

# Removing Despair

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[ 0 : 00 ] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning, which you'll find in Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, at verse 40, page 866, if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles.

And as you are turning that up, you might also just listen as I'm going to read one or two other verses from the Old Testament, which just give a little bit of context and background to our passage this morning.

First of all, from Leviticus 15 and then from Numbers, chapter 19. If a woman has a discharge of blood, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness.

As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. And whoever touches these things shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.

And Numbers 19. Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. He shall cleanse himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day and so be clean. But if he doesn't cleanse himself on the third and seventh day, he will not become clean.

[ 1 : 14 ] Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. And that person shall be cut off from Israel because the water of impurity was not sprinkled on him.

He shall be unclean. Well, let's read then Luke chapter 8 and verse 40. When Jesus returned, that is, across the Sea of Galilee from the area of the Gerasenes where they had been, the crowd welcomed him for they were waiting for him.

And there came a man named Jairus who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house. For he had an only daughter, about 12 years of age, and she was dying.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years. Though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, Who was it that touched me?

[ 2 : 30 ] When all denied it, Peter said, Master, the crowd's surrounding you and are pressing in on you. But Jesus said, Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.

And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, Your daughter's dead.

Do not trouble the teacher anymore. But Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved. And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.

And all the crowd were weeping and mourning for her. But he said, Do not weep, for she is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

[ 3 : 41 ] But taking her by the hand, he called, saying, Child, arise. And her spirit returned. And she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given to her to eat.

And her parents were amazed. But he charged them to tell no one what had happened. Amen. May God bless to us. This is his word.

Well, if you'd turn with me to Luke chapter 8. A chapter all about removing despair.

Chapters 7 and 8 of Luke's gospel, as we've seen, are chapters which picture the wonders of Christ's salvation, and do so in very graphic fashion.

Wonders that cause amazement, as people begin to understand what they've witnessed. The very last verse of chapter 8, verse testimony to that, the girl's parents were amazed at what Jesus had done.

[ 4 : 46 ] And we've seen that Luke chooses and orders his material very deliberately. He tells us that himself in chapter 1, verse 3. He does it to show how Jesus demonstrated the sheer magnitude and scope of his salvation in the mighty works that accompanied his words of gospel preaching.

salvation. And so salvation is pictured for us as the reversal of death, as sin's penalty is reversed forever by Jesus.

And it's pictured as release from debt, bringing release from sin's past into a new future of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. That was the story of the woman who poured the ointment on Jesus, and the many women who followed him and had their lives changed by him.

And salvation is pictured also as a rescue from darkness, from sin's power, and indeed from sin's dark personality, as we saw last time in the stilling of the storm, and in the freeing of the man who was possessed by a legion of evil spirits.

And in this final story today, we see salvation pictured as the removal of despair that sin brings to human life in this veil of tears.

[ 6 : 02 ] Despair because of the pain and the poverty, and the hopeless despair of sin's power to force distance, to force separation and isolation into our lives.

distancing people from the joy and the warmth and the love and the fellowship that we were made for with loved ones, but ultimately, of course, with God himself.

And Luke here weaves together two human stories of great despair, two people who could hardly be more different, and yet who both share the same predicament, and whose need is met in exactly the same way, in the person and the power of the Savior, Jesus Christ, as they come themselves presently to experience the wonders of his salvation.

Look at verses 40 to 43 where we're introduced to two despairing people, two people who know that they're beyond all earthly help, very different people, of different rank, different position in society, but in the end, when facing the starkness of human despair, well, as Rabbi Burns put it, the rank is but the guinea's stamp, for all that and all that, a man's a man for all that, and suffering and grief are no respecter of persons.

And what we see here is just two despairing human beings. First, verse 41, there's Jairus, who, we're told, along with others, is eagerly awaiting Jesus' return by the lakeside.

[ 7 : 37 ] Implication seems to be that they've been away quite a long time, perhaps they've been waiting all the time that Jesus was over on the other side, dealing with the man with the demons. But why was Jairus, a man like him, down by the lakeshore?

