

Desperate Measures

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading this morning is from Luke chapter 8. We'll be looking at verses 40 through 56. If you would like a physical copy of the Bible, there are some in the back there, and the passage will be found on page 866 in those Bibles.

Luke chapter 8, verses 40 through 56. Now, when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.

And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler in the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about 12 years of age, and she was dying.

And as Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, Who was it that touched me?

[1 : 10] When all denied it, Peter said, Master, the crowd surrounds you and are pressing in on you. But Jesus said, Someone touch me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.

And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

And he said to her, And while he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, Your daughter is dead.

Do not trouble the teacher anymore. But Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be well. And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

And all were weeping and mourning for her. But he said, Do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

[2 : 15] But taking her by the hand, he called, saying, Child, arise. And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed.

But he charged them to tell no one what had happened. This is God's Word. If you have a Bible, please turn to Luke chapter 8, verses 40 through 56.

We're doing a series in the morning here at St. Columba's on encounters with Jesus. And you'll notice in this passage, there are, in fact, not just one encounter, but two encounters.

So, this morning, it's kind of two for the price of one. Although, I'll try to make sure that the sermon doesn't last twice as long.

The film was called Desperate Measures. Released back, I think, in 1998, it featured Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia, Brian Cox. And it told a story of a San Francisco police officer who embarks on a frantic search for a compatible bone marrow donor for his leukemia-stricken son.

[3 : 33] And it's a Hollywood film. In his desperation, he breaks into the FBI headquarters to find a suitable donor. He finds a match on the computer.

Unfortunately, it turns out to be some violent killer. He's then plunged into a series of increasingly desperate actions as he tries to save his son's life.

And the film really depicts the desperate, the extreme measures that a person might go in order to save their child's life. We ourselves sometimes quote the proverb, Desperate times call for desperate measures.

And in our text today from Luke chapter 8, we're introduced to two desperate individuals, two people who've been pushed to the very limit, two people who've been taken to that place of utter desperation, pushed into taking desperate measures.

And in their desperation, with no one else to turn to, they reach out in faith to Jesus Christ. And sometimes that is the way of it.

[4 : 46] It's in the difficult experiences of life, in the desperate times, that people turn and cast themselves on the mercy of God. It's in the hard times that people turn to Jesus.

How often it is that God uses circumstances of desperation and difficulty to break into people's lives and to bring them hope and salvation.

C.S. Lewis famously put it like this, God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain.

It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. And here in our text this morning, we find these two very different people being awakened and stirred up by desperate times that push them into taking desperate measures.

I want to look at this passage under three headings. The first thing I want you to notice is this, is that Jesus here encounters the faith of the desperate.

[5 : 58] Jesus encounters the faith of the desperate. And as I mentioned, this passage at the end of Luke 8 centers around these two very different individuals.

The stories are entwined together as each in their own way comes to Jesus for help and healing. Two desperate people reaching out to Jesus in faith.

And the scene is set, you'll notice it there in verse 40, as a crowd of people throng around Jesus. The crowd, when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed Him.

They were all waiting for Him. And there came a man named Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, falling at Jesus' feet. He implored him to come to his house.

For he had an only daughter, about 12 years of age, and she was dying. So the first person we're introduced to is Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue, charge perhaps of arranging the services there, a prominent religious leader in the community, man of standing and status, perhaps a man of wealth, certainly a man of devotion to God.

[7 : 08] Everyone would have known him. They would have known who he was. He was a man perhaps used to getting his own way, used to being in control, used to being in charge, used to other people coming to him.

But here the tables are turned. And as the crowd mills around, this man Jairus approaches Jesus and throws himself down at his feet.

Now for such a man to abase himself in such a way, that would have been, I think, a shock and a surprise to all who were gathered there.

He falls on his knees. He begs Jesus to come to his house because his 12-year-old daughter is dying. And we're not told the nature of the illness, only that there's not much time.

The implication here is that a quick and speedy response is required if she is to be saved. There are, of course, many difficult and hard things in this life, but there are not many more traumatic to a parent than a sick or dying child.

