

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of weeks, we've celebrated National Adoption Sunday and given you a chance to meet Jim Caviezel. We've also talked about the importance of World Missions. Today we're back in the series from Matthew I'm calling, "Parables and Miracles" and we're going to examine the miracle where "Jesus honors the faith of a father."

Matthew 9 is full of miracles. First Jesus calmed the storm and then He delivered a man consumed with demonic desires. Those two miracles demonstrate that Jesus has authority and power over danger and demons. There are two miracles in this text that show us Jesus also has power and authority over disease and death.

Jesus had both power and authority. Some people have authority, but they don't have the power to back it up. A government geologist asked a farmer if he could go out in his pasture and take some readings. The farmer said, "You can't go out in that pasture." The government man said, "I have been authorized by the U.S. Department of the Interior to go anywhere I need to go to take these readings. Here is a signed authorization form from the Secretary of the Interior." The farmer looked at the paper and said, "You can't go out in that pasture." The government man said, "I don't care what you say, I'm going out to take these readings. I won't disturb anything." He climbed over the fence and walked out and started taking some soil samples. About that time the earth began to tremble and he looked up and a huge bull was running toward him with his horns lowered. He started running as fast as he could toward the fence. The government man was screaming, "Help me!" The farmer leaned on the fence and hollered, "Show him your papers!" He had the authority, but he didn't have the power to go out into that pasture. We see Jesus had BOTH the authority and the power over danger, demons, disease and death.

Matthew 9:18-26: "While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, 'My daughter has just died. [literally "she is dying."] But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.' Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.' Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed from that moment. When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, 'Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.' But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region."

This miracle is recorded by both Mark and Luke, and we learn several important details from their accounts. We know the father's name is Jairus and his daughter was only twelve years old, and that she was an only child. We also know that when Jairus found Jesus his daughter was at the point of death, but she hadn't died yet. Jairus ran and knelt before Jesus and begged Him to come and touch his daughter. Luke and Mark tell us that after Jesus stopped and took the time to deal with the woman who touched his cloak, a servant from Jairus' house arrived and said, "Your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher any more?" But Jesus continued on to Jairus' house and raised his daughter from the dead. As we follow the footsteps of Jesus into a scene of

death, there are three personal lessons we can learn.

I. WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, DESPERATELY SEEK THE LORD

Jairus was hurting because his daughter was dying. If you're a parent, you probably understand what is to hurt when one of your children are suffering. One of my worst memories is from a cold winter day when Laura Grace was about four years old. I had come home for lunch and Cindy had cooked hot soup. I set a bowl of steaming soup to cool on the table in front of LG's chair. While we were distracted with the rest of the meal, neither of us noticed LG crawling up into her chair to sit down. I turned around in time to see her pull on the placemat and it seemed as if everything went to slow motion as the hot soup spilled onto her and soaked the sleeve of her sweater. As she screamed with pain, I picked her up and dashed over to the sink and starting running cold water on her arm. But the sweater had absorbed the hot soup long enough to cause second and three degree burns to appear on her little arm. We rushed her to a local clinic where she continued to scream from the burns. Laura Grace says that day remains her earliest memory in life and she still bears faint scars on her arm from the hot soup. But what I recall the most is the frustration and agony I felt as a father as my child was suffering. Many of you who are parents have had the same gut-wrenching experience.

Can you imagine the pain and frustration that Jairus must have felt as he stood by and watched his only child grow weaker and sicker with every moment? Finally, he became so desperate he ran and knelt before Jesus and begged Him for help. It's important to note that Jairus was a ruler of the local synagogue. He was part of the traditional Jewish religious leaders who were generally opposed to Jesus. These religious leaders were the same ones who criticized Jesus for offering forgiveness to the paralytic and for eating with a tax collector and other sinners. So for Jairus to run and fall at the feet of Jesus, He was rejecting the official position of the other religious leaders. But Jairus was experiencing what I have witnessed many times throughout my ministry: When you have a desperate need, it often causes you to turn to Jesus. In fact, I like to say a person sometimes has to get to the POTD before he will really seek the Lord. That stands for the Point Of Total Desperation. Jairus was at the point of desperation, and it drove Him to seek Jesus.

