

Perfecting an Imperfect Faith, Part 2

Luke 8:40-48

We are coming into a section here at the end of Luke 8, if you'd like to turn in your Bibles there. So we're going to look at the text here starting in verse 40 of Luke chapter 8, follow along as I read. "Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him." There was a, "there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.

"And there was a woman who had," had," had a discharge of blood for twelve 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?' When all denied it, Peter said, Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!' But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone

out from me.' 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, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.'

"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, she will be well.' 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.' They laughed at him, knowing," that he, "that she was dead. 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. Her parents were amazed, and he charged them to tell no one what had happened."

But for now, we're going to turn our attention to this suffering woman whose furtive actions really steal the scene here. We're going to see here another believer. We're going to see a woman whose faith is a mix of strength and weakness. Kind

of like all of us, right? She's far from perfect. But we learn from her.

Point two, that Jesus has power for imperfect faith too. He has power for imperfect faith and I'm so thankful because my faith is routinely imperfect. Well, how about yours? Just briefly, look at the backdrop Luke creates for us to see this woman. Last sentence in verse 42, "As Jesus went," notice just action, "As he went, the people pressed around him." Now, at first glance, that may just seem like a, like an incidental comment. It seems like Luke, he's just painting the picture for us of this procession of people moving through the narrow streets of Capernaum on their way to Jairus' house.

But on closer inspection, we see that this welcoming crowd of verse 40, has become a suffocating crowd. And that reminds us, the verb there translated, pressed around, that verb shares the same verbal root as the word in Luke 8:7. You can look back there in your Bibles in Luke 8:7. Where Jesus says that, "the thorns, they grew up with the good seed," and what did they do? "They choked it." Same verbal root. Same verb form we read about in verse 14. Look at it there, how the seed that fell among the thorns, it's "choked in the heart by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life."

When we went through that, we called those different idols that occupy the heart that crowd out the worship of the true and living God. These are the only three places in Luke's writings that we find this verb *sumpnigo*. It's the verb for choking; so it's in verse 7, it's in verse 14, and it's in verse 42. Luke is making a point. He wants us to see that these welcoming, rejoicing, celebrating crowds, everything seems great on the surface. They seem totally opposite of those gentiles over in the Decapolis, who are the hard-hearted soil rejecting Christ, rejecting his word. Here are the welcoming crowds, celebrating, rejoicing, eager to have him come back.

Luke pictures them here like thorns that suffocate and choke out the good seed. In this sense, the Jews of Capernaum are no better than the Gentiles of the Decapolis. That is a theme, actually, that is going to resound through the rest of the New Testament. As Paul tells us that, "Both Jews and Greeks, they are all under sin," Romans 3:9, "For," verse 10, "There is no one righteous, not even one." Don't be fooled by what you see on the surface. Look deeper, look deeper. Look to action over time, not merely words, and applause, and excitement in the moment. Help that build your discernment.

But from the midst of this suffocating crowd, notice that there emerges here, a fledgling plant. A little offshoot, one that grows up here in this soil and from all appearances on the outside, she looks deficient, she looks weak, she is sickly, but she is going to prove to be a remarkable strength in believing. Look at verse 43, "There's a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, though she spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone."

Now, from the perspective of first century society in the Middle East, first century Palestine, the male and the female perspective, this woman sat at the opposite end of the social spectrum from Jairus. Think about the contrast. Jairus is a man, she's a woman. He's a ruler, she's a virtual nobody, not even named in the text. Jairus is in charge of the synagogue. He maintains a lifestyle of ritual ceremonial purity. She, because of her condition, she's been ritually impure and rendered unclean during the whole time, the whole twelve years of her uncleanness. That had social implications for her.

Moses, in Leviticus 15:25, he wrote about the exact condition that she suffered, a discharge of blood and, "All the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness." Very significant, socially. The commentator, Joel Green, described

her situation as socially devastating. He wrote this, "Her hemorrhaging rendered her ritually unclean so that she lived in her perpetual state of impurity. Although her physical condition was not contagious, her ritual condition was with the consequence that she had lived in isolation from her community these twelve years."

