

*Divine Delays*

As we've seen over the past two weeks in our study of Luke, you never know when trouble is going to strike. Here's a few samples from the "you think you've had a bad day" category:

The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later they were both eaten by a killer whale.

Surprised while burgling a house in Antwerp, Belgium, a thief fled out the back door, climbed over a nine-foot wall, dropped down and found himself in the city prison.

Two West German motorists had a "head-on" collision in heavy fog near the small town of Guetersloh. Each was guiding his car at a snail's pace near the center of the road coming towards each other. At the moment of impact they were both leaning out the windows of their cars. Both men were hospitalized with severe head injuries. Their cars weren't scratched.

And then the clincher: Iraqi terrorist, Khay Rahnajet, didn't pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it.

It doesn't matter who you are, or what you're up to in life, trouble has a way of hitting us, and hitting us hard.

Where do we turn when the real problems of life hit us head on? And why is it even when we call out to God Himself we don't always see the answer when we think we should?

I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to **Luke chapter 8 pg 1002**

Woven together in our passage for today is the account of two people who couldn't be more different, and yet have one thing in common: they're both up against a problem they're helpless to solve themselves.

I. *Eventually Life Brings It's Share of Pain and Trouble to All People*

**Read vs 41-44a (through "garment")**

As a synagogue official Jairus held a position of honor, responsibility and power in Israel during the time of Jesus. The ruler of the synagogue was a respected Jewish layman with responsibility for the physical upkeep of the synagogue and the worship services. He was chosen from among the elders and would decide who would be called upon to read the Scriptures, preach and keep order during the services. He was no doubt wealthy and a man of influence in the community.

But now this highly respected citizen of Capernaum comes up to Jesus in the multitude of pushing and shoving individuals. The word translated "thronged" means "to crowd around, press upon" something like "almost crush." It's the same word used by Luke in the Parable of the Soils to describe the thorns "choking" the wheat and making it unfruitful.

In other words this is a large, tightly packed crowd. They make way for Jairus out of respect, but he's not there to pay his respects to the rabbi. He has been the one responsible for inviting Jesus to participate in the synagogue services since Jesus has taken up residence in Capernaum. But he doesn't come to greet an old friend.

His face is pale, his hands tremble, and when he finally reaches Jesus he falls upon his knees before Him. The Greek word in Luke's and Mark's accounts is *pipto*, "fall down, throw oneself to the ground" as a sign of devotion." Matthew uses the more specific word *proskuneo*, "(fall down and) worship, to prostrate oneself before, do reverence to." I see his head bowed, his shoulders trembling with emotion. This must have been a fascinating scene: the well-to-do synagogue president humbling himself before the simply-dressed Jesus. He has been waiting for Jesus to return -- hoping he would return in time, and now He's here. Jesus is Jairus' last hope.

The Gospel of Mark gives us Jairus' plea: *"My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."* Jairus is on his knees "pleading" with Jesus. Please come! Please! So Jesus goes with him.

Have you been where Jairus is? Desperate? Exhausted with worry? Sick with concern? This isn't one of a dozen children. Luke tells us that this is *"an only daughter."* This was daddy's girl. And now at twelve years old she lies near death. Jairus is grief-stricken.

You can probably identify with Jairus. Perhaps you've been where he is in some way in life. But now let's step back for a moment and look at his faith. What's his faith like? He has heard the report that Jesus' boat is coming, and so he has left his daughter's side and gone down to the beach to see Jesus as soon as he lands -- he and hundreds of others.

From his words in Mark he seems to believe: *"Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live"* (Mark 5:23). He believes that if Jesus will just touch his little girl, she will be healed.

The centurion back in chapter 7 knew that Jesus didn't even need to be present to heal. He just had to speak the word. But Jairus is staking his faith on a touch from Jesus' hand to pull his daughter back from the verge of death.

We don't know what Jesus said to Jairus but apparently He said OK and begins to walk toward Jairus' home across town. But the crowd is so overwhelming that it is difficult to move at all. Then, on the way, an unnamed woman touches Jesus and Jesus stops. Jairus hopes they won't get there too late.