He was, we're told, a synagogue ruler. That is, he was one of the most important men of the whole community. It's actually much more than just a religious figure. Perhaps we could think of him as like the senior elder and the sheriff and perhaps the MP and the Lord Provost.

All of these things rolled into one, a very, very important position. A real bigwig. Sort of man who, you would think, would be naturally very suspicious of people like John the Baptist and Jesus.

A rabble-riser, a heretic who seemed to spell nothing but trouble for the establishment. And Jairus was the epitome of a pillar of the establishment. But, a man's a man for all that.

And we're told that tragedy had struck his household. His darling only daughter, just 12 years old, was literally lying at death's door. She had a fatal illness. She was an extremist.

[ 8 : 50 ] No one could help. And you can be very, very sure that a man of Jairus' standing would have exhausted every possible avenue of help before he would have lowered himself to coming to Jesus for help. You can imagine how distraught he must have been.

Some of us may have been in that kind of situation with a child in extremis and they will know the overwhelming terror that it engenders mixed with a sense of impotent helplessness and despair.

So this society figure, Jairus, forgets all his prejudice and he runs down to the beach to meet Jesus. I know I've been calling him a wretched Bible basher but maybe there's something in it, just maybe, and I'm absolutely desperate so I'll go.

So he forgot all his pride and dignity and he comes consciously humiliating himself to beg at Jesus' feet. He forgets all his friends and family.

He came all by himself. This man would have had servants aplenty. Why on earth would he desert his daughter's bedside at that very moment and send himself instead of them?

[10:03] Maybe nobody else would come to Jesus. Maybe they ridiculed Jairus when he even suggested it. We read a few verses down that the household must have been very, very quick to call the mourners in.

They were certainly very quick to come to Jairus and tell him that the girl had died and therefore not to concern themselves with Jesus anymore. I'm sure they weren't that bothered about wasting Jesus' precious time.

Much more likely I think they wanted to avoid the embarrassment of having Jesus come anywhere near that society household. You can hear what they've been saying about Jairus or the grief's gone to his head.

Poor chap's lost the place. Better do something before he embarrasses himself and people start saying he's gone all evangelical or something. Just think while Jairus himself was seeking out Jesus his unbelieving household must have already been off summoning these professional mourners to come and weep and weel for her death because how else could they possibly have got there so quickly to be in full swing by the time Jesus arrives at the house?

Verse 52 But forsaking all of this Jairus came himself and he threw himself down at Jesus' feet.

[11:19] He was in a state of acute despair. And verse 42 says Jesus responded immediately went with him. But then suddenly into the midst of all of this we're introduced to a second person.

A very different person but also a human being in a state of great despair. This time though it's chronic despair and hardly a greater contrast could be imagined between these two.

First of all obviously she's a woman. Well it was a patriarchal society. Of course in Israel women's place was honored far far more than in any of the other neighboring societies because of the teaching of the Bible of course.

But still her place in society would have been determined by a relationship to a man either to her father or to her husband. And then this woman was one who had a terrible affliction all the more terrible because of its social and religious consequences.

We're told she had bled constantly every day for 12 years from a uterine hemorrhage. Physically of course she'd have been very weak from anemia no iron tablets in those days.

[12:31] Mentally I'm sure the strain would have been enough to make her despair. None of the sanitary conveniences that we have in the 21st century. But in fact these things were actually the least of it because according to the Bible's law as we read earlier this ailment meant that she was perpetually ceremonially unclean just like a leper.

If a woman has a discharge of blood all the days of her discharge she shall continue in uncleanness Leviticus 15 verse 25. And so that meant she was cut off from all human contact whatsoever because if anyone so much as touched her they too would have become unclean.

so she couldn't go near the synagogue where Jairus was chief. She couldn't enter the fellowship of God's people. She couldn't go anywhere near the place where you could pray to God.

Nor is it likely that she could have had a husband because who would go near her even to touch the bed that she had touched would inflict uncleanness on him. Never mind to share a bed.

And so most likely she couldn't have had any children either. And she was an outcast in that society. She was stigmatized. She was barren. She was alone in the world. Shunned wherever she went.

