



“The Girl Is Not Dead, but Asleep”
(Matthew 9:18-26)

Introduction: So that we do not forget what we have learned from week to week in these sermons on Matthew, I like to review briefly what we saw the week before, so that we can again be reminded of God’s truth, and so that we can get back up to speed as we start the next section. Last week, we saw three main things: that fasting is still necessary, that we will only fast as long as we are apart from Jesus, and that to fast in a way which is truly pleasing to God, we must become new creatures in Christ. Fasting is still a part of our duty as Christians, as long as God allows our health to hold out. When Jesus was asked by the disciples of John the Baptist why His disciples were not fasting, Jesus did not tell them that fasting was no longer important or necessary, but that His disciples could not fast as long as He was with them. When the One whom you love more than anyone else is with you, you cannot mourn. But the days were coming when Jesus would be taken away, and in those days they would fast. Brethren, we are still in those days, the days between Christ’s first coming and His second, and because of the struggle that we will constantly be engaged in with the kingdom of the enemy, we will need the power and blessing that comes from fasting. But Jesus also reminded us that for our fasting to be acceptable to God, we could not do it the way the Pharisees did, only outwardly, out of tradition. Instead, our fasting must be inward as well, from the heart, as only those who are new creatures in Christ can do. We must be born again. Jesus didn’t come to patch up the Old Covenant or the old man. He came to make us new creatures to be a part of His new creation, which would be brought in through the New Covenant. The only fast which is acceptable to God is that which is done in faith, out of a heart which loves God and desires His glory. This the Pharisees could not do.

But now let us move on this morning to look at two more accounts of the life and work of Christ, two which are intertwined in the Gospels: the account of the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and that of the raising of the synagogue official’s daughter from the dead, two women, one who had been suffering from an affliction for twelve years, and one who had actually died when only twelve years of age. And what I want for us to focus on this morning in particular is that

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

I. First, let us consider the account of the woman with the hemorrhage.

- A. Matthew tells us in verse 18, that while Jesus was still speaking, a ruler of the synagogue came up to Him and asked Him to come and help his daughter who was at the point of death. And so Jesus arose and went with him. But as He was going, a woman who was ill came up behind Him, seeking just to touch Him, so that she would be made well from her sickness.
 - 1. The woman, we are told, had an issue of blood. She had been bleeding for twelve years. Undoubtedly, this would have left her very weak and sick. Depending on what kind of bleeding it was, -- that is, if it was the kind which is associated with reproduction --, then it would have also rendered her ceremonially unclean, which meant that, just as the leper could not be touched because of the transmission of his uncleanness, so also no one could touch her without becoming unclean.
 - 2. And there was nothing the doctors could do to help her. Mark tells us that she “had endured much at the hand of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse” (5:26).
- B. But we also read that this woman had something else which would prove to be the key to her deliverance. She had faith.
 - 1. Mark tells us that when the woman heard about Jesus, that He was near, she immediately came out to find Him.
 - a. She saw the crowd that had gathered around Him as He was on His way to the synagogue official’s house.
 - b. And such was her faith that she said to herself, “If I just touch His garments, I shall be made well” (Mark 5:28). Think about the difference between what was in her heart, and that which was in the heart of Naaman, so many years ago. When the king of Aram heard that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal leprosy, he sent the commander of his army to him to be healed. But when Naaman showed up at his door, instead of coming to deal with him personally, Elisha sent a message by his servant that Naaman should go to the Jordan River, dip himself in it seven times,

and then he would be cleansed. Naaman was so offended that the prophet didn't come to him and perform some elaborate ritual over him to heal him, that he started back to Aram in anger. But at the pleading of one of his servants, he did what Elisha said, and he was cleansed (2 Kings 5). Now this woman we read of this morning wasn't looking for ceremony. She wasn't looking for attention from Jesus. She just wanted to touch His garment, even the very fringe of it (Luke 8:44), for she knew that if she did, she would be made well.