Are you desperate enough to run to Jesus and fall at His feet and beg Him to help you? Vance Havner once said, "The problem of the hour is that the situation is desperate, but the saints are NOT!"

When you're in trouble, remember the words of this Psalm: "Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:1-4) Here's the second lesson:

II. WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER DELAYS, PATIENTLY FOLLOW THE LORD

Jesus agreed to accompany Jairus to his house, but on the way there, a sick woman crept up in the crowd and touched the edge of His cloak. The woman was healed instantly and Jesus realized

what had happened. Matthew only devotes two short verses to this miracle, but Mark and Luke expand the narrative to show Jesus stopped and spent some time speaking to the woman.

As Jesus is speaking to this woman, can you imagine Jairus' frustration? His daughter is dying, and Jesus stops to talk to this woman. I can picture Jairus' standing on the edge of the crowd, tapping his toe with impatience and glancing continually at the Rolex sundial on his wrist. "Come on, Jesus, come on! Can't you hurry?!"

Have you ever had that attitude? Have you begged the Lord for something, and you think you need it *right now*, but the Lord doesn't seem to be in any hurry? With God, timing is much more important than time. In John 11 we read that Jesus' friend Lazarus was sick. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, send word to Jesus to come quickly to heal him. Jesus intentionally delayed several days before he visited Bethany. By this time, Lazarus had been dead four days. Martha wasn't happy with Jesus. She said, "Lord, if you had been here sooner, my brother wouldn't have died!" Have you ever felt the same way? Maybe you've never been honest enough with God to express it, but you've thought, "Lord, why didn't you answer my prayers when I prayed them?" But we know Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and God received MORE glory from raising the dead than from healing the sick. Here's a lesson we always need to remember: God's delays are not God's denials. Psalm 90:4 tells us a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day with the Lord. We get impatient, but the Lord never gets in a hurry.

We need to learn the wonderful art of patience and waiting on the Lord. David sang: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." (Psalm 40:1-2)

Even after the delay, Jairus kept walking with the Lord. When our prayers aren't answered according to our timetables, we need to keep following the Lord and practice patience as well.

III. WHEN YOU FACE DEATH, EXPECTANTLY TRUST IN THE LORD

As Jesus and Jairus approached his house, they were assaulted by the sounds of the professional mourners who had already gathered to do their thing. Matthew wrote it was, "a noisy crowd." There were people whose job it was to perform professional mourning at funerals. The richer a person was, the more ostentatious the funeral racket was, and as a wealthy ruler, Jairus got the deluxe package. There were three things that took place as part of the protocol of a Jewish funeral. First, the mourners would tear their clothes into shreds. Second, there would be loud wailing, weeping, and a high-pitched warbling that could be heard at a great distance. Third, there was music. But it wasn't soothing music, it was chaotic music. Several flute players would play discordant notes that clashed with each other. Drummers beat on drums with no discernable rhythm.

You have to read between the lines to understand a little interaction that goes on between Jesus and these mourners. He said to them, "Go away, she's not dead." The Bible says they laughed Him to shame. In other words, they ridiculed Him because they thought they were the experts on death, and who was He to do their job for them? Of course she was dead! And they didn't want this rabbi interrupting their gig. Mark, who got his info from Peter wrote, "After Jesus had put

them all outside.” (I would have loved to have seen how Jesus did that.) Maybe He just looked at them with a glare that froze the words in their throats, or maybe He spoke to them in a voice that scared them away, but however He did it, He disposed of the mourners. Then He honored the faith of this father, by raising her from the dead.