[13:54] Can you imagine a more utterly hopeless sense of despair? No wonder she tried everything, verse 43. She'd spent everything she had, everything, in a hope of finding healing.

Can you imagine how desperate her sense of despair must have been? And what help had these physicians and gynecologists been? Verse 47. None whatsoever.

She could not be healed by anyone. Now Luke, being himself a physician, puts that in a rather restrained way. Mark's account in Mark chapter five is much more blunt. Mark says, quote, she had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse.

no professional closing ranks for Mark. The real tint of authenticity there, isn't it? Dr. Luke says, well, sadly, my colleagues couldn't be any help in this case.

Luke says, they nearly killed the poor woman. And she too, like Jairus, was in despair, beyond all earthly help. But unlike Jairus, she didn't have to overcome any dignity and pride in an effort to

come to Jesus, because surely she had none left.

[15:13] No friends or family for her to forsake, because she was already alone and outcast. And she couldn't even bring herself to approach Jesus openly, do you see?

So low is her self-esteem, so utterly wretched, so isolating her condition was. And yet, in the marvelous providence of God, these two despairing people are brought together in time and place in the presence of the Savior.

For the one, the last twelve years had surely been years of joy and delight in an only daughter that was the light of his life. For the other twelve years of just ever increasing despair, worlds apart, and yet here they are united in their human need, as indeed every single human being, whatever their rank is united in the need of a Savior.

The rank is but the guinea's stamp. Two despairing people met by Jesus, the Savior. And in what Jesus says, and in how Jesus meets their need, and how he removes their despair, we see another wonderful, wonderful picture of what Christ's salvation really means, and about how it comes for every single human being of whatever rank, who finds him as their Savior.

Verses 44 to 56 picture for so graphically the salvation that comes by reaching out to Jesus, and which will end in a great raising up by Jesus.

[16:51] Look at the rest of this woman's story in verses 44 to 48. It's a wonderful demonstration of faith as reaching out for Jesus. It's a graphic demonstration of how salvation comes to us through reaching out in faith to Jesus as the Savior.

And his person and his power removes the despair of perpetual alienation and separation and estrangement and distance from the love and the belonging and the fellowship that we were made for.

And it brings restoration. It brings reintegration into the fullness of human life and love now, immediately, when Jesus declares, go in peace.

Look, it's telling us here that Jesus came to rescue all who are in despair in life and to remove that despair for everyone who will just reach out in faith to his person.

The first astonishing thing that we see in verse 45 in response to the woman's furtive touch of Jesus coat is that Jesus recognizes real faith instantly.

[18:06] He recognizes in a great crowd when someone is truly reaching out to him in faith and trust. Who touched me, he says. That woman in verse 44, we're told, was surreptitious. She came up behind him.

She was unseen. She didn't want to be seen by him or be seen by anybody else because they would have been angry. because it would be like a leper coming in. They knew that she would make everybody unclean.

It would be like somebody with the Ebola virus marching up and down the aisle of a plane, sneezing on everybody. People would be furious. They'd be angry. But she'd heard about Jesus and she wasn't going to let anything stop her getting to him, even though she had to be very careful. so she sneaked up. And it paid off with that touch of just the tassels on the edge of Jesus' cloak. Immediately, verse 44, she was healed.

And Mark, in his account adds explicitly, and she knew it in her own body. She instantly understood it. She felt it. But verse 46 says that Jesus knew it too.

[19:08] He perceived that there had been a personal, deliberate reaching out. And he knew exactly what it meant. You see how Luke emphasizes over again her touch?

Nearly every verse repeats that word, touch, because Jesus' perception of the meaning of somebody's touch is so important. Remember, that was so important back in chapter 7 in the story of the woman in Simon's house.

Do you remember? Simon the Pharisee saw another woman touching Jesus. And he doubted that Jesus could perceive things properly. If he were a prophet, he would have known what kind of a woman this is who touched him, he said.

See, for Simon, it was quite an inappropriate touch. It was a sinful touch. But Jesus there perceived precisely what kind of touch it was.

He knew it was a touch of genuine and loving faith. And yes, that woman was defiled morally. And yes, this woman also is defiled ceremonially.

