

On a beautiful Friday afternoon in the early fall of my last semester at MTSU, I impulsively decided to go shirtless for a jog around the neighborhood. This jog would change my evening but has also changed my life.

Little did I know the half bag of chips I scarfed down 15 minutes before would be the catalyst for change in my life. Turns out, generic potato chips are not the kind of carb loading that sits well on one's stomach.

I got to where I was a mile from home, desperate to find a willing homeowner to let me use their bathroom. I've never been more embarrassed yet grateful when that woman opened the door and allowed me to blow up her bathroom.

"Don't nobody go in the bathroom for 35, 45 minutes. Somebody, open the window."

Grateful but ashamed of this act of grace, I avoided eye contact as I said thank you and ran out the door.

Here's what I know from that experience: desperation can lead to change.

- I never ate chips again before going on a run
- I can ask for help

### **TITLE: Desperate Faith: How Jesus Transforms Death Into Life**

Desperation is not fun, or glorious, or pleasant. Likely, many of us live our lives either actively trying to avoid being in desperate moments or we think we are immune to them.

Desperation exposes our fears and limitations. It reveals pride, weakness, and our sin. In short it shows us that we are our own worst saviors stuck in the spiritual middle class. Rightly experienced it can prime us for change at the deepest level.

Today we're continuing in Luke to see two stories of desperation that both lead to transformation.

Today we'll be in Luke 8. I invite you to go there to verse 40. If you don't have a bible please receive one as a gift from us. They're located on the welcome desk in the lobby.

#### **Luke 8:40-56**

**<sup>40</sup> When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. <sup>41</sup> Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house, <sup>42</sup> because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying.**

While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him. <sup>43</sup> A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any, <sup>44</sup> approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped. <sup>45</sup> “Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you.”

<sup>46</sup> “Someone did touch me,” said Jesus. “I know that power has gone out from me.” <sup>47</sup> When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. <sup>48</sup> “Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

<sup>49</sup> While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader’s house and said, “Your daughter is dead. Don’t bother the teacher anymore.”

<sup>50</sup> When Jesus heard it, he answered him, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved.”

<sup>51</sup> After he came to the house, he let no one enter with him except Peter, John, James, and the child’s father and mother. <sup>52</sup> Everyone was crying and mourning for her. But he said, “Stop crying, because she is not dead but asleep.”

<sup>53</sup> They laughed at him, because they knew she was dead. <sup>54</sup> So he took her by the hand and called out, “Child, get up!” <sup>55</sup> Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he gave orders that she be given something to eat. <sup>56</sup> Her parents were astounded, but he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

Today I’m going to walk us through this passage a step at a time. There’s a lot going on here. And I want to take the time to not get too cute with anything as we see what Luke has written for our benefit here. I’ll have 4 points as our takeaways but I won’t get to those until all the way at the end. Hang tight. We’ll get there. Let’s start by walking back through this passage.

#### **Luke 8:40**

**<sup>40</sup> When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.**

Jesus and the disciples just returned from being forced out of town by the Gerasene crowds. They were too fearful of Jesus. He had expelled a legion of demons from a man. And they ran into some pigs that drowned themselves in the lake.

This crowd is different. They’re excited to see Jesus, the miracle worker and teacher! The Galilee crowd heard of Jesus healing the centurion’s servant and raising the widow’s son back to life. This is the show they’ve come to see. They’re like the paparazzi waiting outside the home of a Hollywood celebrity.

#### **Luke 8:41**

**<sup>41</sup> Just then, a man named Jairus came. He was a leader of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with him to come to his house,**

Jairus shows up. Here's a man of status in the Jewish community. And he is completely broken. He's not looking for a show. He's desperate for help. Just so you know, Jewish synagogue leaders are too self-respecting and prideful to fall down before another man and ask for their help.

Have you experienced a moment of not caring what others think about you because you're so desperate? Jairus' situation is dire.