- I. *Eventually Life Brings It's Share of Pain and Trouble to All People*
- II. *The Way to God's Blessing in the Midst of Trouble is Through Faith*

The woman with the flow of blood touched Jesus and **Read 44b**

Have you been sick for an extended period of time? Have you experienced the hopelessness of having physicians do all sorts of tests, put you through all sorts of treatments, charge huge medical bills, and and yet you're no better off than when you started?

I'll bet sometimes this lady's friends would tell her of some doctor they had heard of in another town. When she was younger, she might make the journey to consult with them, but not any more. She's broke and hopeless. Why go to a doctor when nothing helps? Her faith in doctors' remedies is long since gone. There is no hope for her.

But her problem is compounded by the way she is viewed by Jewish law. Under the Law of Moses she was ceremonially unclean.

Anyone who knew about her illness would shun her. She couldn't move around in society and mingle in the marketplace with the other women, since a touch from her would make someone unclean. She couldn't attend ceremonial occasions, or

synagogue worship. And so she resorts to secrecy. Probably she isn't even known in Capernaum. She comes incognito. Her condition is carefully concealed. But she comes with determination.

*"She came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped."*

Word of Jesus' astounding acts of healing has spread all over Galilee, even to the village where his woman lives. And she determines to find him and be healed. When his boat is spotted coming towards shore she is among the crowd waiting. When Jairus falls before Jesus begging for his daughter's life, she's not far away. And when Jesus begins to move through the crowd toward Jairus' house, she isn't far behind.

To reach Jesus she must push and shove and elbow her way between people when tiny openings occur. She is weak; her strength is drained, and yet she won't give up. She must reach Jesus, and so she continues to wedge her self through the crowd until she comes up behind him.

She has decided in her heart, "If I just touch his clothes, I'll be healed." She doesn't want to confront him in public. Maybe she's too ashamed to admit her illness, and afraid to risk being rebuked for mingling with others in her unclean state. She has to do this without revealing anything. But she has to touch him. She has to.

She succeeds and immediately her bleeding stops. Mark 5 says: *she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.*

She felt it, but so did Jesus! **Read vs 45**

What a scene Luke paints for us here. The crowd is pressing in from all sides and Jesus says, Who touched me?

I have to believe that Jesus' disciples really struggled at times to figure Him out.

Remember, a short time ago they had been out on the Sea of Galilee in a storm and had seen something astounding. *He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"*

Now He asks, *Who touched me?* That's like standing in the shower and saying, Which drop of water touched me?

Can't you just see Peter rolling his eyes. *"Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"* Come on Jesus, get real!

Of course the big question we have is what difference did it make anyway? Here's Jairus pleading for his daughter and now Jesus is going to stop and try to figure out who touched Him. Jairus must have been thinking, "Please Jesus, don't stop now!"

### **Read 46-48**

Here's a classic example of a divine delay. Jesus takes what I'm sure Jairus considers precious time to speak with the woman. Why?

God always has His reasons. Sometimes we understand them and sometimes we don't. Here Jesus has some priorities. Think about what he was doing:

1) Jesus wasn't going to allow the woman to have a "second-class" healing. Let me explain that one: Look at the position of the woman, now that she has identified herself. Before, she was behind Jesus, out of His sight. Now she is at Jesus' feet, just as Jairus had been.

I believe the woman came to Jesus secretly, from behind, because she felt that she was unworthy to approach Him directly, like Jairus had done.

Jesus wasn't going to allow her to think that way. He wouldn't be content until she was in front of Him, looking into His face, just like Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. Here is where people who have faith belong, at Jesus' feet, before Him. Only unbelievers will have God's back turned to them.

2), Jesus didn't want any misunderstanding as to the real cause of this woman's healing. Notice, He calls her "daughter." This is the only woman in the NT that Jesus addressed as "daughter." Jesus is going out of His way to be gentle and kind to her.

And Jesus goes out of His way to emphasise her faith. This was so important. It wasn't magic. It was faith.

Martin Luther wrote: She believes that divine, omnipotent power resides in Jesus; that He can answer the secret, unspoken trust of her heart; that all she needs is the Word and preaching by which He has made Himself known,

and uses the touch only as in some way to come in contact with Him.