- c. And do you know what? She was right. Such was her faith that as soon as she touched His clothes, her hemorrhaging stopped, and she felt within herself that she had been made well.
2. Now as I said, she didn't really want to draw any attention to herself. She just wanted to touch Jesus and leave. But this isn't what happened.
 - a. Marks tells us that Jesus felt within Himself that power had gone out. So He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" (Mark 5:30). His disciples thought this was a strange question to ask, and so they said, "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" (v. 31). The real question is, Who didn't touch You?
 - b. But Jesus knew that a miracle had occurred. Someone had trusted in Him. Power had gone out and a woman had been made well. And since miracles were not only for the personal benefit of their recipients, but also for the divine attestation of God's messengers, Jesus wanted this woman to declare what had happened. And so He turned to look for her.
 - c. But she was afraid. Mark says, "But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth" (v. 33).
 - d. Why was she afraid? Perhaps she was shy, and didn't want to be the center of attention. Perhaps she was afraid because she thought she had taken something from Jesus without asking. Or perhaps it was because she was afraid she would cause some embarrassment to Christ, for her uncleanness because of her bleeding, in her mind, may have caused Christ to become ceremonially unclean as well.
 - e. But whatever the reason, she did not hide or try to escape. She trusted in the mercy of the Lord, fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth.
 - f. And Jesus did not rebuke her. He did not censure her in the least, but said, "'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' And from that hour," we are told, "the woman was made well" (v. 22). She ventured all on Jesus, believing that He could do what no other man could. She was so certain that He could heal her that she didn't even want to bother Him personally, but just reach out in faith to touch the fringe of His garments. That was enough. If I can just touch His clothes, she said, I will be well. And she did, and she was healed.
 - g. Now from this incident, I would like to make the following applications.
 - (i) We, and all men everywhere, are also unclean, like this woman, only our uncleanness is much more serious. Ours is a spiritual uncleanness, one which will one day condemn us. If it is not cleansed, if it is not washed away, it will one day press us down into hell forever.
 - (ii) We too, as the woman, may have tried to remove our guilt and to sooth our consciences through our own devices or through those of other men who say that they can help us deal with problems such as ours. But like this woman we failed to find healing. There are many who seek for many years to find peace with God, but who never find it, because they look in the wrong places.
 - (iii) We need to realize this morning that we will only find the cleansing we need where this woman found it, in Christ. Her bleeding made her unclean. But the Lord healed her. Our sin makes us unclean, but the shedding of Christ's blood is able to remove our uncleanness, and make us clean again. As the hymn says, "His blood can make the foulest clean." It is able to remove the guilt of even the worst of our sins. If we will but reach out and take hold even of the fringe of His garments, we will be saved.
 - (iv) We need not fear that He will turn us away. The woman was afraid that perhaps Christ would be angry because she touched Him, but He wasn't. In fact, He owned her as His own child, calling her "daughter." We need not fear that Christ will turn us away either. He bids all who sense their need of Him to come, and tells us He will not turn us away.
 - (v) But we must have faith if we are to be accepted. The woman believed that Christ could make her well. And she acted on that faith by going out to find Him. A belief which is not acted upon is no belief at all. You really don't have faith, if your faith doesn't make a difference in the way you live.

- (vi) But we must also submit to Him. That which justifies faith more than anything else, that which shows it to be genuine, is submission. When Christ called her, she came to Him and fell down before Him. She recognized the authority of the One standing before her. He not only had the power to command her sickness, but also the power to command her. True faith always produces submission. If we have it, we will yield ourselves to Christ as completely as we can as well.
- (vii) But lastly, let us also be encouraged by this, especially those of us who are currently facing various illnesses, that it is the Lord who heals, not the doctors. Doctors perform their cures on many different people, but only some are healed, while others are not. Why is this? It's because God wills that they heal some and not others. The doctor has no power to heal at all, except that which comes from God. So not only should he not take the glory from God for healing anyone, we should also learn not look to the doctor, but to God for our healing.
- (viii) But remember that as Christians, even if God should not heal us, even if it is His plan that we die, we should not be grieved, for death is the removal from this world of sin and grief, to a world of perfect peace and love. It is our entrance into heaven, into the presence of the One who is love itself. For death to be as sweet as it should be for the Christian, we must believe that to depart and to be with Christ is very much better.

II. But let us turn now to the second account recorded here, that of the raising up of the daughter of the synagogue official.

- A. Remember that Jesus ran into the woman with the hemorrhage while He was on His way to the household of the synagogue official, whose name, Mark tells us, was Jairus.
 - 1. Now the one thing that should stick out to us immediately about him, was that he also had faith. Just look at what he does.
 - a. When he came to Christ, he bowed down before Him. The word literally means "worship," which is how the KJV translates it.
 - b. He too believed that Jesus was able to heal. He said to Jesus, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live."
 - c. Now this doesn't mean that everyone who believed that Jesus was able to heal necessarily had saving faith. There was such a thing as the faith of miracles -- a belief that Jesus or His disciples could do miracles --, just as there is also an historical faith -- a belief that something really happened in time and space history. Not everyone who believed that Jesus could do miracles was saved, but I think it is very likely that this man was.
 - 2. Another thing which is important about this account, but unclear, is the state of the girl when Jairus first approached Jesus.
 - a. In Mark and Luke's account, the girl was not dead, but dying. It is only after the incident of the woman with the hemorrhage that he learns from those sent from his house that his daughter has died. In Matthew's account, the girl appears to be dead when Jairus first approached Jesus.
 - b. I think the answer to this is either that Matthew condenses the story somewhat, as he does in other places, since he doesn't tell us about the messengers at all. Or, when he says that the girl is now dead, what he is saying is that the girl has now come to the point of death, which is what the word literally means.
 - c. But irregardless, the girl was very sick, even at the point of death, but Jairus believed that Jesus could heal her. And so he sought for Jesus's help, and Jesus rose to help him.
 - d. Jesus even helped him along the way. Even after the messengers arrived with the bad news that his daughter had died, Jesus still encouraged him, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe" (Mark 5:36).
 - 3. When Jesus arrived, he was immediately confronted by a noisy array of people: all the traditional mourners and comforters who were there doing their work.
 - a. But their lack of sincerity and faith in Jesus was soon exposed, for when Jesus said to them, "Depart; for the girl has not died, but is asleep" . . . they began laughing at Him" (v. 24).
 - b. But Jesus put them out, and taking the girl by the hand, He said to her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" (v. 41). And immediately she arose and began to walk. And Matthew tells us, "This news went out into all that land" (v. 26).