#### **Luke 8:42a**

**<sup>42a</sup> because he had an only daughter about twelve years old, and she was dying.**

I can understand this kind of desperation. I have 3 daughters. And one of our daughters had pretty severe asthma incidents when she was little. There were a few, very scary moments when breathing treatments and hospital stays got really serious. And yet she turned the corner.

Jairus's daughter has been put under hospice care. He is looking to Jesus as his only hope.

#### **Luke 8:42b**

**<sup>42b</sup> While he was going, the crowds were nearly crushing him.**

So Jesus goes with Jairus into the crowd toward his home. The word translated "crushing" can also be translated as choking. You might remember that earlier in chapter 8 Jesus tells the parable of the sower. He uses the same word to describe the 3rd situation of the seed falling on the ground

#### **Luke 8:14**

**<sup>14</sup> As for the seed that fell among thorns, these are the ones who, when they have heard, go on their way and are *choked* with worries, riches, and pleasures of life, and produce no mature fruit.**

Luke seems to be showing the parallel between the thorns and the action of the crowds. They are more concerned with choking life than saving it.

It's like Luke is giving us a subtle warning. Do you excuse your pursuit of riches, comfort, and pleasure? The riches and pleasures you think that are adding value to your life are actually taking it away. Like the crowds they will put Jesus in a box. I want my Jesus but you can keep the change- just give me a well-paying job, some streaming services, good schools and camps for my kids, the next vacation, and a nice retirement.... But these may be choking you. Watch out.

Jairus' experience has removed the choking facade of his comfort and riches. And he's reminded of the thin edge between life and death because of his daughter's condition. He's calling out for help from Jesus. And so does this woman that shows up next.

#### **Luke 8:43-44**

**<sup>43</sup> A woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all she had on doctors and yet could not be healed by any,**

This woman is also desperate. She has a severe, chronic disease that has kept her menstrual cycle bleeding for 12 years. That's as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. Luke is showing that these two people are linked. There's overlap but also contrast:

- Jairus has a name, she does not
- He has synagogue authority, she can't enter the synagogue
- He is respected publicly, she is rejected publicly

Mark: she has spent all her money on doctors and they made it worse.

Yes, she's suffering physically. If you've ever lost a lot of blood you know your iron levels can get so low that you are just physically weak. Yet, she's using what seems like her last bit of strength to get to this crowd and get to Jesus.

But she's also got to be mentally, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted. The OT law declares anyone who is bleeding as unclean. She can't worship. No one can touch her or hug her. She was completely isolated from community.

Another pastor makes the connection between Jairus and the woman like this:

- There's no one too insignificant, too unclean, or messed up to get Jesus' attention
- And there's no one too good, too influential, or too powerful to need Jesus desperately.

**<sup>44</sup> approached from behind and touched the end of his robe. Instantly her bleeding stopped.**

So what is she doing treating Jesus' tassels like a lucky rabbit's foot? Is she superstitious? Well, maybe she's just a little stitious. She may be looking at Jesus as a good luck charm. She's tried everything else. Why not just sneak a touch on this holy man?

Perhaps there's more. Maybe she had an image from the prophet Malachi in mind.

#### **Malachi 4:2**

**"But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with *healing in its wings*, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall.**

Perhaps this woman is hoping beyond hope that Jesus is the human representation of this sun of righteousness. Maybe the arms of his robe and the tassels hanging down carry healing in their wings. So she takes the risks and grabs them. And instantly she's healed.

#### **Luke 8:45**

**<sup>45</sup> Who touched me? Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing against you."**

Here Luke uses different words to describe the crowds. Hemming means trying to contain Jesus. Pressing against is also the same word that can be used to describe how grapes are pressed to make juice and then wine.

This crowd is a problem. Not only are they a hindrance to the immediate need. They're getting in the way and even putting Jesus' own life in danger.

**<sup>46</sup> "Someone did touch me," said Jesus. "I know that power has gone out from me."**

How did Jesus know? He knew power were out from him. That word is the same word where we derive the word dynamite. Jesus felt the dynamite power of God exit him because of this woman's touch.

