
HOPE FOR TODAY'S FAMILIES

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The Texts

Luke 8:40-56; Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43

I. Introduction

Our world today is overflowing with religious conflicts and war, political polarization, refugees seeking safety, migrants fleeing despotic regimes, abject poverty, aging populations, economic distress, food and water insecurity, housing insecurity, lack of access to basic education, climate change, an increase in alternative family formations, debilitating and terminal illnesses, and much more.

Developing healthy families in this context is among the most challenging tasks human beings can undertake. Even when people are deliberate about developing healthy family relationships it is still challenging – despite our best intentions – because we are all human, and every human being is imperfect. Our failings make it very difficult to sustain healthy relationships.

Despite the difficulty of life in relationships there is *Hope for Today's Families*: from Abidjan to Aberdeen; from Berrien Springs to Buenos Aires; from Cairo to Cape Town; from Florence to Freetown; from Haifa to Hanoi; from Moscow to Mumbai; from Nairobi to New York City; from Sydney to Shanghai; from Taipei to Tegucigalpa; from Zanzibar to Zabrze; much can change for the better when we trust God to give us the patience, kindness and love He wants us to have in our relationships, regardless of where in the world we live. As we embrace God's reasons for creating the family, it is possible to have stronger and healthier family relationships.

Our topic today is titled “**Hope for Today’s Families.**” Let us pray.

II. The Text: Luke 8:40-56 A Girl Restored to Life and A Woman Healed

⁴⁰ So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. ⁴¹ And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus’ feet and begged Him to come to his house, ⁴² for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. ⁴³ Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” When all denied it, Peter and those with Him said, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, “Somebody touched me, for I perceived power going out from Me.” ⁴⁷ Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And He said to her, “Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” ⁴⁹ While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, “Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.” ⁵⁰ But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.” ⁵¹ When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. ⁵² Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” ⁵³ And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called saying, “Little girl, arise.” ⁵⁵ Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

III. Explication and Application

The context of this narrative finds Jesus on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee – probably in Capernaum – having just recently been in Gergesa, a place on the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. It was in the country of Gadarenes or Gergesenes (today’s Golan Heights), where Jesus had recently healed a demon possessed man, according to Luke (Luke 8:26-27) and Mark’s (Mark 5:1-2) accounts. Matthew (Matthew 5:28) claims there were two demon possessed men. With compassion Jesus cast out the demons who begged to be allowed into a herd of pigs (Luke 8:31-33). This action caused fear and anger in the people of that place who then urged Jesus to get out of their country and leave them alone.

It is possible the people on the Western shore of Galilee had heard about the wonderful miracles Jesus had just performed and wished for Him to do great things among them as well. Or, perhaps, they simply wanted to see the man who had accomplished such outstanding wonders to be able to boast to their friends that they had been with Him. Whatever the case, the biblical account declares in Luke 8:40 “the multitude welcomed Him.”

A prominent man of great reputation and wealth and an unassuming woman – on the Western bank – carried their own heavy burdens and were among those who welcomed the presence of Jesus. The man’s name is given – Jairus – but the woman is anonymous. Jairus was an affluent leader of the synagogue who with humility and courage came to Jesus to plead for the life of his child, even as his temple colleagues plotted to kill Jesus. She on the other hand was humble, a poor woman who had exhausted all her money attempting to get well, only to see her condition grow worse. She was desperately hoping to get assistance for herself. Jairus was gratified for the twelve years of happiness with his daughter, but now he might lose her at any moment. The woman had endured twelve years of despair because of her condition; but was hoping Jesus could make her well.

At once Jesus set out with Jairus for his home. And, while the disciples had experienced this gracious response from Jesus in the past, they were a bit alarmed by how amenable Jesus was to the request of the arrogant rabbi. Still, they went along with Jesus as the crowd followed enthusiastically and hopeful. Although

the home of Jairus was not far from where he had found the Master, progress was very slow because of the very large crowd of people pressing Jesus on every side. While the anxious father was concerned about the slow progress being made; at regular intervals Jesus stopped to help someone in need or to bring consolation to a person in distress.

As they travelled to the ruler's home a messenger pushed through the crowd with bad news for Jairus. His daughter had died so it was no use to trouble Jesus anymore. However, Jesus heard the message and immediately reached out with comfort to the brokenhearted father, saying: "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well" (Luke 8:50).

The scene at the ruler's home was already one that would break any father's heart. The professional mourners were already onsite weeping and wailing, and a group of neighbours, relatives, and friends were also by this time there. The Jews of the day engaged quickly in sharing and showing their grief, given that the body was expected to be buried the same day after being washed and anointed.

Put off by the noise, Jesus tried to quiet the crowd by telling them that the girl was not dead but sleeping. You can bet that this did not go over well with all those at the scene. Since for Jesus death is but a sleep, He was being absolutely truthful in His statement. But the assembled group ridiculed Jesus because to them the girl was really dead. They did not realize that Jesus was "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). After all, was it not Jesus who had raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15)? Had He not told John the Baptist that the dead were being raised (Luke 7:22)? Clearly, the mourners didn't believe these reports and thought Jesus to be a charlatan and a fool.

