

"Expecting a Miracle?" Matthew 9:18-26 Trinity 24 2023

Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

What I wouldn't give to have a day with Jesus as he walked this earth. They were amazing times! Amazing teachings! The great thing is that we can take ourselves to those days by simply picking up a Bible reading it and imagining that day as if it were today. I want to take you back to one of those days depicted in the Gospel of Matthew 9:18-30.

Here we are given a glimpse of a day in the life of Jesus. And during this day we hear about two amazing and miraculous healings – a girl, and a woman. Each is healed from a different illness, and each is healed in a different way. But with both, Jesus is directly involved.

The first is a ruler of the synagogue from Capernaum – a leader in the community. He is grief stricken that his twelve-year-old daughter has died. According to Luke his name was Jairus, and he of course has heard Jesus teach – possibly knows him since Jesus had taught many times in Capernaum and certainly in the synagogue. Jairus had also witnessed many miracles or at least heard of many miracles of Jesus. Most recently a boy from the village of Nain was raised from the dead.

So, he seeks Jesus out – he's desperate. He says something revealing his incredible faith: "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." Later Jesus arrives at the home

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where all the neighbors and relatives are grieving. They laugh when Jesus says that she is just sleeping. They know she is dead and that's the end. There is no faith in their hearts. So, Jesus sends them out, takes her by the hand and calls her to arise.

The second healing involves a very different person – a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve long years. That was not just irritating but it separated her from society. She was unclean meaning that she was not allowed near the temple or the synagogue. She must touch no one and no one can touch her. While Jairus was experiencing the joy of his daughter and life in his home for twelve years, we have all those years that this woman was grieving alone. No husband, no children, no connection with the fellowship of believers. It was a very lonely life.

In a moment she sees Jesus passing through the crowd. She has heard him teach and preach. This is her chance. And in faith she reaches out from the ground and grabs the tassel from the corner of his robe. Jesus feels the power released from him to heal her but doesn't know who it is. Jesus asks who touched him. She confesses her faith that if she touches only his garment, she will be well. And Jesus affirms: Your faith HAS made you well!

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These are both amazing and wonderful and different stories of healing but what binds them together? Faith. Each is an example of the power of faith and teaches us the great treasure that is right in front of us every day. Do you realize how much faith changes our lives and the world around us? What do we learn about this great treasure of faith?

Firstly, we learn that faith is the key that releases the power of God. The opposite is true as well: a lack of faith limits the power of God. Notice first what Jesus tells this woman who has been healed of her flow of blood in verse 22: "Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.""

It was clearly their FAITH that healed her. It was also faith that the synagogue official had. Both of them had absolute confidence that Jesus not only could but would heal. From their statements there was no doubt.

And that is the key for the work of God throughout the Gospels. Somehow God's power is linked with faith. In fact, if there is not faith – his hands are bound. When Jesus was in Nazareth, his hometown, he spoke in the Synagogue but people rejected him as the Savior. He was just the hometown boy. And so, his ministry there was also very limited: Mark 6:5-6 "And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His

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hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief.”

Why are there so few miracles today? Why don't we see what happened in the Gospels and in the book of Acts? Why do we refer to the days of miracles as “Bible times”? Jesus said John 14:12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.” Why don't we see that? Because we live in a time in which there is little faith. We believe only in that which we can touch, see, and measure. For the most part, we don't really believe in the power of God as they did.

Secondly, there is another lesson about faith which is good news for us: we have a source of faith which is the Word of God. I've read these stories of healing many, many times and am amazed at their faith. We wonder if those people were just born that way? Did they have a greater religious inclination? Were they just more spiritual? No, they weren't any different in their doubts than we are. But what made them different than others was the fact that they received the teaching of the Word of God.

You see, we're not born with faith. It's not a talent or ability that some have, and some don't although it does seem easier for children to

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believe than adults. Faith comes from outside of us. Just as Jesus told the story of the farmer who planted the seeds in the soil and the plants grew up – so God plants in our heart the Word of God which results in faith that grows and produces fruit.

Today the Word is attacked left and right as just a book, just stories and fables, unreliable, one of many classics. And if we throw out the Word and do not receive it, how will God touch our souls? Beware! Return to the Word that can heal your souls, plant faith, and release the power of God today! Salvation or any other miracle that happens through faith is a work of God's power alone. It gives no credit to us, or to any other person but gives glory to the Lord of the universe – God Almighty.

Thirdly, we can learn the lesson that faith releases to God all the impossibilities. The greatest impossibility is the salvation of a lost soul. We are born self-centered, self-seeking. We are born living for the flesh and in the world. And yet God does a miracle through the Word and touches our hearts. He creates faith and brings us to confession of sins and faith. We trust in Christ alone and are totally righteous through Him. God takes the soul that is long lost and far from God and transforms that life!

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Jesus spoke of the impossibility of a rich man being saved is like a camel going through a needle. And then he said this: "But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" (Mt 19:26) "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt 17:20) When Mary was told that as a virgin she would bear a son the angel told her: "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Lk 1:37) To the father of the boy possessed by demons Jesus told: "All things are possible for one who believes." (Mk 9:23)

Do you see the common theme here? Faith is simply releasing all our burdens, all our fears, all our impossibilities into the hands of God because we cannot deal with them. We cannot do ANYTHING. We are totally helpless. But God can do the impossible. Faith lets everything go out of our hands and into his hands because he can handle it. We can trust him. But the main question concerning any miracle is this: is Jesus being glorified. He is to be lifted up and praised above all. Miracles are not self-serving. They are not just to give us what we want but to give the Lord praise.

A parable is told of a community of ducks waddling off to duck church one Sunday to hear their duck preacher. After they waddled into

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the duck sanctuary, the service began and the duck preacher spoke eloquently of how God had given the ducks wings with which to fly. He pounded the pulpit with his wings and said,

"With these wings, there is nowhere we ducks cannot go!
There is no God-given task we ducks cannot accomplish!
With these wings we no longer need walk through life.
We can soar high in the sky!"

Shouts of Amen!" were quacked throughout the duck congregation. The duck preacher concluded his message by exclaiming, "With our wings we can fly through life!" WE.....CAN.....FLY!!!!" More ducks quacked out loud AMENS! in response. Every duck loved the service.

In fact, all the ducks that were present commented on what a wonderfully convicting message they had heard from their duck preacher....and then they left the church and waddled all the way home.

Let's not be a duck congregation that waddles home! Let's listen to the Word, soak it up, receive it, let your heart be filled with the truth of God's promises. And then walk it in faith. Are you daily opening your heart to the message the Lord has for you? It WILL transform you and you will be transformed into his likeness and a vessel of his power. Do you NEED the Lord or are you self-sufficient? People in these stories

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couldn't live without him. They were desperate. Are you desperate enough to take and receive everything he says to you? Only then will you be able to receive the great treasure of faith that will grow in your heart! Amen.