HEALING TWO WOMEN

While he was saying these things to them, look, a ruler came and bowed down before him, saying: "My daughter has just now died. But come and lay your hands upon her, and she will live." And Jesus rose with his disciples and followed him. And look, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came behind him and touched the fringe of his garment. For she was saying to herself, "If I only touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed." But Jesus turned, and when he saw her, he said, "Have courage, daughter. Your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that very hour. And Jesus came into the house of the ruler, and when he saw the flute players and the crowd wailing, he said, "Go away, for the girl has not died: she is only sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd was driven out, he came in and took her hand, and the girl arose. And this report went out into the whole region.
Matthew 9:18-26

This pericope consists of one healing narrative being told within another. The point that is being made clear with these dual healing accounts is that in the last passage, Jesus said that the friends of the bridegroom cannot grieve while the bridegroom is with them. The restoration of life in each of these accounts emphasizes that lesson with forceful reality.

Connected to that point and always present within it is the fact if indeed, the bridegroom has come and with him the healing joy of the anticipated Messiah, then the eschatological judgment is also following on its heels and this time of great blessing must bring about the time of great decisions.

As usual Matthew truncates this account when compared to Mark but in this instance, Matthew's account is unusually reduced by omissions. Following are those omissions.

The name of the ruler, Jairus, and that he was a ruler of the synagogue.

The reference to the ruler's insistent pleading.

The reference for his daughter to be healed.

All references to the crowd around Jesus.

Details regarding the extent to which the woman with the hemorrhage suffered.

The details and references to her healing.

The awareness by Jesus that power had gone out from him.

The question Jesus asked, *"Who touched me?"*

The response of the woman having been discovered.

Taking only the inner group of disciples with him at the house with the daughter.

The words pronounced by Jesus to the daughter, *"Talitha koumi."* (Matthew may have omitted these to dismiss any magical incantation misrepresentation.)

The reference to the astonishment of the crowd.

Matthew thus transforms these stories into summaries with their essentials intact.

Despite this, Matthew is clear on one point, and this is the point to lay hold of: the ruler's daughter is dead!

In this sense, Matthew's passage is a passage concerned with Jesus raising the dead, rather than the healing of the sick.

> *And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, leapers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up and the poor have the good news preached to them."*
> *Matthew 11:4-5*

Matthew has been *"aiming"* the reader's attention to this idea of resurrection with subtle persuasion. Miracles of physical restoration, casting out demonic spirits, cleansing and complete healings, have continuously pointed to the advent of *something new.* Even the forgiveness of the paralytic is an arrow that finds its target in restoration and completion.

An addition Matthew makes to the text is that when Jesus rose to follow the ruler, it is stated that *"Jesus rose with his disciples and followed him."* This offers us some tension from Mark's account where three disciples are referenced.

Only Matthew makes mention of the *"flute players."*

Unlike Mark, Matthew uses the word *"fringe"* regarding what part of the Messiah's garment the woman touched; that the woman *"said to herself"* and that Jesus said to her, *"have courage."*

Finally, only Matthew states that *"this report went out into the whole region."*

Matthew's focus seems to always be on Jesus and his teaching which would reveal to us that he has a desire to communicate teaching to the church of his day. Less interesting to him are the details that color the story.

That both Matthew and Luke place the story of the ruler and his daughter conjoined with the account of the woman with the hemorrhage, inserting the latter into the former, most likely lets us know that the two accounts were verbally told in this way from earlier times.

> *While he was saying these things to them, look, a ruler came and bowed down before him, saying: "My daughter has just now died. But come and lay your hands upon her, and she will live." And Jesus rose with his disciples and followed him.*
> *Matthew 9:18-19*

Matthew transitions to new story with the words *"while he was saying these things"* followed by his key attention-grabbing phrase, *"look."*

At this point, a *ruler,* understood by Matthew to be a synagogue official, bows down before Jesus with a report of his recently deceased daughter.

Since he uses no title when addressing Jesus, we cannot ascertain what his estimation of Jesus is. His query, however, that if Jesus just lays his hands upon his daughter, she will live, lets us know that he had indeed, heard of this man's powerful deeds. With Jesus, the ruler had some hope.

The raising of the dead by certain men of God can be found in the historical record of the Old *Testament.*

> *19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. 20 And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." 24 And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."*
>
> *1 Kings 17:19-24*

> *32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. 33 So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. 34 Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.*
>
> *2 Kings 4:32-35*

The emphasis Matthew places upon the ruler's request that Jesus give life back to his daughter raises the stakes from Mark's report that the daughter is dying.

Matthew seems to be connecting the faith of the ruler with the simple faith displayed by the centurion in an earlier account: *"Come and lay your hands upon her and she will live."* The focus here is the man's future faith, *"she <u>will</u> live."*

Jesus responds immediately by rising and following the ruler *"with his disciples"* telegraphing that they were to witness this event. This detail is important and points to Jesus' resurrection.

> *And <u>look</u>, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years cam behind him and touched the fringe of his garment. For she was saying to herself,*

"If I only touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed."
Matthew 9:20-21

Now within the narrative of the first account, Matthew marks an insertion of a second account by use of the word *"look."*

Now we have a woman with a hemorrhage of blood. Important to know is that we do not know the age of this woman. In the culture of the time, if this woman was born with this condition and had lived with it for twelve years, she could be twelve years old which would qualify her as a woman. This, however, is only speculation.

What is not speculation is that her condition not only placed her in medical difficulty but also would have made her an *"unclean"* outcast in the culture.