[20:10] Her touch did make people unclean. God's own law said that. But you see, Jesus, the Savior, came to be touched and to be tainted himself by the defilement of human sin in order to

remove the despair and all of that defilement and to bring in the place of despair the joy and the hope that springs from a fulsome cleansing of sin.

And just as with that woman he perceived her touch was born of true and loving faith. In this case, too. Here in verse 46, he perceived, he says, that power, that is healing, forgiving, cleansing power, that it had gone forth in answer to the touch of genuine seeking faith.

Jesus perceives, Jesus recognizes real faith. and he recognizes however flawed, however inadequate it might be and this woman's faith did seem to be rather flawed and inadequate. She thought that she could have Jesus' power secretly. She seemed to be a bit mixed up, didn't she, with superstition and so on. As though Jesus' clothing had magic powers. Well, that's quite wrong.

Some people today still think like that. They think that there are holy relics and things that have special power to heal or that pilgrimages to special holy shrines and things can help you.

[ 21 : 38 ] That's just confused, that's superstition, that's magic, that's nonsense. And so yes, this woman's faith did seem to be a bit mixed up. But however inadequate her understanding was, what she did know was that she needed Jesus himself.

So she knew she had to get close to him. She knew she had to reach out to him for help. And Jesus knew her heart. And he understood what her touch meant.

Jesus recognizes real faith. Faith that's reaching out to him for help. However feeble, however mixed up and ignorant it might still be.

And secondly, Jesus responds to real faith and rewards it always. Jesus didn't say to her, now look, my dear, get your theology sorted out first and come back later when you're a lot less confused.

He didn't say, I'm sorry, I can't get involved with anybody who thinks that my clothes have got magical properties. Go away. What did he say in verse 44? What happened rather?

[ 22 : 45 ] Immediately, she is healed by the power that is in him. In his person, of course, not in his clothes. Aren't you glad about that?

Aren't you glad that even if you're still a bit confused about theology, even if you don't understand everything yet about how God works and how he saves people, aren't you glad that he can still save you and he will still save you and he loves to save people that don't know everything?

I'm jolly glad about that because he knows when our hearts are reaching out to him in real faith. He recognizes it and he responds always because he responds to her faith and that's what real faith is. It's reaching out to Jesus knowing that Jesus has the answer. That's what faith is. Even if you don't yet understand the ins and outs of the hows and the whys and the wherefores, Jesus responds to that faith and he gives much more than we even ask or imagine.

This woman was cleansed not only of her disease but also from her sins. She received from Jesus the restoration and the reintegration of her whole life. You see, Jesus will not let her slip away with her healing.

[ 24 : 06 ] Verse 44, he insists on flushing her out. Someone touch me, he says. Come out. Who is it? And 45, Peter's exasperated.

Everyone's touching you, Jesus. It's like Black Friday at Tesco's. Come off it. But Jesus won't be moved. And so you see verse 47 says she comes trembling forward and she spills the beans publicly.

Notice about her problem and about her healing. Why does Jesus do that? Why does he seem to be embarrassing the poor woman like that in front of everybody?

Is he being cruel? No, he's not a sadist. Think about it. This was a woman who everybody knew was defiled and was defiling to other people.

And so one reason he did it was to declare publicly that she was clean, that she was undefiled, that she was no longer somebody to be shunned and kept away from. And so Jesus publicly justifies her.

[ 25 : 10 ] He declares her to be clean in the face of everybody and therefore to be restored and reintegrated to her family, to her society, to the synagogue, to the fellowship of God's people, to the fellowship with God himself.

Wasn't that a wonderful declaration for that woman to hear? A life-changing declaration. But he also did it, I think, to teach her and probably to correct her misunderstanding, however gently he was doing it.

Because she needed to know, didn't she, that it wasn't her finger that had healed her or Jesus' cloak, but it was her faith. Her faith in Jesus personally. And she needed to know that you can't have the blessings of Christ's salvation without personal fellowship and knowing the Savior himself. She had to know that. There's no such thing, is there, as arm's length salvation from Jesus. People often think there is.