Jesus became weak and she became strong. CATCH THIS: This is the power of the gospel right here. Jesus in your place. He takes your weakness and gives you his strength. That's what happened here. And that's what happens when we believe the dynamite power of the gospel.

And Jesus' response? He invites her to make herself known and to confess publicly what has happened.

We still do this. We call it baptism. And that's what baptism represents as well as a public confession. It's where you publicly declare that Jesus has traded places with you taking your sin and giving you his righteousness, taking your weakness and giving you his strength. Have you made this declaration?

**<sup>47</sup> When the woman saw that she was discovered, she came trembling and fell down before him. In the presence of all the people, she declared the reason she had touched him and how she was instantly healed. <sup>48</sup> "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace."**

This is also a risk for the woman. She's making herself known that as an unclean person she knowingly touched a clean person. Is Jesus going to reject her also?

No. He calls her daughter, a term of endearment. He is gentle with her. He wants to assure her, not scold her. He calls her daughter to this woman who has been rejected. He's making himself a father to the fatherless.

**<sup>49</sup> While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore."**

I can't imagine the roller coaster Jairus has been on up to this point. He desperately interceded with Jesus and persuaded him to come attend to his dying daughter. On the way he's seen Jesus miraculously heal someone else. His optimism probably peaked the moment the woman told how Jesus healed her. He was probably thinking, "My daughter then will make it, too!"

And then the person shows up to deliver this horrifying news. This is the worst news. His only daughter is dead.

**<sup>50</sup> When Jesus heard it, he answered him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe, and she will be saved."**

Jesus seems unphased. He commands Jairus to put his fear away and to buckle up his belief. He makes a promise: she will be saved. What???

Death looks like the most certain and final thing. And the opposite of all that Jesus commanded and promised to Jairus: only fear, no more faith, only loss.

**<sup>51</sup> After he came to the house, he let no one enter with him except Peter, John, James, and the child's father and mother. <sup>52</sup> Everyone was crying and mourning for her. But he said, "Stop crying, because she is not dead but asleep."**

Funerals at this time would start immediately after someone had died. They didn't embalm the bodies so it was imperative to get moving. And people would very publicly mourn and wail. This included family and friends, but also hired mourners as well. It was a loud and emotional event. Jesus tells everybody to stop.

And he says she is metaphorically asleep. This is not like Billy Crystal's character in *The Princess Bride*: "Your friend is only mostly dead. Mostly dead means slightly alive." No. She's all the way dead. But Jesus says she's just temporarily dead.

Jairus, his wife, and the 3 disciples don't get it.

**<sup>53</sup> They laughed at him, because they knew she was dead. <sup>54</sup> So he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" <sup>55</sup> Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he gave orders that she be given something to eat. <sup>56</sup> Her parents were astounded, but he instructed them to tell no one what had happened.**

Jesus does two things here that are small, yet remarkable. Watch this.

He takes her by the hand. Now we have a clean person touching an unclean person. This is not just religiously taboo. It's also incredibly tender. Jesus is taking his grown man hand and placing her hand in his. I want you to see the gentleness there. Don't miss it.

Second, he says to her, Child, get up. In Mark, he gives us the Aramaic expression: Talitha koum. This means little girl. Think of it like sweetie or honey.

This scene displays Jesus' fierce power, but also his incredible tenderness. Jesus is strong enough to radiate the dynamite power of his healing nature without being made unclean. And yet he is gentle enough to intercede for the outcast and helpless like a good father.

So what do we do with all this? Let me give us a few takeaways.

### **1. Come to Jesus**

There may be a lot of obstacles in your mind about you coming to Jesus. Don't let the crowds, other peoples' opinions, your bad reputation, your prideful self-reliance, or your desperate need keep you from coming to him.

The enemy of this world wants nothing more than to keep you from coming to Jesus. Like the thorns that choke out the sprouting seedling, he wishes to keep you from the life he can provide. He doesn't care if you have too low a view of yourself or too high a view of yourself.