There’s a great song by Don Francisco entitled, “Got to Tell Somebody.” It’s written from the perspective of Jairus. I won’t sing it, but let me quote the lyrics for the part of the song that dealt with the mourners. “We were still a long ways down the road when I heard the sounds and cries of the mourners and musicians as they strove to dramatize my grief they had no business with beneath their loud disguise. My wife just sat there silently and stared through empty eyes. Then Jesus asked the mourners, ‘Why is it that you grieve? She isn’t dead as you suppose, the child is just asleep.’ It only took a moment for their wails to turn to jeers. ‘Who does this man think he is? Get him out of here!’ With authority I’ve never heard from the lips of any man; He spoke and every sound rolled out with the thunder of command; and in the sudden silence, they all hurried for the door, wondering what the reason was they’d ever come there for. Then He called the three disciples who’d been with us on the way. He led them and my wife and me to where our daughter lay. He took her by the hand, He told her ‘child arise.’ And the words were barely spoken when she opened up her eyes. She stood and walked across the room and stood there at our side. My wife knelt down and held her close and at last she really cried. Then Jesus told us both to see that our daughter had some food; but as to how her life was spared, not to speak a word. But I’ve got to tell somebody!”

When you face death, you can have hope as well. There are two important things we can learn from this miracle where Jesus revealed His authority over death:

A. You can trust Him when you grieve over the death of a loved one

Jairus was a grieving parent, and Jesus told Him not to be afraid, but to believe. That’s the same message He gives to us today when someone we love has died. For a Christian, the death of a loved one doesn’t have to be a morbid, hopeless event. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul wrote, “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” I have observed the grief of those who are not Christians and the loved one they are laying in the ground gave no indication of being a Christian. One word can be used to describe their grief: HOPELESS. There really IS a difference between the attitudes of Christians and unbelievers when it comes to grief.

Through the years I’ve had grieving parents come to me and say, “Why didn’t Jesus answer our prayer and heal our child?” We don’t know why God chooses to extend the lives of some and not others. But one of my mentors, Ray Stedman, shares some words of wisdom about this. He writes: Why doesn’t Jesus heal everyone and raise everyone who dies? Jesus has a different perspective on death than the world. Believing this present life is all there is, the world wants it all now, but the Christian can stand at the crib of a dying child and ask God to heal him. Then, believing that God can heal him, if the child dies we still believe that our God DID heal him totally by bringing him into the eternal presence of the Lord. This life isn’t all there is. (*The Servant Who Rules*)

A pastor friend of mine had a three-year-old daughter die several years ago. He told me that although it still hurts, God gave him one word that made a difference in his grief. It was the word "through." He said, "One day I was reading the 23rd Psalm and I read these words, 'even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.' I looked at that word 'through' and realized that I had gotten stuck in the valley. God was there to walk with me as I passed THROUGH the valley." Are you stuck there? My friend, Jesus gives us hope when someone we love has died. He says, "Don't be afraid. Trust Me."

B. You can trust Him when it's your time to die

In our flesh we all have a tendency to fear death—that's natural. Comedian Woody Allen once said, "It's not that I'm afraid of dying, I just don't want to be there when it happens!" Only Jesus can remove the fear of death. Once you truly realize what's on the other side of death for a Christian, you don't have to be afraid. If I should die before Jesus returns. I don't want the casket open, for people to comment, "Oh, he looks so good." I will look dead. Besides, that's not me there anyway—it's just the body that I lived in for a few decades. I believe like the old preacher whose last name was Peas. He had them put this on his tombstone. THE BODY OF PEAS LIES BENEATH THIS SOD; BUT PEAS AIN'T HERE—THIS IS JUST THE POD; PEAS SHELLLED OUT AND WENT TO GOD!

Paul understood this. When he was languishing in a Roman prison knowing he could be executed at any time he wrote: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." (Philippians 1:21, 23)

CONCLUSION

Knowing Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is the ONLY way to assure you'll have eternal life. The Hindus believe you go through several reincarnations and depending on how you lived in a former life will determine what kind of life form you'll be when you return in the next life.