That's what religion is. Whether it's pagan or whether it's got a Christian veneer. When people think they can have what God can give without any too close interaction with God who is the giver of these things.

[ 26 : 22 ] But no, Jesus says. He demands that all who receive his gifts receive him. And he calls all such to come publicly out to him, to kneel before him, to confess him as Lord and Savior, to join with his people publicly, to be one of his, to be identified with him.

Some people say, oh yes, I'm a Christian, but I don't ever go to church. Jesus says to you, if that's you, that's impossible. Because people who have received my gift of salvation, they know me and they love me.

They want to spend time with me. And I'm found always in the midst of the presence of my people. That's where I am. That's my temple. I live with my true family, with my mother and sister and brothers.

Those who love my words, those who hear my words and do them, as chapter 8, verse 21 reminded us. You see, those who reach out to Jesus for healing must come out and join Jesus and his people.

Real faith always means real fellowship with Christ and his people. And he's teaching her that and he's teaching us that. And also, Jesus, by calling her out, is giving her even more than she was seeking.

[ 27 : 41 ] Jesus said, you remember, back in verse 18 of chapter 8, that to those who have, more will be given. And he rewards her faith, not just with her physical healing, but with salvation for her sins and with peace with God.

That's what verse 48 means. Daughter, your faith has saved you, is what it says literally. Go in peace. It's identical to what Jesus said to the woman in chapter 7, verse 50.

And there, it was absolutely explicit. We're told, her sins are forgiven. And that's why she can be at peace, because it's peace with God. Because to find the Savior, to reach out to him, is to be received by him.

It's to find salvation. It's to be brought in from the outside, back into God's family. Not only into the fellowship of God's people, but into the fellowship of God's own family.

Peace on earth among those with whom God is pleased. That was the angels' great glad tidings in chapter 2. Do you remember? In Luke 10, verse 6, Jesus calls Christ's followers the children of peace.

[ 28 : 54 ] And that's what this woman is now by her faith. And Jesus declares that publicly. You see, daughter, my daughter, it's family language, daughter, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. And friends, that is what the Apostle Paul says of everyone who has reached out to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 5, verse 1.

Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him also, we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

no longer standing at distance, perpetually isolated, estranged from God our Father. But children sharing and enjoying that family intimacy with him.

Verse 48, daughter, children of God's peace. And that's why Jesus won't let her be silent. He publicly declares his peace to be upon her.

[ 29 : 55 ] And that's what faith in Jesus brings. That's his response to faith. That's his reward of faith. Not because of any merit, of course.

It's absolutely gratuitous and free here. She stretches out her empty hands, reaching out to Jesus. But he, in his grace and mercy, fills her hands and fills her heart to overflowing.

And Luke's message could not be clearer, could it, that salvation comes now to those who reach out to Jesus. However great their despair, their pain, their sense of helplessness.

And he responds with great reward, with a public declaration of belonging to his family as his son, his daughter of peace.

And belonging to the fellowship of all who are his people, his family. There's no defilement, there's no despair that he cannot and will not remove from our lives.

[ 31 : 01 ] Even the defilements that his own law condemns and demands must put us at a distance from him. Go in peace, he says. Peace with heaven, and newfound peace and fellowship and love and family and belonging here on earth, right now, immediately.

This woman who had been estranged from her place of worship, now worships at the feet of the Son of God himself. Isn't that marvelous? That she who couldn't even go and say a prayer in the synagogue, now hears the voice of the one who himself answers prayer, calling her daughter. She who was unclean and untouchable and spent all she had on worthless physicians, is now made clean by the touch of the great physician himself, the one who came to seek and to save the lost.

And she who had known only pain and turmoil and distress and despair, is to all go in peace by the Prince of Peace himself.

It's wonderful, isn't it? But it's a picture, a graphic and wonderful picture of what salvation in Christ means, even now, here on earth, as he removes the perpetual despair in life from all who will have faith, for all who will just reach out to Jesus Christ.

[ 32 : 31 ] And even in a crowd, he knows, he can tell, he can tell this morning who is reaching out for him like that. He recognizes real faith, however flawed it might be, and he rewards it immediately, even now, with great and lasting peace in the place of despair.