Jairus moved about freely. He enjoyed public discourse. He, he's widely regarded, highly respected. This poor woman, she'd been hindered from relationships in the community and, and not just by an unkind community, by an obedient community. By Levitical law, she had to hold herself to those strictures. In addition to the ailment and the physical weakness and the embarrassing stigma that this was, the woman lacked the social benefit of the people she needed most. She needed this community. She needed the benefit of social discourse and normal interaction with the other, she needed synagogue attendance.

And for the last twelve years of her life, all the time Jairus enjoyed the blessings of his family and rejoiced in his daughter, here's this woman outside the community suffering alone. Her condition of ritual impurity had added insult to her injury. But what made her situation even more pitiable here, is the desperation of material impoverishment. Luke tells us in

verse 43, "She spent all of her living on physicians," "all of her living on physicians." The word is *bios* here, living; literally the whole of her means of subsistence. This refers to her, her personal wealth, her personal property, her livelihood, all poured into physicians, doctors.

In other words, if she had had property, she sold it to pay the medical bills. If she had had inheritance, heirlooms, things passed on to her, a savings account, extra income, whatever it was, spent. All the money, gone. Going to pay for physicians who, in the best of cases, had been trying to help her. Now, the beloved, beloved physician Luke wouldn't say it exactly this way. But Mark, he told his readers in Mark 5:26, that the woman quote, "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but grew worse." Luke left that part out. He didn't want to throw his fellows physicians here under the bus.

But the fact is, as one commentator put it. In the first century, as today, not all physicians are like Luke, with the same character. One commentator says that the remedies that they tried in such cases were sometimes very severe and sometimes loathsome and absurd. Same thing today, isn't it? Another commentator summed up the options that were available, and

really the effect on this poor woman. He said when her, whether her doctors had been celebrated physicians, whose exorbitant fees made them accessible only to the elite or the quacks that exploited members of a naive and needy public. The outcome is the same. Doesn't she know it?

This poor woman, she's physically weakened by the loss of blood. She's ceremonially unclean. She's socially isolated, so that she can avoid defiling others and now she's, she's drained financially too, having tried for twelve years to find a solution. She spent all her living on doctors. She suffered under their futile attempts to find a solution. Maybe, and perhaps, and probably very likely, she was intentionally taken advantage of by some. The situation instead of improving, it grew worse.

But then in her mind, opportunity comes knocking. Jesus, he's returned and there's a crowd around and she's been thinking about, you know what a crowd means? A crowd means, I have a chance to get close to Jesus and to reach out and touch his garment, which, touching his garment isn't the same as touching him. So I can avoid defiling him. And even better, she could do so while staying in the crowd, hidden. She could she could



remain anonymous here. She could hope to avoid public embarrassment of discovery.

Look at verse 44, "She came up," not in front of him, "she came up behind him," right? "Came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment." Actually, that's not the best translation, fringe, that's actually a reference there to one of the four tassels that hung off the, the four corners of Jesus' square outer garment. It's an outer garment. It's called a *tallit*. And she came up behind Jesus, and she touched not the fringe, but that tassel of that garment. Immediately, immediately, her discharge of blood ceased. Wow, twelve years of suffering relieved in an instant. At the same time, twelve years of trained medical expertise, it's set in sharp relief against the backdrop of divine power, which came through a touch. Look if she could have done that twelve years ago. Could have saved her a lot of money and grief, right?

She might have been involved in all kinds of social discourse, maybe even head of the women's ministry at the synagogue. But had she been relieved early; the timing would have been all wrong. Not her timing, our timing. She wouldn't have been in the desperate condition she was in, where she's willing to risk everything she has left. And at this point,

everything she has left is what? It's her dignity. She's willing to set that aside too. Seek healing from Jesus Christ and at this very important moment, providentially speaking. From the divine perspective, her health, her money, her social dignity, her standing, her status, all of those things are small prices to pay to bring this woman to this exercise of faith.

Let that sink in, beloved. As you think about things that you go through, you wonder why doesn't God help now? When I need it most. You think God knows what you need when you need it most? Certainly he does. Really presses us to, to trust him, doesn't it? Here she's come to a very important crisis of faith. Leads to her healing. Leads to an immediate healing conveyed through contact with Jesus Christ. So what could we discern here about this woman's faith? Is it strong faith or is it weak faith? Was she right to seek help from Jesus in this way? Surreptitiously, without telling him, or do we excuse her, since after all it had been twelve years and, man, she's been through enough?