After moving everyone out of the house, Jesus took Peter, James, John, and the father and mother of the dead girl, into her room. Taking her by the hand, Jesus spoke to her in Aramaic, the language spoken at that home: "Talitha cumi! Litter girl, arise!" These were not magic words but a command from the life-giver. Ellen White describes the subsequent this way: "Instantly a tremore passed through the unconscious form. The pulses of life beat again. The lips unclosed with a smile. The eyes opened widely as if from sleep, and the maiden gazed with wonder on

the group beside her. She arose, and her parents clasped her in their arms and wept for joy.”

Of course, on the way to Jairus’ home Jesus came in contact with a woman in the crowd. For twelve long years she had suffered with a disease that had made her life incredibly miserable. She was ceremonially unclean and felt physically inferior, unable to find spiritual fellowship with believers because her condition precluded her from making contact with them or making it to the synagogue each week. Her limited finances were spent on physicians and esoteric remedies without success.

In spite of her long night of trial, hope renewed in her heart one day when she heard about what Jesus had done for others. She was persuaded that if she could find Him she would finally be healed. Faint, feeble, and frail, she came to the Galilean shore where Jesus was teaching, attempting to press through the crowd without success. Her hope was beginning to wane when by some providence of God, Jesus made His way through the multitude and came near where she was. In one last desperate move the suffering woman lunged in the direction of Jesus with what appears to be her very last ounce of verve and managed to barely touch the hem of His clothing. Instantly it happened! The feeling of being dry! Strength replaced weakness. Overwhelming joy swapped placed with grief! Peace, tranquillity, serenity, unspeakable ecstasy and happiness invaded her soul!

With a heart filled with gratitude and indescribable euphoria, the woman made an about-face from the crowd. With newfound vitality she was confident that she could quietly disappear and live the rest of her years with joy, peace, and freedom from the illness that had imprisoned her for so many years. But the voice of Jesus pierced the din of the crowd.

“Who touched Me?” He asked. You can imagine the look of amazement in the collective faces of the crowd. *Is He joking? Is He really asking that question? With all the people pressing about Him and He is asking who touched Him?* Peter, the impulsive and impetuous one; the one lacking emotional intelligence responded to Jesus with attitude in his voice. Looking incredulously at Jesus, Peter wondered, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say,

‘Who touched Me?’” (Luke 8:45). Jesus disregarded Peter’s somewhat mocking question and declared: “Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me” (Luke 8:46).

Intending to remain anonymous – a reality Jesus does not accept from anyone who comes to Him – rather wanted to affirm personhood and the unique qualities every human being has been endowed with from their Creator; desiring for this insecure and anxiety ridden woman to become assertive, confident, and self-assured; Jesus created an occasion for real interaction and communion, which this poor woman had lost for twelve long years. Sensing the spotlight on her, the now healed woman came forward and confessed in public what had transpired in her life and what occurred when her need intersected the abundance of Jesus. “She was defiled, destitute, discouraged, and desperate; but she came to Jesus and her need was met.” It is one thing to *press* Jesus; it is another thing to *touch* Him.

IV. Conclusion

In a study published in the October 2011 issue of *Nature Neuroscience*, researchers at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging at University College London present evidence that people who are naturally optimistic learn only from information that reinforces that rosy outlook. The study actually suggests that many of us are hardwired for optimism as well. Some reporters have shorthanded this finding to describe *optimism as a “brain defect.”* Brain defect or not, optimism seems necessary for personal progress. *We have to be able to imagine better realities*, to press ourselves toward that goal.

Hope, however, is more than optimism. Biblically speaking, hope, along with faith and love, make up the “big three” of Christianity. They are the things that the apostle Paul spoke about in 1 Corinthians 13 that remain when all else fails. “And now faith, hope, and love *abide*,” is how he puts it, and he meant that when we look for the qualities that are distilled from the experience of the believing life together, these three things are the solid footing on which we stand – even if seen now only darkly as through a distorting glass.

What is your need today? Will it take humility and courage to approach it, such as that displayed by Jairus – an arrogant, big-headed, conceited, and self-

righteous rabbi whose daughter was dying and in need of the *Resurrection* and the *Life*? Or are you like the anonymous woman who suffered in silence – avoided, ignored, rejected and shunned? Will it take renewed hope, not merely worldly optimism, but a real belief and confidence in God’s promises found in the Bible? Are you still captives of hope? Does hope still burn within your hearts?

Jesus is walking through your village today and with Him comes healing from every dreadful disease, even when death has already become a reality. Regardless of what you are facing in your relationships today, remember there is still **Hope for Today’s Families** through Jesus Christ our Lord. Trust Him today, tomorrow, and forever; and make Him the Lord of your life.

May God bless you to this end is our prayer.