But you know, great as that is, salvation in Jesus Christ is not just about now. It's not just about life on this earth now, in the present.

There's more to it. There's much more to it than that. And that's what is wonderfully and graphically pictured for us in verses 49 to 56, as we come back to the story of Jairus.

It's all about raising up by Jesus. It gives a graphic demonstration and a foretaste of the full salvation that will come to us at last, which will be nothing less than a bodily raising up by Jesus from the sleep of death.

Jesus came not only to remove the perpetual despair in life now for all who reach out in trust in his person, but he will come again to remove the permanent despair of death forever to all who will one day wake up in his presence.

[ 33 : 51 ] Poor Jairus. What must he have felt in verse 43 when the crowds thronged Jesus and slowed him down? And then when there was further delays as Jesus stopped with all this business with this woman, he must have been frantic.

Why was Jesus stopping to deal with this chronic situation where my situation's acute, desperate? It would be like being in A&E;, wouldn't it? And you've got crushing chest pain and you know you're having a heart attack and all the doctors and nurses are busy stitching up somebody's finger.

It must have felt like that to Jairus. And sometimes it can feel like that, can't it, to us very often. And God seems to be giving all his help and giving all the answers to prayer to people around about us, people with much less need than we seem to have right at this moment.

And God's ignoring us and dealing with them. Why doesn't he answer my prayers? Why is he so busy answering all those things which are so much more trivial? Of course, if we were rational, and if Jairus was rational, we'd be saying, well, if Jesus can help others like this, he can help me too. But we're not usually rational when we're thinking about those things, are we? Poor Jairus. Then verse 49, his worst fears are confirmed.

[ 35 : 11 ] The dreaded messenger comes. Don't you think his heart must have sunk when he saw them coming? As your heart would sink. If you saw police coming to your door late one night and asked you to come in holding their caps in their hands, or somebody from the army perhaps, if you knew your son or daughter was serving abroad, and that awful sinking feeling, and the confirmation, verse 49, your daughter is dead.

Most of us can only imagine the agony of that moment, but some of us, some of us in our fellowship very recently don't have to imagine. They know the searing pain of that moment.

They know the immediate assault in your faith in God that these things bring, that hits you, and you say, why? Why has God allowed this?

You think to yourself, well, is Jesus really any use now? Isn't it just too late? That must be what had hit Jairus, don't you think, when the messengers come to him and say, don't trouble the teacher anymore.

He's no help anymore. You remember back in chapter 7, verse 6, that was exactly the message that the centurion sent out to Jesus when Jesus was coming towards his house.

[ 36 : 36 ] But there it was a declaration of faith, do you remember? You don't need to trouble to come to my house, just say the word. It was a great expression of faith, but here it's actually a great temptation to Jairus to give up on Jesus, isn't it?

It's too late to think, well, I was wrong to think that Jesus could help in my despair. Why didn't Jesus just do like he did with the centurion?

Why didn't he just say the word at a distance and say, I've been delayed here, but go home, your daughter's healed. Well, I think it must have been, mustn't it, to teach Jairus something, perhaps to teach us something, not to give up on Jesus when everything seems bleak, when everything seems even beyond despair and help, to teach us that we can have faith in him and that we can trust him even then and that we need not fear and that we can go on trusting the good news of the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel that Jesus was proclaiming then and the gospel that we still proclaim today.

do not fear, says Jesus in verse 50. Only believe, have faith and she'll be well again. She will be saved, literally.

It's very, very hard when you're in the face of despair, in the face of disease and death, to trust in Jesus' power, to trust in Jesus' timing, to trust in his presence with you, to be the answer that will never fail.

[ 38 : 11 ] It's very hard, isn't it? Perhaps when you're in the state of having a chronic disease or debility, an illness that you have to live with in your life, something that makes you miss out on all sorts of things that others can do and you can't, something that seems to blight your ambitions in life and you're saying to yourself constantly, it's just not fair, it's not fair.

It's hard, isn't it, not to question God's purposes, God's motives. Or maybe when you're living with a chronic lack in your life, an unfulfilled longing and desire, perhaps for a marriage partner, perhaps for a child that's never come, perhaps for something else.