Though she comes to Jesus to be healed, her approach is not direct, which is most likely caused by her being unclean. Rather she decides on a plan to touch the fringe of his garment in secret.

This scheme alone helps us to understand her faith. It is probably best to understand the woman's plan as a necessity given her condition but also as a respect of the holiness of the man she believed had the power to heal. There is some Old Testament precedent for this.

38 "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. 39 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.
Numbers 15:38-39

12 "You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of the garment with which you cover yourself.
Deuteronomy 22:12

This tells us that Jesus is faithful to Torah when it concerns his dress. Also, being healed through the garment of a holy person was not uncommon in the culture.

6 and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.
Matthew 14:36

12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.
Acts 19:12

Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we

have heard that God is with you.'"
Zechariah 8:23

This Zechariah verse is significant in that it had Messianic significance thus giving more validity to Matthew making mention of the woman's fringe-touching hope.

What is interesting to see is the woman's use of the word *"healed."* The Greek word is σωθήσομαι and it means *"I will be saved," "delivered."* Most likely it carries the idea of her being *saved* from the terrible malady, but when Matthew uses the word elsewhere it points specifically to salvation. Therefore, it's possible Matthew wanted his readers to begin to see this.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save (σώσει) *his people from their sins."*
Matthew 1:21

and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.(σωθήσεται)
Matthew 10:22

25 *When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"* (σωθῆναι)
Matthew 19:25 (see also Matthew 16:25, 18:11)

But Jesus turned, and when he saw her, he said, "Have courage, daughter. Your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that very hour.
Matthew 9:22

Since Matthew says nothing about a crowd following Jesus to the ruler's house, the effect of his turning lacks the mystery of Mark's record of this account. In fact, the woman here seems to be caught in the act of touching the fringe of his garment. Thus, we see no confession on her part.

Jesus tells the woman *"Have courage, daughter. Your faith has healed you."* Jesus used these same words to the paralytic earlier. It's at once tender and encouraging.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that faith alone healed the woman without faith having a subject. Matthew's perspective has Jesus as the one who has made the woman whole again. From there, it was her faith, evidenced by her desire to touch the garment of Jesus, that appropriated the power of Jesus to heal.

"From that very hour" reveals the sovereign power of Jesus. He pronounced that she was healed and indeed, that healing took place immediately.

And Jesus came into the house of the ruler, and when he saw the flute players and the crowd wailing, he said, "Go away, for the girl has not died: she is only

sleeping." And they laughed at him.
Matthew 9:23-24

The narrative shifts back to the ruler and his deceased daughter. Arriving at the ruler's house, Jesus sees the customary mourning taking place in preparation for the funeral. In the culture of the day, the dead were buried the same day they died.

The flute players were professional musicians, at times appropriated for festive occasions, or in this case, funeral processions.

and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters,
will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft
will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill
will be heard in you no more,
Revelation 18:22

Note that Matthew tells us that the mourners were wailing. Such a loud commotion would have been customary for first century Jewish funerals. They were not reserved events.

Therefore my heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my heart moans like a flute
for the men of Kir-hareseth. Therefore the riches they gained have perished.
Jeremiah 48:36

What Matthew wants us to understand is that all of this lets the readers know that the girl is dead.

For his part, Jesus knows what he came to do. For that reason, he tells the mourners to go. Lamenting *"the living"* cannot share the same space.

Death for Jesus is not the final word. He is able to bring the dead back to life.

By saying that the girl is sleeping is not a denial by Jesus of the fact that she is dead. Rather it is the finality of death he is speaking of.

That the people present laughed at Jesus once again confirms the reality of the girl's death.

But when the crowd was driven out, he came in and took her hand, and the girl
arose.
Matthew 9:25

Having removed the attendants, Jesus enters the room where the girl's body lay. Matthew makes no mention of the disciples or the girl's parents entering the room with Jesus. This heightens the personal nature of the miracle.

All Matthew relates to us regarding the healing is that Jesus took her hand. We saw this before.

He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.
Matthew 8:15

And like the story of Peter's mother-in-law, the girl rose. Though the narrative is simple, this account records an incredibly impressive miracle in raising the dead.

And this report went out into the whole region.
Matthew 9:26

Note that there is no attention called to the faith shown by the ruler who came to Jesus with such words as *"come and lay your hands upon her, and she will live."*

There is also no mention of the effect of the girl emerging from the room alive.

Whereas Mark and Luke have Jesus admonishing the crowd to remain silent about this event, Matthew shares no such warning.

Matthew is concerned only with the deed itself and what that deed says about Jesus. Raising the dead, however, is a deed that speaks loudly for itself.

In a real way these miracles point beyond themselves to realities at the heart of the Chruch's confession and experience. The raising of the dead to life is basic symbolism of the gospel. What Jesus did for the dead girl he has done for all in the church who have experienced new life. In a similar way in the healing of the hemorrhaging woman, the repeated use of "save" for her healing points itself beyond the greatest healing experienced by the Church, the "healing of salvation." For the Church is saved primarily not from the experience of limited ills here and now but from the deadliest enemy of all, the curse of sin. Thus while enjoying the stories of what Jesus did in his ministry and rejoicing in the power and authority of Jesus displayed in these miraculous deeds, the Church at the same time – Matthew's readers together with Christians from every era – sees in these narratives something of its own personal history and hopes, something of the power of the risen Jesus in their lives here and now.
Hagner – Matthew, page 250-251