[8 : 19] I wonder if there is anything as hard and difficult to deal with as that. I know there are people here, people listening, and they know exactly, you know exactly what that is like.

And in falling down at Jesus' feet, you get a sense of this man's fear and panic and desperation. Jairus will do anything to see his little girl restored.

He's terrified she's going to die. He's terrified he's going to lose her. And so driven by need and desperation in a very public way, he humbles himself and he throws himself upon Jesus' mercy. Desperate times call for desperate measures. And you can imagine how his hopes start to rise as Jesus agrees to go with him, his insides churning with fear and anxiety.

Will they make it in time? And so Jesus, Jairus, and the crowd hurry toward Jairus' home. There's a sense of anticipation in the crowd. Are they going to witness yet another miracle?

[9 : 28] And it's as they make that journey that we're introduced to another person of desperate faith. Verse 42, as Jesus went, the people pressed around him, and there was a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years.

And though she'd spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood

ceased.

Here is a woman of quiet desperation. Unlike Jairus, she had no social standing or position in the community. She's not even named. She had lived with a private medical condition for some twelve years, probably some kind of menstrual problem.

It had rendered her religiously, socially unclean, according to Levitical law. She was in reality in a perpetual state of uncleanness, socially isolated, ostracized.

She perhaps couldn't even visit others in their homes. The synagogue services were off limits. For her, it was physical debility and social isolation to the maximum degree.

[10:46] And not only that, but this ailment had drained all her financial resources. She'd sought the help of doctors, but to no avail. This condition absolutely dominated her life.

In fact, it was sucking the life out of her. It affected her physically, socially, financially, spiritually, emotionally. She lived with an inner sense of shame and grief.

What an unhappy woman she had become, driven to the very end of her tether by this persistent and apparently untreatable medical condition.

She longed to be healed. She longed for a normal life. She longed to be made clean. She longed to be set free from this illness. And the shame that she felt.

How many there are in this world just like her. And many feel for whatever reason that they don't fit in, that they're unacceptable, that they're unclean, that they're a disgrace.

[11:50] Sometimes, as I say, through no fault of their own. Here's the words of Ed Welch, a Christian counselor. He says this about shame. What is shame?

You are shunned. Faces are turned from you. They ignore you as if you didn't exist. You're naked. Faces are turned towards you. They stare at you as if you were hideous. You're worthless and it's no secret.

You are of little or no value to those whose opinions matter to you. And this unnamed woman, I think, had a deep sense of shame. Not because she'd done something wrong, but because of this condition that dominated her life.

She carried around with her a profound sense of dis-ease. And those kinds of feelings, however they arise, often cause people to hide away, to retreat.

Maybe to hide away even in a marriage, to hide away from former friends, to hide away from church, even to hide away from themselves.

[13:00] And this woman, I think, was used to hiding. And here she was, hiding in the crowd. We're not told, but some commentators suggest she may even have been disguised. But as she sees Jesus in the crowd, she devises a plan.

She'd heard of the wonderful things He'd done for others. Maybe, just maybe, He could do something for her. If only she could touch the fringe of His garment, then perhaps she too could be healed and be restored.

And she believes that Jesus has the power to do what others could not do. And yes, in some ways, her thinking is quite superstitious. Yet such is her sense of desperate need that amidst this bustling crowd, she reaches out in secret to touch Jesus and be healed.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. It's the briefest of touches. It's only the fingertips of faith.

But it transpires that this is all that is needed for her to be delivered. So here are these two very different individuals, both coming to Jesus in desperate faith, conscious of their weakness, their frailty, their powerlessness, and they reach out to Jesus.

[14:18] they reach out the hand of faith to connect with him. Jesus encounters the faith of the desperate.

And that brings me to the second thing here. And that is that Jesus tests the faith of the desperate. This unnamed woman did not want to grab the limelight.

She was perhaps a private person, her medical condition, the shame that she felt about it, probably had reinforced that outlook. For a woman in her condition to touch a rabbi was a great taboo.