Or maybe when you are facing the more acute fears of a doctor's appointment coming up in this very week for yourself or maybe for a loved one and you just suspect that it's going to be bad news and that knot in your stomach just won't go away and you can't turn over and sleep at night.

It's hard not to doubt God's timing and his control and his power. Or when you are living yourself in the face of real bereavement and mourning, just as in verse 52, all there were weeping and mourning for this beloved daughter's death.

Isn't it very, very hard not to have an eruption of questions and doubts and fears in your heart? It's very hard when Jesus seems to be taken up with everything else and everyone else except for our prayers and our cause of despair, which is causing us so much pain and distress.

[ 39 : 56 ] And it just isn't being relieved. It can so easily seem that all hope is gone. And we begin to think the same as these servants, don't we?

Don't bother the teacher anymore. There's nothing Jesus can do. It's hard not to give up hope. It's hard not to be overcome by fear, by sorrow, by weeping.

And that is so many people's story in our life and in our world, isn't it? Because this whole world is so full of pain, so full of sorrow, so full of despair.

This earth is a veil of tears. The Bible does not pretend that away, friends. The Bible is much more realistic about that than almost anything else in our world.

It doesn't pretend the facts away, but it does explain them. It's the curse of sin that makes such despair like a shroud upon all peoples.

[ 40 : 59 ] But all through the Scriptures, the words of the prophets promise a sure and certain end to this veil of human tears. The Lord of hosts will swallow up the covering that is cast over all peoples.

The veil that is spread over all nations, said Isaiah. He will swallow up death forever. The Lord will wipe away all tears from every eye. The dead will live.

Your bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust will awake and sing for joy. And it will be said on that day, behold, this is our God.

We have waited for him that he might save us. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation. Friends, do you see that that is the wonderful, glorious truth that this story placards so vividly before our eyes this morning?

The central, wonderful message of this story is that this veil of tears and this life with all its pain and poverty is not all that there is. Nor is death the end of this life.

[ 42 : 08 ] And nor can death ever rob us of the love and the fellowship of any who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life. Because in the presence of Jesus, death is only sleep, he says.

It's not permanent. It's only for a time. Verse 52, she is not dead, but sleeping. Only believe, verse 50. And she will be saved.

And salvation means nothing less than being raised up by Jesus into bodily life beyond the grave. That's what verses 54 and 55 picture.

Jesus called her rise and her spirit returns to her body. What death had separated is rejoined and she rises up bodily and she resumes bodily function.

She has something to eat. You see what Luke's saying. Even the ultimate despair of death will be removed by the salvation that Jesus brings.

[ 43 : 17 ] And for those who love Jesus and belong to Jesus, death will be but sleep. And salvation means being woken up again and being found in Jesus' presence, restored to life, life in all its fullness.

Notice this is no ethereal shadow life here. This is real and fulsome life with a hearty appetite.

That's the first thing that she does. She has something to eat. Jesus is always talking about eating in his kingdom.

In the last supper in Luke 22, he says, I won't eat and drink again until all is accomplished in my kingdom. The first thing he does when he appears to them when he's risen is give me some fish.

He's always talking about banqueting.

Think of the parables in Luke 14 and the great feast in Luke chapter 15. Salvation means ultimately real and bodily and fulsome life.

Eating and drinking and feasting in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world, of course, laughs and scorns at that just as the crowd did here in verse 53.

[ 44 : 22 ] They laughed at him. He's not sleeping. She's dead. Death is the end. Don't be foolish. That's what our world says. Life and health now. That's what really, really matters.

That's why the NHS is such a political footballer in our society. We worship health and the prolonging of life. That's why the cosmetic and the health food industry is a multi-billion dollar industry.

It always will be. Because we strive to prolong and preserve earthly life and quality of life. Because that's all there is.

And death is just the end. But Jesus says, no, verse 50, do not fear death. Do not weep. Because death is not final if Jesus Christ is present in your life.

It's just sleep awaiting his wonderful, gentle awakening into his presence, into life in all its fullness. But only, of course, if Jesus is present in your life to give you his salvation.

