

Hope for the Desperate

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[0 : 00] Let us quiet ourselves as we receive God's Word. Let us quiet ourselves.

Let us quiet ourselves.

Let us quiet ourselves. Let us quiet ourselves. Let us quiet ourselves. Let us quiet ourselves. Now, the death of this two-year-old certainly would not have been covered if not for what her parents did after.

Her name was Olive Heiligenthal, and her parents, Kathy and Andrew, felt that they deserved an exception. The Heilighentals were members of Bethel Church, a charismatic Christian megachurch notorious for its belief in miracles.

So they did what comes naturally under the circumstances. They decided to pray for their daughter to be resurrected. Olive's mother wrote on her Instagram, We're asking for prayer.

[1 : 54] We believe in a Jesus who died and conclusively defeated every grave, holding the keys to resurrection power. We need it for our little Olive Elaine, who stopped breathing yesterday and has been pronounced dead by doctors.

We're asking for bold, unified prayers from the global church to stand with us in belief that he will raise this little girl back to life.

Her time here is not done, and it is our time to believe boldly and with confidence wield what King Jesus paid for.

It's time for her to come to life. Over the next few days, the couple called for their church of about 9,000 members to trust in full certainty that Jesus will bring their daughter back to life.

On the next Tuesday evening, Bethel hosted an energetic worship and prayer service, declaring resurrection and life for the little girl. Hundreds attended, standing, jumping, and raising their hands as they sang, All Hail to Jesus.

[3 : 07] A Twitter hashtag, WakeOutOlive, then took the internet by storm. A GoFundMe to support the family. Amid the resurrection, prayer has raised more than 50,000 U.S. dollars.

Such enthusiasm continued until December 20, six days after the death, when Bethel posted an update. Here is where we are.

Olive hasn't been raised. The breakthrough we have sought hasn't come. And so, we are moving towards a memorial service and celebration of her life.

Friends, has Jesus failed Olive and her family? Is Jesus so weak and powerless? See, we have spent the last few weeks exploring Jesus' authority.

We have seen his power over nature as he calms the storm. His power over demons as he commands a legion of impure spirits to come out of a man.

[4 : 16] And I hope we have all marveled at his majesty. Hallelujah. What a savior. But today, Jesus will demonstrate, just as Kathy Heiligenthal wrote, that he indeed holds the keys to resurrection power.

Jesus has power over disease and has power over death. But what if I told you, listen carefully, that Jesus' ability to overcome all that can erase human existence is not less than what the Heiligenthal and Bethel church thought of, but so much more.

What if I told you that through his miracles here in Luke chapter 8, 40 to 56, Jesus reveals something about his authority that is much more commanding and challenging than mere healing and resurrection.

So if you haven't already, please turn your Bibles to Luke chapter 8, verse 40 to 56. Jesus has power over disease.

Jesus has power over disease. Now sometime after the healing of the demon-possessed man, Jesus and his disciples took a boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee.

[5 : 41] Before they even got to the western shore, there was already a crowd waiting for him. Now you could hear cheers. Hey, hey, hey, that's Jesus, right?

The rabbi who heals and teaches? Now all kinds of people showed up. The poor, the hungry, the sick.

All of them desperate for more exposure to Jesus' person and ministry. Now out of nowhere, a man dressed in a tunic squeezed his way through the crowd.

I'm sorry, please, please excuse me. Our whispers began. For this man turned out to be Jairus, the ruler or the main leader of the synagogue, the head of the church, so to speak, who was in charge of arranging the services and almost everybody recognized him.

But why is he here? Is this again one of those cases where a Jewish leader comes to Jesus with questions in an attempt to trap him and catch him spreading heresy?

[6 : 49] Is Jairus here to initiate a one-on-one showdown with Jesus on the Torah? Well, what happens next is absolutely stunning.

Jairus, a man of social standing, a leader of the city, falls at Jesus' feet in humble worship. And it's clear that something serious has happened.

That he is in urgent need of help. My only daughter is dying. Much like before, where the widow of Nain lost her only son, here, a man is again in pain as he faces the prospect of losing his only daughter.

For 12 years, Jairus and his wife came home to a cheerful child who brightened out even the darkest of days. Now add on the fact that in the first century, a 12-year-old girl would be approaching marriageable age with her best life in front of her.

The idea to return into a world without their daughter was painful and unimaginable. So desperate, Jairus heard about Jesus and sensed that he was being used by God.