And ashamed, she didn't want to be in the spotlight. Like many people, she preferred to be in the background. She wanted to keep hidden. And that's why she resolved to reach out to Jesus in secret.

She thought she could be healed quietly and then just steal away. What transpires is that Jesus is not prepared to let her do that.

[15 : 22] And Jesus said, verse 45, who was it that touched me? When all denied it, Peter said, Master, the crowds are surrounding you and are pressing in on you. But Jesus said, someone touched me.

For I perceive that power has gone out from me. Jesus is conscious that in some way power has proceeded from him. And the touch he asks about is not simply a physical touch, but a touch that sought help and found it.

And he determines that the silent and secret faith of this woman needs to be exposed. Perhaps we might think that was a kind of cruel thing for Jesus to do.

Why didn't he just let her slip away unnoticed into the crowd? Why does he embarrass her in this way? It must have been very frightening for the woman. Why did he make her go public?

Verse 47, when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people, why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.

[16 : 38] The woman actually comes forward of her own accord. She saw that she was not hidden. Trembling, she comes, and like Jairus, falls at Jesus' feet. She's afraid of public exposure.

She's embarrassed at being the center of attention, but she comes clean. She gives her testimony nonetheless. And whatever fears her fears might have been, they are soon dissolved as she hears these words of Jesus.

And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. It's the only time in the Gospels, I think, that Jesus uses this term daughter.

A word of tenderness and affection. It's interesting, isn't it? We've got Jairus' daughter on the one hand and this daughter on the other. Jairus' daughter is 12 years old.

This woman has had a medical condition for 12 years. And Jesus underlines this point that it's her faith that has made her well. As I said, she appears to have a somewhat superstitious understanding of Jesus' powers.

[17 : 46] She thought that she could be healed on her own terms. That is never the case. And that's why Jesus makes her publicly identify herself. It wasn't the touch of His garment that had healed her.

It was her faith in Him. Her healing was not about superstition. It was about faith in Jesus Christ. It's very important to see that distinction because, unfortunately, superstition still rules the lives of many, many people, often giving the illusion that we're in control because of certain artifacts or rituals or ceremonies and confusing these outward signs with real faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And real faith is the hand that receives the blessing. It may be a shaking hand, it may be a trembling hand, yet Christ feels that touch though a whole world of need presses upon Him.

And so the woman comes clean and falls trembling at Jesus' feet. Her secret faith made public. And she and the crowd are reminded the wholeness and healing and salvation come by faith alone. And yet, if this woman's faith is exposed and in some way tested by Jesus, so too is that of Jairus. because this whole incident with the woman seriously interrupts and delays Jesus coming to deal with His daughter.

[19 : 23] Now, you know, we all know what it's like when we're anxious to get somewhere. Perhaps it's for an appointment or a meeting and then we're detained or we're delayed unexpectedly. You know, there's a traffic jam.

Every light turns to red. We're stuck behind a slow-moving vehicle or a cyclist. If you're here in Edinburgh, the city council have suddenly created roadworks overnight that you didn't know they were there.

And it can be hugely stressful and incredibly frustrating. Well, just imagine how this whole encounter with the woman must have affected Jairus. He's desperate to get home.

He's desperate for Jesus to heal his daughter. Time is short. It's an urgent situation. They must get home before she dies. And yet, Jesus keeps both Jairus and his daughter waiting.

And it must have seemed to Jairus and the disciples that Jesus was delaying, really, for no good reason. This was actually, this was a matter of life and death. Why doesn't Jesus hurry up?

[20 : 32] Why does he delay? And sometimes we can feel the same. We question God. We wonder why things are taking so long. Why doesn't he just sort things out now? It can be very difficult.

Maybe God is delaying something in your life. How are you responding? Are you just going to give up, throw in the towel? Are you frantic and impatient for some kind of resolution? Or do you trust him? And there comes the news that Jairus must have been dreading, how his heart must have sunk.

Verse 49, while he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore.

But Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, do not fear, only believe, and she will be well.

[21 : 31] A test of faith for Jairus. Jesus looks into his eyes and says, trust me. Do not fear, believe. Maybe he's looking at you today and he's saying the very same thing.

Despite the way things appear, just now, trust me. Have faith. William Cooper's famous hymn has the verse, judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace.

Behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face. When he came, verse 51, to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James and the father and mother of the child.

All were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

Jesus eventually gets to the house, he encounters the scene of profound grief and loud mourning in the Jewish culture of the day. Mourners were only called after death had been established.

[22 : 52] And in the midst of this tumult of sorrow and anguish, Jesus calls on those present to stop their lamentation, because he says the girl is not dead, only asleep.

But his words prompt not faith and obedience, but just laughter and derision from those who are gathered. They consider Jesus' statement to be utterly ludicrous, a fantasy, a fiction.

This girl is now beyond all human help. What else is there to do but grieve and mourn? Jesus' hope and Jesus sometimes tests the faith of the desperate.

That brings us to our third point. Not just Jesus encounters the faith of the desperate, tests the faith of the desperate, but thirdly here, Jesus rewards the faith of the desperate.

The miracles of Jesus in the Gospels, it's important to understand what they are. And these two miracles here of Jesus are really pictures of what Jesus has come to do.

[24 : 01] They're windows into the work of salvation that He is bringing to His people, visual aids designed to help us grasp just what Jesus and His in-breaking kingdom will accomplish.

The New Testament commentator Darrell Bopp writes this, these miracles are audio visuals of important truths related to Jesus' sovereignty. As important as each event is in itself, even more important is the picture involved.

The overcoming of disease and death in this passage is but a foretaste of the ultimate comprehensive overcoming of disease and death.

These events point beyond to eternal realities. And it's important that we bear that in mind. And in both these instances we discover that faith in Jesus is rewarded.

He said to her daughter, verse 48, your faith has made you well, go in peace. The word translated, made you well, same word Luke uses of salvation.

[25 : 07] You could read verse 48 as your faith has saved you. Her desperation gives way to salvation, to healing, to wholeness. She is rendered whole and happy and complete.

read. Friends, it's important to understand faith is not magic. It is a laying hold of Jesus Christ. It is the key instrument in receiving the salvation that God offers.

Without it, we will never find wholeness. We will never find deliverance and we will never find peace. We can be moral, we can be religious, we can attend church, we can be devout, we can become conscientious, we may do many all manner of good works.

And yet one true believing touch of Christ is worth more than all these things put together. Our pride may not like it, but it is true nonetheless. We have no claim upon Jesus Christ.

We can't control Him. We can't manipulate Him. We have nothing to offer Him. We have nothing to give Him. We can't bend His will to ours. faith.

[26 : 22] Simple faith, naked faith, faith alone in Christ alone. And you'll notice here that Jairus' patient and trusting faith is also rewarded as Jesus raises His little girl from the dead amidst the scorn and derision of the faithless.

Taking her by the hand, verse 54, saying, Child, arise, and her spirit returned. She got up at once. He directed that something should be given her to eat, and her parents were amazed, but He

charged them to tell no one what had happened.

With tender love, Jesus takes the little girl by the hand and bids her to get up. In one sense here, the death of this young girl issued a challenge to the power of Jesus Christ.

Here is death throwing its gauntlet down at his feet, as it were. When faced with death, must Jesus, like every other person, bow the knee and surrender?

By no means. For here is Jesus facing the greatest enemy, the most formidable of opponents, the strongest of foes, God of God is God of God.

[27 : 45] For if Jesus has us by the hand, nothing can ultimately destroy us or hurt us, not even death. Even death must bow the knee before Jesus Christ.

He is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. how vital it is that we understand and grasp that truth. The old commentator J.C.

Ryle writes this in his expository thoughts on the Gospels. Death is indeed a cruel enemy. He makes no distinction in his attacks.

