

Jesus Heals Various Conditions
Matthew 9:18-34

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.” And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. 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, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district.

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” 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.” Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.” But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. 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.” But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.” (English Standard Version – ESV)

Background:

- “Rulers of the synagogue” were the chief officials in synagogues and prominent members of their communities. If the setting is still Capernaum (Matthew 9:1), it is significant that Jesus’ following could include both this man and more questionable elements of the community (9:9). One would fall at the feet of someone of much greater status (like a king) or prostrate oneself before God. Therefore, for this prominent man to humble himself in this way before Jesus was to recognize Jesus’ power in a serious way.

- The woman’s sickness was reckoned as if she had a menstrual period all month long, which would make her continually unclean under the Law (Leviticus 15:19-33) - a social and religious problem in addition to the physical one. If she touched anyone or anyone’s clothes, she rendered that person ceremonially unclean for the rest of the day (Leviticus 15:26-27). Nevertheless, she does not avoid the heavy crowd in order to get close to Jesus. Many teachers avoided touching women altogether, lest they become accidentally contaminated. Thus, she could not touch or be touched. In an act of scandalous faith, she touches the “fringe” of Jesus' garment (no doubt one of the tassels worn by Jewish men), in obedience to Numbers 15:38-41 and Deuteronomy 22:12. The tassels were on the four corners of their outer garment, and later on the prayer shawl. They were made of blue and white cords woven together.

- Many ancient people believed that only teachers closest to God had supernatural knowledge. Jesus uses his supernatural knowledge to identify with the woman who touched him, even though in the eyes of the public this would mean that he had contracted ritual uncleanness.

- Flute players were present to lead a crowd in mourning. Several professional women mourners were required even at the funeral of the poorest person. The funeral of a member of a prominent family like the one noted in verses 23-24 would have many mourners. The cathartic release of mourning included shrieking and beating of breasts. Bodies decomposed rapidly in Palestine, so mourners were to be assembled, if possible, immediately after death. In this case they gathered before word even reached Jairus that his daughter had died. The most defiling kind of ritual uncleanness one could contract in Jewish law came from touching a corpse (Numbers 19:11-22).

- “Son of David” was the title of Messiah, but in most expectations Messiah was a political or military figure rather than a healer. Evidently, these blind men understand a connection between healing and Jesus’ identity that was not part of Jewish tradition. God ruled over blindness and sight (Exodus 4:11; Proverbs 20:12) and could answer prophets’ prayers to remove and restore human sight (2 Kings 6:18-20).

- Elijah and Elisha had done extraordinary healing miracles. David is the only recorded Old Testament figure God used in exorcism (1 Samuel 16:23). Therefore, Matthew 9:33 indicates that the crowds were greatly impressed with the miracles of Jesus.

Questions:

- + In the first account, Jesus is interrupted by an ailing woman on his way to heal a dying girl. If you were the ruler with a dying daughter, how would you have reacted to the interruption? How did Jesus react to the interruption? How do you react to interruptions? How should you?
- + Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has made you well.” How does faith relate to wellness? What would you say to those who exercise great faith, but are not healed of their afflictions? What point does Jesus make by raising the girl from death in the presence of faithless people?
- + Before healing the blind men, why does Jesus ask, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” What do you believe God is able to do for you? What do you believe God cannot do for you? The two men cannot help telling others about their experience with Jesus. What about you?
- + After healing the demon-possessed man, why is Jesus commended, and why is he condemned? How is Jesus both commended and condemned today? What do you think of Jesus, and why?