B. But now let us consider what Matthew tells us here: Jesus raised this young lady from death to life.

1. But was it clear that she was really dead?

- a. After all, Jesus said that she was not dead, but only asleep. What did He mean by this?
- b. He could have meant that the girl was really dead physically, but alive spiritually. If you look through the Scriptures you will find that death is often called sleep for the godly, for it is only a temporary condition that their bodies are in while their souls are in heaven waiting for the resurrection. Certainly, this is a comfort for those of us who have loved ones who are even now with Jesus.
- c. But Jesus could also have called her condition sleep rather than death because He knew that her present condition was only temporary. He was about to raise her from the dead. She was dead physically, but she would not be dead for long. She was in a condition which was much like sleep. I think that this is more likely the case.
 - (i) Jonathan Edwards had a very interesting comment on this passage. He pointed out that in the case of this little girl, as it was with everyone else that died and was raised again to life, that she was not fully dead, at least in the sense that we will be when we die.
 - (ii) The Bible says that when a person dies, his soul immediately passes into a state of perfect holiness, if he is a Christian, or into perfect misery, if he is not a Christian. Once this happens, once this change takes place, there is no turning back. It is a permanent change. But apparently neither of these things happened to this girl. Her soul was not perfected or made perfectly miserable. Rather, she was in a sleep-like condition, until the Lord raised her up. Her soul may have been separated from her body, well enough, but she did not pass into an eternal state, but was in some sort of intermitted state.
 - (iii) This view can also help us to understand what the author to the Hebrews means, where he writes, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment" (9:27). If those who died and were raised again, actually died twice, how could this verse be true. The answer could be that their first death was not death in this final sense, but only a state in which their souls were separated from their bodies temporarily, without passing into their final state of holiness or misery.
 - (iv) But either way, we need to see that this girl was physically dead, and that the Lord raised her again to life, in much the same way that He will raise the dead on the day of judgment. Jesus said to Martha, when He raised her brother Lazarus from the dead, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

2. The Lord asks you through this passage this morning the same thing: Do you believe this?

- a. Do you believe that Jesus is the One who has the power to raise the dead? Do you believe that Jesus is the One who is life itself? And have you trusted in Him to give you this resurrection and this life?
- b. If not, then you are still dead, spiritually dead, and need to come to Jesus that you may live.
 - (i) Jesus says that if you will believe in Him, you will pass from death to life.
 - (ii) You might not think that you are dead, since you can eat, breathe and move around. But the point is that even though you are physically alive, this doesn't mean that you are spiritually.
 - (iii) This is what Jesus is talking about. Those who believe in Him shall live even if they die. Their souls will be alive with Him in heaven. And those who are alive and believe in Him now shall never die. They may die physically. Their bodies may turn back into dust. But they will live on with Christ in heaven, waiting until their bodies are raised back up from the dust, and they are reunited with them forever.
 - (iv) But this is not the case with you who refuse to trust in Christ. When you die, your soul will immediately pass into perfect misery, where you will wait until the resurrection of your body, when it will be reunited with you and then cast into the lake of eternal fire, where you will suffer in both soul and body forever.
 - (v) If this is the case with you this morning, then I would urge you turn to Jesus in faith and repentance. Believe on Him for everlasting life. He is the only One in whom is life and salvation.
 - (vi) But if you still refuse to put your trust in Him, realize that only Jesus can give you the ability to do so. This little girl did not raise herself up from the dead. Jesus raised her to life. Jesus must also do the same for you, if you are ever to trust in Him. If you have not come to Him

and are still unwilling to come this morning, then pray to God for His mercy to raise your soul from death, that you might trust in Him and be saved.

- c. But if you are trusting in Christ, then realize that Jesus has mercifully raised you from the dead. You did not save yourself. You did not see your need of Him and trust in Him on your own. Jesus gave you His mercy. Jesus gave you His life that you might believe. Therefore, give all the glory and honor to Him, and love and serve Him with all that you have, for this is the only thing you can give for so great a mercy. Amen.