He comes to the rich man's mansion as well as to the poor man's cottage. He doesn't spare the young, the strong, and the beautiful any more than the old, the infirm, and the gray-haired. Not all the gold of Australia, not all the skill of doctors can keep the hand of death from our bodies in the day of his power.

Death will come to our houses whether we like it or not. Death will take each of us away despite our dislike to hearing about it. Surely it is the part of a wise man to get ready for this great change.

[28 : 55] Why should we not be ready? There is one who can deliver us from the fear of death. Christ has overcome death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

He who believes on him has everlasting life. Though he dies, yet he shall live. Let us believe in the Lord Jesus, then death will lose its sting. Some years ago, the vicar of St.

Andrew, the great church in Cambridge, a man called Mark Ashton, he was diagnosed with an inoperable cancer. And he wrote a book about his experience called, his little book, On My Way to Heaven, Facing Death with Christ.

And in the book, he recounts a story of going to the hairdressers, I think in Eastbourne. And, you know, in the hairdresser, there's a lot of talk and chat and all the rest of it.

This is what he said. When she asked me how I was, and I replied that I'd been told that I'd just got a few months more to live, the ordinary friendliness and chattiness of the place ceased.

[30 : 08] I could not get another word out of her for the rest of the haircut. I think that's fairly typical. Rather than accept and prepare for the inevitable, we try to close our eyes to the reality of death.

Ashton wrote, our age is so devoid of hope in the face of death that the topic has become unmentionable. And that's true.

We don't even want to talk about it. And yet, surely we must. Not in some morose, morbid fashion, but with the hope that only Jesus Christ can give.

Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them from my hands.

According to Jewish custom, both the little girl and the woman here were viewed as being ceremonially unclean. Touching them should have rendered Jesus unclean, but the reverse proves true.

[31 : 20] cleansing, healing, and new life flow from Jesus to those who reach out to him in faith. The good news for unclean sinners of whatever hue is that Jesus Christ is the contagiously clean man.

In him the unclean are made clean. That's what we see at the cross, where Jesus took upon himself the curse of our unclean condition, and carried our sin all the way down to the grave and buried it there for good.

Yes, at times we live in a world full of desperate people, and sometimes it's a quiet desperation, like the unnamed woman in our text. No one really sees or understands, all hidden away, behind closed doors, often in a solitary life.

And yet at other times it's like Jairus, it's open, it's public, it's visible. Maybe you're someone in desperation over your sins, or overwhelmed with feelings of guilt for the things you've done, the people you've hurt.

Maybe it feels as if life is crashing down upon you. Maybe you're filled with anxiety over the future. Maybe you're struggling to make sense of what's happening in your life.

[32 : 42] Maybe you're hiding away from others. Maybe you're consumed with shame. Or you're concerned about illness and approaching death. Friend, let your desperation drive you into the arms of Jesus.

For there is abundant grace and mercy for the desperate in Jesus Christ. He is a great and mighty Savior. Let me encourage you to reach out to Him today with the empty hands of faith, or even with the fingertips of faith, and discover for yourself His love, His blessing, and His power.

Jesus Christ is utterly approachable. He invites all men and women to come to Him, to come with your shame, come with your fears, come with your sin. You don't have to unburden yourself to come.

In fact, it's your burden that qualifies you to come. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest as Jesus. Take my yoke upon you, learn from me.

I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Jesus loves to welcome sinners still. He delights to give strength to the weary and the worried and the weak.

[34 : 01] He is the great physician who took on our sickness to heal and to make us whole, and who tasted death that we might live.

And today, He invites you to reach out to Him in faith and discover for yourself the God who is in Jesus Christ already reaching out to you.

For the Lord is good and faithful. He will keep us day and night. We can always run to Jesus. Jesus, strong and kind.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. God our Father, you know us better than we know ourselves.

We may hide from others. We may even try to hide from ourselves, but we cannot hide from you.

Lord, we pray that by your grace and the work of your Holy Spirit, you may help us that we may rest our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

[35 : 18] May we find in Him salvation, forgiveness, and new life. As we pray these things in His name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.