

## Follow Me! Nothing Is Impossible for Jesus Matthew 9:18-34

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18 While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." 19 And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. 20 And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, 21 for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." 22 Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. 23 And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, 24 he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. 25 But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. 26 And the report of this went through all that district.

27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." 28 When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." 29 Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." 30 And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." 31 But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

32 As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. 33 And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." 34 But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons" (Matt 9:18-34).

The word desperate is a powerful word. It means that you have an urgent need or desire. We use it for extreme situations:

- "I desperately need a vacation."
- "They drove to Mayo Clinic out of desperation"
- "She'll date anyone – she's so desperate"
- "Do you have anyone I can talk with? I'm desperate"

You can probably think of times in your life when you were desperate. Something pushed you to the point that you were willing to do just about anything to get help, find a solution, or change the circumstances that were causing you pain. Desperation creates action.

Our text today contains great hope for desperate people. Matthew 9:18-34 shows us four miracles characterized by desperate faith, and we learn that nothing is impossible for Jesus. He is the savior of desperate people. He is the savior of people who have reached the end of the rope. He is the savior of people who say, "I need your help Jesus!" He is the savior of people who put their faith in him, people who know that nothing is impossible for Jesus.

Here's the main thought from today's text: **When you've got nothing left but faith in Jesus, you've got everything because nothing is impossible for Jesus.**

Let me show you this from Matthew 9:18-34 as I identify for you three ways that Jesus moves people from their desperation to faith in Him.

### **1. From Loss to Restoration (9:18-19, 23-26)**

Our story begins in verse 18 with a person coming to Jesus who Matthew describes as a ruler. Now we get a clue as to who he was from an important cross reference in Mark 5:21 – "Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet..." To be named like this must have meant that he was a fairly well-known ruler in one of the synagogues.

Now don't miss the fact that a ruler of the local synagogue comes to Jesus and falls at his feet. Remember that Jesus was just beginning his ministry, most of the religious establishment were not supportive, and some were even hostile towards him. Later on in Matthew (Matt 12:9-14 13:53-58) we'll see that it is a synagogue that Jesus encounters some significant opposition. So this man's approach is unusual.

The reason the ruler comes to Jesus is because he is desperate. There is no other explanation for this risky behavior. He comes to Jesus because of his daughter. Verse 18 tells us that she had died. You can feel the pain in his request: "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live." This is desperate faith.

Mark provides a bit more color on the story (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43). He tells us that the ruler originally came to Jesus while she was barely alive. He likely saw that his daughter was on the brink of death, and he ran to find Jesus. However, as Jesus was on the way to his house, the ruler is informed that his daughter has died. The words from the messenger must have been devastating: "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" (Mark 5:35). Jesus' response is telling: "Do not fear, only believe" (Mark 5:36). This man was afraid that he was going to lose something very precious. But Jesus is about to change all of that.

When Jesus arrives at the house (Matt 5:23) the family had already summoned mourners to come. Bodies were usually buried within 24 hours, and the burial process had already begun. However, the arrival of Jesus changes all of that.

He tells the mourners (v 24) "Go away, the girl is not dead but sleeping." Some suggest that she was in fact sleeping, but given the presence of the mourners and the response of the crowd, she was surely dead. Notice what they do: they laugh! The contrast here is enormous. Jesus sees death as sleeping; they see Jesus' words as silly.

Oh how often this happens! Jesus and his followers see the world through a different set of eyes, and it seems foolish to the world. "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18).

But with a crowd of people laughing and mocking, Jesus quietly goes into the house and raises this little girl from the dead. And the result (v 26) is that the report of this goes throughout the entire region. No one was laughing or mocking anymore.

Jesus quietly restored to this family what had been lost. Do you know that even though people may laugh, criticize, or say hopeless things about desperate situations, if Jesus shows up he can bring restoration? He brings restoration in two ways: ultimate and earthly.

**Ultimate restoration** is connected to the hope of the believer found in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus' defeat of death through his own resurrection changes how we see our future. It means at least four things:

1. The power of death and sin are broken (1 Cor 15:17-19)
2. Death is not the end (2 Cor 4:14)
3. Believers share in his resurrected victory (Eph 2:6-7)
4. People who know this have a different view of life (Col 3:1)

But that is not all. There is another kind of restoration that comes which is even more immediate.

**Earthly restoration** means that Jesus does restore things even now. Listen to the hopeful words of Colossians 1:18b-20.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Do you know that means? It means that Jesus has the power to restore anything because he is reconciling all things to himself, bringing things back into harmony with the way God wants

them. Restoration is a critical part of Jesus' ministry. He even quoted Isaiah 61 in describing his ministry. Notice the beauty of restoration that is loaded in this passage:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3)

In Luke 4, it was this text that Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth. And after reading it, he said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." In other words, Jesus was sent to earth to restore what was lost! So if you are desperate – lost a marriage, your children, hope for the future, a meaningful job, your reputation, your sense of worth – put your faith in him!

## **2. From Shame to Wholeness (9:20-9:22)**

The second encounter takes place in the midst of the first story. As Jesus is making his way to the ruler's house he comes in contact with a hurting, shame-filled woman. We learn about her in verse 20:

And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, 21 for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well" (Matt 9:20).