[8 : 12] He tells Jesus, I beg you, please come to my house. Well, Jesus agrees to go. Yet the way to Jairus' home was very much delayed by the constant pressing of the crowd against Jesus.

Traffic on the streets was congested as many tried to get near the famous teacher to have a closer look at him or touch him. Now unbeknownst to anyone, there was a woman in the crowd whose uterus had been bleeding for 12 years.

In the eyes of everyone, she is ever dirty, tainted, and impure. For more than a decade, she could not live with others as any who touch her would be made unclean under the law.

She was shut out from all fellowship and religious life. And what's worse, she could not get help. There was no known cure for her condition.

And though many have tried to treat it, no one has been able to do anything for her. Was Jesus really going to be able to help her?

[9 : 27] Nobody knew. The woman was afraid to reveal herself in public. She didn't want to trouble Jesus, especially when he seemed to be in a hurry. Would he even touch her?

An unclean woman, anyway? Yet Jesus seems to be her only hope. He alone holds the key to her cure. So approaching Jesus from behind, she touches the edge of his garment.

And all of a sudden, something changed. She realizes that her bleeding has stopped. She no longer feels any pain. Great. She celebrated silently.

Now it's time for me to leave. Now as she squeezes her way out of the crowd, Jesus stops and turns around and says, Who touched me?

Who touched me? People began looking at each other. The woman was stunned. Her worst nightmare had come true. It's clear that Jesus knew what had happened, and she would need to confess what she did.

[10 : 41] Now before she got to say a word though, Simon Peter, true to his reputation, as a bold and impulsive follower of Jesus, responded to Jesus' question, Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.

Peter is amazed that given the size of the crowd, that Jesus would even ask such a question. How can Jesus complain about being touched? Now Peter, of course, misses the mark, for there was something different about this person's touch than the crowds rubbing against him.

The type of contact was so intentional and unusual that Jesus noticed it. Thus he says, I know that power has gone out from me.

Now throughout Jesus' ministry, it was common for people to want to touch him and be healed. Many knew that contact with this special teacher healed, that if Jesus had power, he could use it and distribute it as he wished.

But Jesus is making a more radical statement here. He's saying he's not just a vessel for God that somehow just transmits God's healing powers, but he is the very one who possesses power and unique authority from God.

[11 : 59] The woman was scared. Was Jesus angry that he had been made unclean by such a touch and that his plans would be interrupted?

What would Jesus do if no one admits to touching him? Would he call her out, shame her, and make her confess in public?

She's heard of stories where unclean people had been healed and almost all of them had to make their healing known. So she's afraid.

For if she were to speak in public as a woman, she would be crossing cultural norms. She's terrified. For it has been 12 years since she last showed herself to everyone.

The woman comes out of the crowd and falls before Jesus, not out of respect like Jairus, but out of fear.

[13 : 02] She confesses her condition and says she only did what she knew many had done before her, touched Jesus and received healing. She testifies that the moment she touched his garment, she was immediately healed.

Now all eyes were on Jesus. How would he respond? Jesus looks at the woman and calls her daughter.

Now which at first glance seems like a strange thing to say considering Jesus is probably younger than this woman. But the point is that the woman by her faith is now a daughter of God.

The woman by her faith is now part of God's family. And she has nothing to fear a daughter. And next Jesus uses almost the same phrase as what he told the woman who anointed him with perfume.

Your faith has healed you. Go in peace. Now because she had faith in Jesus, she is healed. Not just physically healed, her relationship to God is restored.

[14 : 15] And now she enjoys peace with him. For 12 years she has suffered in shame, unsure if she would ever be clean enough for God. Today she is reconciled to the one who made her.

For 12 years she has taken pain in isolation. Now she gets to go back to her community. Friends, maybe you're struggling with some kind of sickness.

Maybe like me, in the past few days you've been coughing or feeling unwell because of the extremely hot and there is an inconsistent weather. Maybe it's someone you're close to who's battling chronic illness.

Alzheimer's. Cancer. Diabetes. Heart disease. Take comfort.

Take comfort. Take comfort. For Jesus has authority over disease. Not only will he give you and your loved ones relief in sickness, he promises to one day raise you with a glorified body free of pain.

[15 : 29] But at the same time, as Jesus shows in his healing of this woman, he's not just concerned about our physical well-being. He also addresses the guilt and isolation that comes with our worst disease, sin.