In some ways, this woman's faith seems rather strong, right? I mean, though poor, this woman appears to be rather rich in faith, wouldn't you say? I mean, she knows that this man has power to heal. She believes that personal contact with him, or

at least maybe contact with something that has had contact with him, like the tassel in contact with his garment, which is contact with an inner garment, which is in contact then finally with him, his body. She believes that's enough to heal her condition. Do you believe that strongly? She got what she desired, too. Her hemorrhaging came to a sudden stop. She's healed instantly.

But there's something that doesn't sit right with us about there, about that, right? It's not that her faith is inadequate. It's not that her faith is insufficient. It was sufficient for her to be healed. It was adequate for her to be healed. It's just that her faith here is in serious need of instruction, of maturity. Let me just list out a few deficiencies in her faith. First, right off the bat, this woman seems to have a bit of superstition worked into her faith, doesn't she? She's treating the tassel of Jesus like his clothing, like some today treat the Shroud of Turin, as if there are magical properties by coming in physical contact with the miracle worker, or that which came into physical contact with the miracle worker. You think of the whole Roman Catholic view of relics, as in this category.

We don't have time to, to go through all that we could go through here, but listen, she's, she's not, she does have a

superstitious element in her faith. We know exactly what she is thinking at this moment, because Mark tells us, Mark 5:27-28.

“She had heard the reports about Jesus and she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said,” here's what she was thinking at the moment. “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” She's a bit superstitious.

Second thing is deficient in her faith. She believes that she can have access to God's power in Christ apart from relationship, apart from a personal relationship with Christ. Closely connected to that, third, is her belief that she should continue this privatized, anonymous form of religion she's been practicing for the last twelve years. She's gotten into a bit of a habit remaining apart from people. No, this is about personal relationship. God made us for relationship. First, relationship with God through reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ, his son. And second, a reuniting with God's people. All of those who are reconciled to God by union with Christ. So listen, her faith is deficient. She needs to realize no more anonymity. No more hiding out, no more hanging out on the fringe. We're created for relationship first with God through Christ and then with believers also through union with Christ.

Fourth problem with her faith. Notice her aim here is too low, it's too immediate. Her perspective here is, is far too small and short sighted. I mean we can understand. We can sympathize. We can feel what she feels. We understand, we're human. But she's still too small in her thinking. She's come to Jesus for the healing of her body, and she, she truly does trust him. She really does believe him. But if she knew who Jesus really is. If she, if she knew what he really came to do. Is this the one who came to subvert, not just her, not just her twelve year flow? He came to subvert the curse itself, that which caused the flow. He came to deal with the cause of all disease, and all sickness, and to conquer death itself.

Look, had she known that, she might not have sneaked up from behind. She would have come to him from the front in plain view to know him, and to be known by him. Wanted to open herself up completely to this one, who came, came to save her from her sins. William Hendrickson summed it up well when he wrote this, "The greatness of this woman's faith consisted in this, that she believed that the power of Christ to heal was so amazing that even the mere touch of his clothes would result in an instant and complete cure." Okay, we can commend that. And yet, Hendrickson also writes this, "And the imperfection of her faith, it's evident from this fact." That she thought she, "that

she thought that such an actual touch was necessary and that Jesus would never notice it." Interesting point.

Her faith is strong and weak at the same time. It's strong as titanium. But as thin as tissue paper in some ways. It's brutal. Needs to be strengthened. Have that titanium strength work all the way through it. But even the smallest, weakest amount of faith. I like what John Calvin said, "God deals kindly and gently with his people, accepts their faith, though imperfect and weak, and does not lay to their charge the faults and imperfections with which it is connected." It's very true.

Jesus here sees more deeply than she can. He wants more for her than she's able at this moment to desire for herself. And healing her medical condition, Jesus intends to go even further by shoring up the imperfections in her imperfect faith. He's about to strengthen her faith by taking it from private to public.