She not only believed this intellectually, she acted on it. Touching Jesus was not an easy thing to do, but she did it. From one point of view, it was Jesus' power that healed her; but from another (the point of view Jesus doesn't want us to overlook), it was the woman's faith which brought her healing, while the rest of crowd wasn't blessed as she was.

The irony of this story is that dozens of people had been touching Jesus in these few minutes of moving towards Jairus' house, but only one had touched Jesus with faith that released saving power -- a sick but determined woman.

That tells us that it's quite possible to be in the immediate vicinity of Jesus without receiving his salvation through faith.

The thing that distinguishes Biblical Christianity from all other religions is the principle of salvation by faith. All religions involve faith, but only Biblical Christianity presents faith as the exclusive way to God.

It's been said that man couldn't have written the Bible if he wanted too, and wouldn't if he could. He couldn't because the Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies and no mere human being could have begun to guess, over and over again with precision accuracy, events that would take place hundreds of years after the predictions.

But even if that were possible, which it isn't, man still wouldn't have written the Bible because it presents him as totally unable to earn his way to God.

You can search far and wide through the religions of our day and through the religions of history and there's always a common thread. There's something that you can do to reach God. There's something you can do to earn your forgiveness. In fact, if there's a common word to all the world's religions it's the word "do."

It doesn't matter whether it's Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism; what you have to do may be different, but there's something you do, and then God accepts you. When man creates the religion it always centers around works of some kind.

Now listen to the Bible: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

*...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...*

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Man's way always depends on his worthiness. God's way depends on God's grace. God's acceptance and forgiveness only comes when we admit our total powerlessness to save ourselves and trust Him by faith.

Many people have come close to Jesus but only few reach out and touch Him by faith. Every Sunday, there are people who attend church and get close to Jesus but don't touch Him. Everyday there are people who read the Bible or listen to Christian radio or hear a friend's testimony and are close to Jesus but don't touch Him.

If there are a thousand steps between you and Jesus and you only made 999 you'd be close, but you have to make that last step, you have to reach out and touch Him.

*"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

There may be people here today who are close to Jesus but they have yet to reach out and touch Him. What are you waiting for? What's keeping you from putting your trust in Christ?

- I. Eventually Life Brings It's Share of Pain and Trouble to All People*
- II. The Way to God's Blessing in the Midst of Trouble is Through Faith*
- III. God Knows Our Fears and Our Limits But, He Will Carry Us Beyond Our Fears.*

## **Read vs 49**

Jesus had taken His time with the woman and now Jairus hears the news he's feared the most. His daughter is dead. It's too late. All this was for nothing. The joy of his life has been drained from him by four words, *"Your daughter is dead."*

But then listen to the rest of the message: *Do not trouble the Teacher.* The word translated "trouble" is *skullo* in Greek. The only time its used in the NT is in this story. It's a word that originally meant "to flay" or "to skin." It was used to describe whipping someone until their skin was ripped off.

Eventually, just like many of our words it came to have a figurative meaning: "to harass," "to torment," "to really bug somebody to no end."

What a strange expression at a time like this. The man who bears the bad news now advises Jairus to stop bugging Jesus.

Why do we imagine that our prayers, our requests for favor and intervention, are an imposition on God? That somehow he has better things to do? That we're bothering Him.

Does God ever view our prayers as an imposition on his time? Does he view this never ending stream of supplicants before his throne of grace as a distraction from the more important things he has to do?

Is God bothered by our prayers? What's really amazing is, it's just the opposite. God is troubled by our lack of prayer!

the God of all creation wants to fellowship with His creation. He commands us to pray. Over and over again in the Bible we're commanded to pray. Why?

Because prayer is our acknowledgement of our dependence on God. If your really a person of prayer you're not proud, arrogant, self-absorbed, or self-sufficient. Your dependent.

Listen to Hebrews 4:16: *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* Hebrews 4:16."

As one commentator said: "Don't bother the teacher any more!" That subtle command, my friends, was not a suggestion from God but from God's enemy, seeking to cast God as one who is too preoccupied to love, too busy to listen, too weak to help in the face of death. And how often we believe such a word!

Look at Jesus response to the messengers bad advice: **Read 50**

*God Knows Our Fears and Our Limits But, He Will Carry Us Beyond Our Fears.*

There comes a time sometimes when even solid faith buckles. We hope against hope and then our hopes are dashed. We are tempted to give up and walk away from Jesus. But Jesus doesn't let us go so easily. "Don't be afraid," he says gently. He knows our fears and our limits. But if he goes with us, he can carry us beyond our fears. "Just believe," he says, "and she will be healed."

Now, how we wish that all the sick children of the world would be healed and never have to face premature death! But that's not going to be until Jesus' second coming. But in the case of this particular twelve-year-old girl it's different. There will be a physical healing.

Jesus refuses to leave Jairus alone with his grief but goes with him. If you will, Jairus comes to Jesus on the basis of his own worried, hoping faith. But when that fails, Jesus carries him with his own faith.

### **Read vs 51-53**

Why does Jesus exclude everyone but the parents and His closest disciples from the dead girl's room? To preserve the girl's privacy? To minimize the sensationalism of what he was about to do? I don't think so.

What's really happening here is Jesus is excluding the mockers and mourners and unbelievers. When Jesus was in his hometown of Nazareth, Matthew records, *"And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith"* (Matthew 13:58). Mark goes even further and says, *"He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them"* (Mark 6:5).

Jesus kicked out the unbelief from the young woman's death chamber before he healed her.

They saw the girl's stillness from man's perspective. They knew death. They knew its finality and coldness. The girl would be buried before dark. In Judaism the body is buried the same day.

But Jesus saw the girl's stillness from God's point of view, as sleep -- a temporary condition from which she would soon awake.

Who was right? The people or Jesus? It all depends upon your perspective doesn't it? It all depends upon what you are trained to see.

That's what Peter, James, and John were doing in the room. They were in training. Training to have faith beyond appearances. Faith to hear the voice of God state what His will is in the situation. Faith to believe the word of God and God's promises.

So here's faith and laughter -- the laughter of unbelief. The scorn of the realist and

the scientist who know the rules of this material world, but are only babies when it comes to spiritual realities. *And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead.*

Think about it; what did they really know in the face of God?

### **Read 54-56**

A short series of things happen in these three verses that are given in a very matter-of-fact way.

*First:* Jesus says to a dead girl “Get up,” and she does. The Lord of Life who said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life...* gives life by His word. That’s the way it will be for all believers who have died at the coming of the Lord at the rapture.

*Second:* He tells her parents to bring her something to eat. Why didn’t He just raise her with a full stomach? Because God doesn’t do for people what they can do for themselves. It’s not “God helps those who help themselves.” It’s that God has come in the person of Christ to help those who can’t help themselves.

Jairus couldn’t heal his sick daughter. He couldn’t raise her when she died. Jesus could, and did. But Jairus and his wife could feed their child, and so Jesus didn’t. Miracles aren’t performed where normal human effort will do the job.

*Third:* Jesus tells the parents “don’t tell any one what happened.” That’s a funny command isn’t it? Everybody knows their daughter had died and soon everybody will know she’s alive. It’s kind of had to keep a thing like that a secret.

I don’t believe Jesus expected it to be a secret but here’s what’s happening. Jesus wasn’t trying to prevent the impossible. Instead, He was making sure that the scoffers would be deprived not only of witnessing the miracle, but also of hearing a first-hand testimony about what had happened.

Think of the frustration and irritation of those who had laughed at Jesus, who would come rushing up to the parents asking, “Tell us what happened,” only to be told, “Sorry, Jesus told us not to tell you.”

Those who disbelieve not only fail to receive God's blessings, they are not even able to witness them.

- Does trouble come to everyone? It sure does.
- Is there a way to experience God’s blessing in the midst of trouble? Always by faith.
- Does God know our fears and our limits? Perfectly.

His promise: *Do not be afraid; only believe.*

Have you believed in the Lord of Life whose touch brings life?