Christ is our true doctor who not only heals us but restores us to a relationship with God. Jesus has power over death.

Jesus has power over death. Now as Jesus finishes addressing the woman, a man appears from the synagogue leader's home with bad news.

Jairus' daughter has died. The announcement carried a heavy and discouraging tone.

All hope is lost. There is no need to travel the rabbi anymore. Gasp. Shock.

[16 : 40] Disbelief. See, Jesus could have reached Jairus' home in time had he not decided to stop and heal a lesser medical condition. Jesus could have prevented a life to be lost had he not purposely forced a discussion about the woman touching his cloak.

What in the world is God doing? Where is God's justice? And Jesus' judgment in this turn of events?

Now in an atmosphere of panic and anxiety, Jesus turns to Jairus and calms him. Don't be afraid. Just believe.

And she will be healed. Now that's quite a ridiculous request, isn't it? The child is dead. How can she be healed? Yet that's exactly the kind of faith that Jesus calls for.

Jairus must have confidence that God has the power to and he will raise his daughter from death. He has to believe first. Only then will physical deliverance follow.

[17 : 50] Now as much as Jairus found it difficult to calm down, he chooses to believe at least for the moment that Jesus knows what he is doing.

Now upon arriving at the house, Jesus for the first time only allows Peter, John, and James to enter with him. Now parents also went into the house and once inside, they saw that there were already people mourning.

Now in those days, mourners helped families process the grief that accompanied any death. So the fact that the neighbors were already in the house beating their breasts and crying out loud when Jesus arrived shows how tragic the situation is.

In the midst of their mourning, Jesus makes a strange comment. Stop wailing. She is not dead, but asleep.

Now to be clear, Jesus didn't mean the girl was unconscious as if he had come all the way with Jairus just to rouse someone from sleep.

[18 : 56] Indeed, if that were the case, this would not be worthy of being recorded in the Gospels at all. Jesus is saying that death is not the end.

That there is life beyond this world. That when we put death in a context, full context, of the afterlife, death is really just a temporary state of rest.

And it is not beyond his power to raise the girl. And her sleep gives Jesus the opportunity to show through resurrection his power.

Now granted, no one in the room could really comprehend Jesus' message. The crowd laughs and contends. What do you think? What do you mean she's asleep? Look at this guy. Does he think we're idiots who can't tell a sleeping person from a dead one?

If someone is dead, they're gone. Now whether he meant it or not, Jesus' comment turned grief at least to momentary amusement.

[19 : 57] Now this is not the first time someone laughed at a surprise announcement by God. Sarah too laughed when God promised to give her a son even at her old age.

But what Jesus wants people to know is that God's power is far beyond what we can imagine. God is capable of bringing surprises that challenge our faith and calls us to trust in him.

Well next, Jesus does something shocking. He reaches out and takes the girl's hand as he addresses her. Now touching a deceased person will render anyone unclean by the standards of the law.

Yet here is Jesus who is holding the girl's hand like it's nothing. Now he certainly did not need to touch the girl in order to perform his act. When Jesus healed the centurion's servants, he merely said words.

Similarly, when he raised the widow's son, he only said, young man, I say to you, get up. So why does Jesus touch the girl here? What Jesus is implying, restoring the girl's health takes priority over ritual cleanliness.

[21 : 16] That as important as the law was, there are times when it should just touch. When the law should take a backseat to doing what is more compassionate and appropriate.

And then, like your mother who used to wake you up in the morning so you get to school on time, Jesus loudly calls the girl to wake up from her nap. My child, get up.

Immediately, the girl's face turns from pale to yellow. Her spirit returned and it was no longer a body lying on a bed but a real person. Her life was restored.

Then taking Jesus' hand, she stood up. Now knowing that the people might think that they are hallucinating, Jesus asked that the girl be given something to eat.

He wants everyone in the room to know that the girl standing before them is not some ghost or spirit but a human being who requires food. Now as described by one commentator, Jesus acts like a physician who has just felt the pulse of his patient and gives instruction respecting her diet for the day.

[22 : 28] Now at the sight of their daughter walking about, the parents were amazed. After all, it's not every day that you see a dead person raised.

Doubt turned to gratitude while laughter of mocking turned to laughter of genuine joy. Now that moment, everything in them wanted to run outside and tell everyone about what had happened.

yet Jesus again gave a strange request. He tells the parent to be silent even though everyone in a couple of hours can see that the dead person is walking around.