Islam teaches there are two ways to enter paradise. First, faithfully observe the five pillars of Islam. It's a religion of works, but most Muslims realize they fall short of the requirements of their faith. But there is one other shortcut to paradise: To die as a martyr while killing infidels. They are deceived into thinking if they can fly jets full of Americans into buildings while shouting "Allahu akbar" they will enter paradise. Or if they can stand up in front of unarmed soldiers with a pistol in each hand and shout "Allahu akbar" while killing infidels, then you get to go to paradise. How long are we going to swallow the garbage from the mainstream media who want us to believe that our lack of tolerance is somehow responsible for such acts of violence? Read my lips, "Islam is a religion of the sword and it has always spread its influence around the world by violence." There is a difference, and we must get the two-fold message out about not only the danger of Islam, but the beauty and superiority of a faith in Jesus Christ.

While he was in Egypt visiting an evangelical church in Cairo, Dale Pond, our Minister of Missions met an interesting Christian named Elie Hasbani. Elie Hasbani lived in Lebanon where he had enlisted as a soldier. He had heard the gospel message from his three sisters who have

been converted to Christ, but he had rejected the message. One night as he and other soldiers were searching for rockets, he stepped on a land mine. He says in the split second it took for his brain to register that he might die, he realized he wasn't ready to die, so as the explosion erupted beneath him, he turned to Jesus for help. Here are his words: The force and power of the explosion lifted me high into the sky and I landed on my back. I smelled something burning only to realize it was my own flesh. The taste of blood and dirt filled my mouth. Then I felt the pain. I felt like I had been torn to pieces. Suddenly the thought came to me that I was going to die. I was so scared. What would happen if I died? I was sure I was going straight to hell! Then this thought occurred to me: My only hope was Jesus. I cried out with all my heart, "Jesus, I know you are alive, and I know you are true. Please save me and take me to heaven. I don't want to go to hell. Forgive all my sins. I am a big sinner. I don't want to die!" At that moment a strange power filled my body and I began to laugh and praise God out loud. I began to yell, "My leg is gone! My leg is gone! But I am still alive! Thank you, God! Thank you Jesus!"

I tied my leg with a rope to stop the bleeding, then shouted at my friends who were shooting in every direction because they believed the enemy had attacked. They also thought I was dead, so when they heard my voice, they rushed to my aid in great surprise. When they saw me smiling, and heard me laughing, they thought I had gone crazy. One of them said, "He must have fallen on his head and damaged his brain." They did not understand the change that had come over me.

I stayed in the hospital for two months. I was able to tell all my friends who visited me about what had happened and what Jesus had done in my life. I prayed constantly because my only hope was in Jesus. He was the one who saved me. I lost a leg, but I gained my life."

When Elie faced death, he realized that only a faith in Jesus prepared him for the afterlife. Today Elie Hasbani is a pastor and because of his testimony, he has led many Muslims to faith in Jesus.

There's an old chorus that says, "Give me that old time religion, give me that old time religion, give me that old time religion, it's good enough for me." I love the verse that says, "It will do when I am dying; It will do when I am dying; It will do when I am dying; It's good enough for me." Indeed, faith in Jesus Christ is the only thing that will be of any value to you when you face death!

OUTLINE

I. WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, DESPERATELY SEEK THE LORD

"Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." *Psalm 121:1-4*

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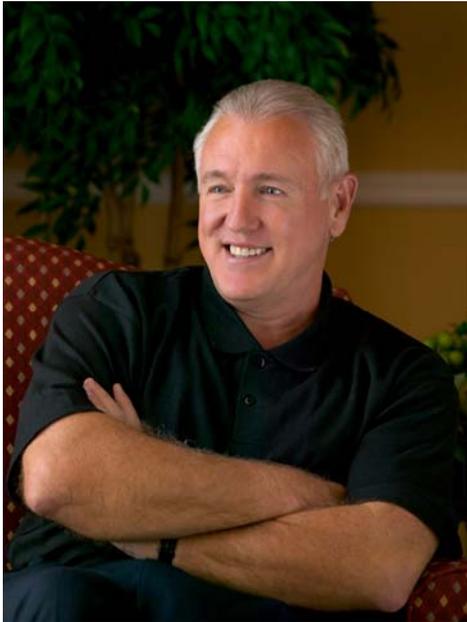
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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes