

Two Daughters: A Paulin Devotional

Luke 8:40-56

Is there anything you wouldn't do to heal your dying daughter? Is there anything you wouldn't try, anyone you wouldn't turn to?

Jairus was "a leader in the Synagogue," in Capernaum. The Greek tells us that he was the ruler, or chief administrator. He was definitely a high-ranking, respected official. He had clout. But despite his standing, at a time when doing so put him at great risk, Jairus humbled himself before Jesus and begged him to help his dying daughter.

You'll notice that Luke says nothing about Jesus' decision or response. I like that. The very next words are "As Jesus was on his way...."

Luke doesn't waste any time - Jesus wasted no time. He was immediately on his way.

But something stops him, doesn't it? He doesn't get very far when something else happens. With the crowds pressing in on all sides, almost crushing him, Jesus is pressing steadfastly on toward Jairus's daughter, when he FEELS the power (his "dunamis") go out of him. "Who touched me?" he asks.

But here's the thing. NO ONE touched him.

That woman - the one who had been bleeding for twelve years, who had spent everything she had on doctors and gotten no better? The woman who was out in public despite her relentlessly ritually unclean state? The woman who would never have been allowed to sit with her family, never allowed in synagogue, entirely cut off from community and faith and worship for over a decade? She didn't touch Jesus.

She touched the hem of his garment. She touches his tzitzit - the fringes at the edges of the four corners of his garment. The knotted tassels that symbolised

God's presence and his commandments around the wearer.

It's important to know that it was entirely taboo for a non-family member to touch the tassels. These tassels signified tribe and clan - the knots were unique - so unique that people could use them, pressed into wax, as seals on official documents.

But this bleeding woman has such faith that she stretches out to touch his tzitzit - and then, when she comes, trembling, to own up to what she has done - he greets her as his daughter.

She has touched the tassels meant for family, claimed her allegiance to her Lord by her faith and has become family. "Daughter," he tells her, "your faith has healed you."

This tiny little miraculous family-forming exchange isn't even over before someone comes to tell Jairus that his daughter has died. Not to bother the teacher.

"Teacher," could be said as a respectful title, but I'm dubious here - it seems more likely dismissive. But Jairus hadn't fallen at the feet of a mere teacher any more than the bleeding woman had when she grasped at the tassels of his garment. They had fallen at the feet of a saviour, whose mighty power, whose "dunamis" they desperately needed. "Dunamis" isn't just any power - it's miraculous activity or strength - it's the same word Jesus will later use in Acts when he promises his followers that they would receive DUNAMIS when the Holy Spirit has come upon them.

Jairus has never needed Dunamis more. So when Jesus says, "Don't be afraid; just believe," I can picture Jairus closing his eyes, swallowing hard, and believing with every fibre of his being because he cannot possibly bear to believe anything else. And Jesus goes into house, to her bedside. The mourners laugh at him when he says she's not dead but sleeping.

But Jesus takes her by the hand, and says “My child, get up.” And at once she stood up.

“My child.” In Greek, Luke writes ἡ παῖς. In ancient Greek, that’s a familial idiom best translated as “My child.” Luke is intentional about elevating the familial tone.

Both miracles are short, quick, urgent. Jesus doesn’t hesitate to go immediately to Jairus’s daughter, and doesn’t hesitate to stop in a teeming crowd to claim relationship with the woman whose faith puts a claim on him. Both of them instantly become his daughters.

Whether in the noise of a jostling, suffocating crowd, or in the hush of a room where all hope appears to have gone - he is there. With all the power and authority of the Divine Creator, and all the gentle, reassuring intimacy of a parent. Jesus is there, ready to be there in our time of need, ready to greet us with that loving acceptance and to welcome us into his family.

Reach out. Touch the hem of his garment. Claim your place in the family.

(Photo: The Chosen, Season 3, Episode 5 "Clean, Part 2")

Luke 8:40-56

Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, and she had spent all she had on doctors, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore."

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