Now there are a number of things that you have to see about this encounter. First, this woman suffered from some kind of medical condition (probably a uterine disorder) that made her desperate. Mark 5:26 tells us that she had "suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was not better but rather grew worse." Secondly, this disorder would have devastated her life. She would be in a perpetual state of uncleanness. She would have been looked down upon, unable to attend temple worship, and viewed with disdain since most people would have viewed her illness as the judgment of God. Her situation reminds me of a story that Dr. Bob Cropsey told me about some women in Togo whose medical condition made them outcasts until they received a surgery that literally changed their lives. Their medical condition made them isolated them from everyone.

This woman is not only desperate; she is filled with shame. She doesn't approach Jesus like others have. She doesn't fall down in front of him. No, she comes up from behind him and simply tries to touch him. This is an unthinkable action on her part because technically she would be making Jesus unclean. No words, no plea, no conversation. She comes to Jesus behind his back and secretly touches his garment.

Luke 8 tells us that when she did that Jesus sensed power leaving his body, and he turned to disciples and asked who touched him. They replied with a statement of disbelief that Jesus would even ask that questions since there were so many people around. Mark makes a remarkable statement about this moment:

But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth (Mark 5:33).

Jesus responds and Matthew 9:22 tells us what happened – Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well."

Now the word that Matthew records for "well" is a very important word. To heal and make well is certainly the primary meaning, but the word is bigger than that. The King James renders the verse "thy faith hath made thee whole." You see the word for well is the word that is often translated as "saved" (see John 3:17, Acts 2:21, 16:30, Rom 10:13, and Eph 2:8).

Don't miss this! Jesus is touched by an unclean woman; he becomes unclean; she is healed. And Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you!" Do you see the unbelievable connection to the gospel? There is a divine exchange. Jesus gives power; he becomes unclean.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).

But there is more here. Jesus took her shame away! Jesus made her whole again! Touching Jesus had made her acceptable, clean, and unashamed. Shame comes from the awareness of something dishonorable, improper, or embarrassing. Shame can come from something you do or something that is done to you.

Shame is a direct result of the presence of sin in the world. Before there was sin, there was no shame – "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:25). So part of the beauty of what Jesus does, is he takes our shame away. And he does this, not by denying the past, but by changing who we are.

There are some of you here today filled with shame. You know what it's like to be the woman with 12 years of hemorrhaging. For some of you it is because of what you've done. Others it is because of what people did to you. Jesus said to the woman – "Your faith has made you well."

Jesus makes us whole! Let me give you a few things that you need to believe in faith:

- God knows it all, and He still loves me (Psalm 139:1-18)
- He is sovereign over everything (Psalm 135:6)

- I'm completely forgiven (Rom 8:1)
- He has made me a new person (2 Cor 5:17)
- I live for his glory (2 Cor 5:9)

Jesus has the power to help desperate people move from shame to wholeness. But it begins by coming to him in faith and to keep coming by faith every day.

### **3. From Bondage to Freedom (9:27-34)**

The final two stories show us the way that Jesus can liberate people from bondage to freedom. We see this in the story of two blind men and a mute man.

The blind men discover (v 27) that Jesus is passing near them. They begin to follow him and desperately call out "Have mercy on us, Son of David." Apparently they kept following, even entering the house where Jesus was staying.

Their desperate search and their desperate cries paid off because Jesus engages the two men. He asks them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (v 28). He is asking them if they believe. And when they respond, "Yes", he touches their eyes as he says, "According to your faith be it done to you."

That is an unbelievably important statement. Jesus had the power to heal the men, but he didn't actually act until the men believed. Jesus was filled with infinite power, but the power was not released until faith activated it. Why?

Jesus is not just on earth to heal. The healing is the fruit of his work and his mission. Jesus' mission is to invite people to believe in him, to trust in him, and to rely upon him. And without faith, there is no healing.

These men were healed when they were desperate enough to believe that their only hope was Jesus.

The final story is not really about a mute man; it actually is about the contrasting response of the Pharisees. In verse 32 we find that a mute man is brought to Jesus. Matthew simply tells us that Jesus cast out the demon, and the result was that the man was able to speak. The crowds (v 33) marveled, but not the Pharisees. They refused to believe but instead tried to dismiss the works of Jesus. They said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." They, in effect, called a good work of Jesus evil. They attribute his power to Satan. Why?

Because if Jesus does these miracles by the authority of who he is, then they are wrong. If Jesus has the power in himself to do these works, then he really is the Messiah. If he can cast out demons by his own authority, then he really is Lord. And the Pharisees would rather

believe that it was a demonic power because then they don't have to submit to him. They didn't believe in him.

And here is the great divide that every person faces – will you believe in Jesus? Now I don't mean will you believe that he was really the Son of God; that he really died for sins; or that he was the Savior of the world. No, I mean more than that. I mean will you believe that he is Lord, that he has authority over your life, and that he has the power to change your life? I mean will you run to him in your desperate condition and say, "Have mercy upon me!" or "Yes, I believe that you can change me" or "Take over my life, my identity, my mind, my body, my heart."

I mean that you run to Jesus desperately aware that you are a captive to sin and say to him "Take me captive Lord, and I shall be free!"

Nothing is impossible for Jesus. Your past, your pain, your sin, your mistakes – they are not impossible for him. What others have done to you, the pain of the past, your fear of the future – they are not impossible for Jesus.

Nothing is impossible for Jesus. The question is: Do you believe? Do you believe desperately? Jesus can bring restoration from loss, wholeness from shame, and freedom from bondage.

**When you've got nothing left but faith in Jesus, you've got everything. Why? Because nothing is impossible for Jesus.**

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