognoscente of the fact that I am God's chosen that I just may be the Messiah."

This poor woman risked the rebuke and anger of the crowd to get to the tassel on Jesus' clothing. She was desperate. She was so convinced He was the Messiah, and therefore that His tassel would heal her, that she pushed through the crowd and reached out and touched it. I wish I were a painter so I could express that picture. There is Jesus and Jairus walking in long strides, on a mission. There is the crowd pressing in on every side. (Luke 8:42) There is a desperate woman in failing health but full of faith reaching out. Then there is that amazing moment when the power of Jesus flowed into this woman like a lightning bolt, and she was made whole. She instantly knew she was healed. Twelve years of misery ended in that moment. What a sense of awe and wonder and joy she must have felt!

The other gospel writers tell us that Jesus asked who had touched Him, because He knew power had gone out from His body. (Luke 8:46) The disciples were amazed because so many had touched Him in the jostling crowd. It is one thing to touch Jesus like a common man, and it is another thing to touch Him with faith in who He is. That faith acted like a grounding rod for the power of Jesus to flow.

²²*Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.*

Again, His purity and holiness, the fact that He is most holy, makes the unclean pure. You can't defile Him, but He can make you whole. Take heart, believer. Your faith can see you to health. Jesus cares about you as an individual. You, little ol' you, matter to God. He'll never be too busy for you. That is how important you are to Him.

Commented [notes15]: ¹⁸To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.
Acts 26:18 (KJV)

Commented [notes16]: ^{25m}When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period.
²⁶Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period.
²⁷Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.
Leviticus 15:25-27 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: ²⁶She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.
Mark 5:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: ⁴³And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.
Luke 8:43 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: ^{38m}Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel.
³⁹You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.
Numbers 15:38-39 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: ⁵ⁿEverything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;
Matthew 23:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.
Luke 8:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: ⁴⁶But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."
Luke 8:46 (NIV)

Did you ever get so busy with your "to do" list that when God interrupted you with a person in need, you were upset? "Hey! I've got all this stuff to do, important things for the kingdom of God. This needy person is keeping me from getting my work done!" Maybe the Lord is trying to show us something with the way this story unfolds. Even on the way to raise a person from the dead, we might be interrupted with a person who is in need. I might have said, "Let me check my calendar and I'll get back with you." Not Jesus! He took the time to speak to her right then and there. He could have just kept walking, but He stopped to address her personally. Never get too busy for those in need. Recognize interruptions are often God at work in someone's life, a chance to let Him touch a life through you. Interruptions are often God's opportunities.

Jesus continued His journey to Jairus' house. In the excavations of Capernaum, a large house was discovered next to the synagogue. It may have been this very house that Jesus entered. Jesus moves easily and without favoritism from the woman, society had held as unclean for 12 years, to the most respected man in Capernaum's home. (Ephesians 6:9) Your status in life makes no difference to Him; you are as important to Him as any king.

²³When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, ²⁴he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. Jews had a prescribed way of dealing with death. Even a poor family had to hire two flute players and a professional wailer. Jairus must have been a man of means and therefore would have many of each. The flutes raised such a noise that Roman law limited the number to eight. There were probably eight and a large number of professional wailers. They had been around death many times and knew the girl was dead. Jesus told this noisy crowd to "Go away!" He said she was sleeping.

The Jews sometimes used the word for sleep to mean death. Remember that Jesus told the disciples that Lazarus was sleeping. (John 11:13-14) Even the cemetery is called 'the place of sleeping' in Greek. They knew what death looked like and laughed at Jesus. Was Jesus using this term of double meaning to get them out of the room? He knew death as a temporal state.

²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶News of this spread through all that region. The expression "Go away!" is very forceful. They had to literally kick everyone out. He only allowed the parents and the inner disciples to stay. (Luke 8:51) Finally, when quiet was restored, Jesus reached down and took the girl's hand as the Father had at first requested. At the touch of Jesus, that powerful moment happened again. As He took her hand, Luke tells us He said, "Talitha kum!" or "Little girl, I say to you, arise." (Luke 8:41) He also says, "her spirit returned and she arose immediately." (Luke 8:55) Luke's description is reminiscent of the testimonies of those who died and left their bodies. At some point, they returned and could tell of what they saw and experienced while their brain waves were flat and their body lay in a hospital bed. This was Jesus' first resurrection of the dead. The widow of Nain's son would be next, (Luke 7:13-14) and then Lazarus. (John 11:43-44)

Commented [notes23]: ⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Ephesians 6:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: ¹³Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, John 11:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: ⁵¹When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Luke 8:51 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." ¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" Luke 7:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." John 11:43-44 (NIV)

It has been said, that if you are to seek a religion, there are two important questions to ask. What did the teacher do about his death? What did he tell me to do about mine? When we look at the history of the great religious teachers, we find their bodies are still in their graves, with one notable exception. Jesus conquered death and appeared to hundreds. He taught His disciples, "*Because I live, you will live also!*" (John 14:19) That is the kind of teacher worth following. That is the kind of teacher worth listening to.

Arthur Brisbane has pictured the funeral of a Christian as a crowd of grieving caterpillars, all wearing black suits. As they crawl along mourning their dead brother and carrying his cocoon to its final resting place, above them flutters an incredibly beautiful butterfly, looking down on them in utter disbelief. —MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The

Jesus never promised to save us from, or even explain, the tragedies of living in this fallen world. Instead, He gives the wonderful promise that "*he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies*" (John 11:25).

These two people came to Jesus in utter desperation. The woman thought she might as well be dead. She was broke and knew that if she was ever to again have a normal role in society, the touch of anyone ever again, she needed the miraculous. The ruler of the Synagogue was from a whole different level of society, but the death of his daughter had made him just as desperate. Only a miracle could bring back his darling.

They both knew where their only hope lay. Interesting, isn't it? These two people from opposite ends of society, both seeking the same Man, and both seeking the same thing, a touch. Her touch was a desperate reach out in faith, while Jairus was desperately requesting that Jesus touch his daughter. But their results were the same. Contact with Jesus brought life. Actually, the word used for the woman's healing (*sozo*) implied salvation. Strangely enough, the word sometimes translated "saved" from the Greek is exactly the way the Japanese pronounce "create".

That same supernatural moment we saw in both cases can happen to you this morning if you come to Jesus in faith with your request like Jairus did. Ask for His touch, or reach out and touch Him in faith, like the woman did. Jesus doesn't reject anyone that comes to Him. (John 6:37) It doesn't matter that you have been angry with Him, or if you are at the end of your rope in desperation. All He asks is that you believe. (Mark 5:36) You can touch Him like the crowd did, without any result whatsoever, or you can touch Him like the woman did, with the grounding rod of faith, and the power will flow.

Commented [notes28]: ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.
John 14:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: ³⁷All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
John 6:37 (KJV)

Commented [notes30]: ³⁶Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."
Mark 5:36 (NIV)

Page 2: [1] Commented [notes8] notes

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

⁴who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (NIV)

Page 2: [2] Commented [notes9] notes

⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler.

"Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."

Luke 8:49 (NIV)

Page 2: [3] Commented [notes12] notes

³⁷Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

Exodus 29:37 (KJV)