Jesus is interruptible, tender, and compassionate. And he's the only one who can offer complete forgiveness of your sin and hope beyond death. Come to him.

As one person has said, 'a faith that does not change you in life will not save you in death.' Listen if you are not his follower he will not be at your bedside, tenderly holding your hand at death. And that will be the best version of loneliness you'll experience from that point forward. You will only look forward to him as Lord and Judge, not as Lord and Savior. Friend, bow the knee today and receive him as Lord and Savior. Come to Jesus.

### **2. Make Your Faith Public**

Jesus' invited the woman to go public with her healing and faith. Maybe like her it is time for you to declare what Jesus has done for you. Make your faith public through baptism. We would love to talk more with you about that. Just scan the code and hit send to begin a conversation about baptism.

Maybe its time for you to start living out your faith in a more public, intentional way. Maybe that starts in your home. Maybe it is at work. Maybe it is identifying with this church as a covenant member so we can do that together in this city as we share Jesus and make disciples together.

### **3. Develop a faith hopeful enough for healing and strong enough through suffering.**

On one hand this story does a lot to reshape our idea of what is possible with Jesus. Certainly we live in a day and age where modern medicine is miraculous in its own right. But we may dismiss the possibility that God can still do miracles today that medicine and science can't explain. Here's the thing: If Jesus got up out the grave, I think all possibilities are on the table. He can heal a woman with a chronic illness. He can raise someone from the dead. He can save and heal you, too.

Does your faith have a category for the miraculous like that? This passage reminds us we should.

But on the other hand, there are many people even in the crowd that Jesus passed through that were also clamoring for healing and help. And he didn't heal them. And he didn't raise their dead. He didn't intervene.

And for some of you that's personal. Your faith in Jesus has not led to better health, it didn't keep this person from dying, and it certainly didn't make things better. Chronic illness remains, the diagnosis hasn't changed. Your faith hasn't led to a change of circumstances. You're still without a job. You're still single. You're still not able to conceive a child. Your loved one still died.

Many people, maybe even you, weaponize their suffering. Either toward themselves to believe they're not good enough for God to care about them. Or to tell God that he is unjust. Neither could be further from the truth.

I think this story still strengthens our faith to endure suffering well. Regardless of the outcome, I think we can receive the words Jesus gave to Jairus. Don't be afraid. Only believe.

You do not need to fear death or your most desperate moments if you have faith in Jesus:

- Like Jairus, you will not be alone.
- Like the little girl, Jesus will take your hand and speak tenderly to you
- His voice will be the one you look to hear and his face the one you'll see.
- And you will get to eat with him alive forever.

#### **4. Jesus was crushed in your place to turn your death into a nap.**

The best thing about this story is that it reminds us that Jesus stood in the gap of our uncleanness and helplessness before God. He was crushed and choked on the cross in your place. He entered the most desperate of moments and isolation so that you and I would be brought near God- forgiven, loved. He has resurrected to give us hope beyond death. He'll never leave us, he'll take our hands, speak tenderly to us, and turn our death into what seems like just an afternoon nap.

In just a moment all of us will respond. You can respond in receiving the Lord's Supper and then in singing. But I invite you also to receive prayer. There will be people available down here in the front and in the back to pray for you. And we invite you to come.

First you may want to receive prayer for placing your faith in Jesus. If you have never come to Jesus I invite you to place your faith in him to save you. To make the great exchange of God's righteousness for your sin. His cleanness for your uncleanness. And substitute his power for your weakness. You can do that today and we would love to pray and talk with you.

But for some of you I want to invite you to be prayed for as an act of humility and grace to receive the love of God and another person. Let them pray a prayer of blessing over you and intercede on your behalf. Whatever it is, big or small, we invite you to come.

#### LORD'S SUPPER

- Bread and cup: blessed, broken, given. This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.
- This story foreshadows the cross as the crowd seeks to squeeze Jesus to death like a grape. But he was crushed for our transgressions.
- And this story prepares us for the future. The girls was given something to eat. We'll also get to share a meal with Jesus forever.