[ 45 : 29 ] And that's why what matters above all now is Jesus' command to believe and trust in him. That was his absolute priority.

We've seen that over and over again, proclaiming the good news of the gospel of his kingdom. I think that's what explains this strange last verse where Jesus commands them to silence, to not tell what's happened.

It's rather in total contrast, isn't it, to what he does with the woman. He insists that she makes public testimony about what's happened to her. Why is that? Well, I think it is because the time for that ultimate salvation is not yet.

And this restoring to bodily life was just a picture of that. It was a real miracle. Yes, indeed it was. But it was but a token and a picture of what will one day be real for every child of God.

This girl certainly died again one day, as did the widow's son, as did Lazarus, the only three people that we know that Jesus raised to life bodily during his earthly ministry.

[ 46 : 34 ] Jesus didn't raise everybody then. But that will be our ultimate salvation. That will be our ultimate justification, the public demonstration to earth and heaven that we are right with God, that we are at peace with God forever, and that we will therefore be bodily present with God forever, and death banished from us never to return.

Paul says that Jesus' own resurrection was his justification in earth and heaven. He was justified by the Spirit, he tells us in 1 Timothy, when he was raised from the dead.

And we too are saved in that hope. He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, Paul says in Romans 8, when all creation will witness the freedom of the glory of the children of God, and God's salvation is justified to this universe.

And we wait, says Paul, we wait eagerly for our adoption of sons, the redemption, the resurrection of our bodies. But now, we are justified by faith, not by sight.

Hence Jesus' priority and his kingdom mission is that people will believe and trust in him now through the preaching of the gospel.

[ 48 : 00 ] And to all who do, reach out to Jesus now. He makes that great declaration as he made to this woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. You're restored to peace with God now.

Immediately you believe. You stand in his grace as a child of God. Jesus is present in your life now and forever. And so you have a sure and certain hope of full salvation, that he will raise you up when he comes, when he awakens all who have fallen asleep in him.

So let me end, friends, with two last thoughts. First, this story is a wonderful comfort to all who love Jesus and who trust him, but who are nevertheless fearful about their frail mortality.

People worried about their own health or worried about a loved one or perhaps people who are just fresh in the sorrow of a bereavement. Death cannot put permanent distance between you and anyone who belongs to Jesus or between you and God himself.

Jesus is coming to wake up all who are his. And so any separation that we have from loved ones in Christ is only temporary.

[ 49 : 24 ] And those who have died before us will know no loss whatsoever, says Paul. He writes that to the Thessalonians. The dead in Christ will rise first and they will come with Jesus to meet all who remain at his coming.

And so he says, together we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. These words are a wonderful comfort.

What could be more encouraging in the face of the dark veil of death than the wonderful thought that salvation means nothing less than waking up in the presence of Jesus with all his loved ones? It's a wonderful comfort. It's also a real challenge, isn't it? Challenge for anyone who hasn't yet reached out in faith to Jesus.

Death is not the end. And Jesus is coming and he alone is the one who holds the key to life everlasting in his presence.

[ 50 : 25 ] And that key will either open that door to the joy of the Father's house, the joy and feasting and fellowship forever, or it will close that door forever upon those who have laughed and scorned his grace and mercy, who have refused the grace that he brings.

Indeed, Jesus himself is the key to all the wonders of his salvation. And he gives himself willingly to all who will reach out to him in faith.

Even in a big crowd, he knows who is doing that. He always recognizes when someone is reaching out to him in faith, whatever they don't know and however confused they are.

And he always responds and always rewards. So don't hold back. Reach out for the Lord Jesus today.

And he promises you from now on a life walking in his peace. And then one day, a life woken up in his presence.

[ 51 : 38 ] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, how conscious we are of all the causes of despair in this, our world.

But how thankful we are that Jesus Christ, your Son, came to remove all despair, to bring us joy in his peace now and to await indescribable joy in his presence when he comes.

So help us, everyone this morning, to reach out in our hearts, to reach out for Jesus, your Son, and so to find in him all the joy that you have longed to give us.

Amen.