What else to conclude but that the girl had been raised. So why does Jesus ask them to keep quiet when eventually everybody will know? See, from Jesus' perspective, he wants to avoid making his healing the focus of his ministry.

Lest people come to him expecting him to show his power everywhere he goes. Jesus' point is that the life he calls people to is not a life of comfort but suffering.

[23 : 40] Yes, it is inevitable that people will talk about his works and yes, there will come a time when the miracles will go public but no, people should not encourage needless publicity of his ministry.

as they are not at the heart of what Jesus is doing. In raising the little girl, Jesus called on Jairus to trust in him even when things seemed to go south.

Jairus had hoped that Jesus could quickly travel to his house to heal his daughter from disease. However, the interruption and delay from healing the woman with bleeding problems had seemingly caused all to be lost.

Jairus played all his eggs in the Jesus' basket only to hear that his daughter has died. That was not what he signed up for.

Yet Jesus still called on him to trust. The timing and circumstances may not have been what Jairus had initially imagined but things were still in control through his agent.

[24 : 50] When others soaked in defeat and grief thinking that all was lost and by all appearance they were, Jesus exercised his authority and reversed the appearances.

Jairus started with a simple faith in Christ's healing power. He ended with a glorious witness of Jesus' resurrecting power.

Friends, it is easy for us to express confusion at the High Leganthos and their decision to pray for their daughter to be raised from death.

We, on the conservative side of evangelicalism, can easily dismiss charismatic theology as overtly spiritual, as emotionally manipulative, believing ourselves to be on some kind of higher theological ground.

But if we look inside ourselves, we are afraid of disease. We are afraid of death too. No matter your background, disease and death always carries with them a sense of injustice.

[26 : 02] How can someone who does so much good for his family and for his work get cancer? How can someone who looked well the day before suddenly pass away?

That's the same kind of unfairness people felt when the delay in Jesus' trip caused Jairus' daughter to die. So what solution does our culture offer to combat the injustice of disease and death?

So on one hand, we escape. We do everything we can to mask disease and death because of the shame it brings. I know a successful businessman who refused to let people visit his sick wife because it puts him in a vulnerable position where he needs help.

We keep ourselves busy so we can avoid thinking about disease and death and just focus on the present. But we don't just escape, we also fight.

We chase the hope of a successful career, a financially stable life, a God-loving family and children and even a fruitful ministry looking to them to bury our insecurities.

[27 : 17] Yet whether we escape or fight, we get temporary relief at best. No matter how much we try to run away, disease and death is inevitable.

regardless of the ways we try to convince ourselves that we are masters of our own fate, we must eventually face our powerlessness.

Disease and death renders all equal. But the good news of Luke chapter 8 40 to 56 is that Jesus has come face to face to battle disease and death.

Jesus declares through his miracle of healing and of raising Jairus' daughter that he has come to remove the sting of disease and death. After all, disease and death are really consequences of the curse in Genesis 3.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the living tree, our desire to live for ourselves has only brought us to our demise.

[28 : 23] And it is a heart that we must repent for. yet Jesus is here to reverse the authority of sin and give us new life.

Brothers and sisters, it doesn't matter whether you are a child or an adult, a synagogue leader or a commoner woman, the gospel is for everyone.

Maybe like the woman, you believe that you are unworthy of Jesus' attention. You want him to assist you when you need him, but you worry that you are not good enough to follow him.

Maybe like the mourners in Jairus' house, you look at the imposing force of crisis and death and think that there is no hope against it. Friends, our culture says cover your ugliness and show yourself only when you are well.

Jesus says, come to me in your shame and I will restore to you peace with God. The world tells us, mask your deficiencies with a fancy education, an attractive spouse and a well-paying career.

[29 : 37] Jesus says, I see you in your deepest fears and I invite you to come forward and have faith in me. Christianity says your real problem is not your physical health but your spiritual health.

the Christian faith that you are sick to the core, that your inner life is rotten, dead and without hope. Yet Jesus came and gave out his health to meet you in your sickness.

He came and gave out his life so he can touch you and your dead soul and raise you up to new life in him. this morning, will you stop running from the fear of disease and death?

Will you stop fighting by clinging to the things you can control for hope? Will you place your faith in the one who sacrificed himself to give you true life?

Will you trust in Jesus and his absolute power knowing that one day you will reign with him in supreme glory? Let's pray.

[30 : 55] Father God, what a weighty, weighty conversation, weighty passage that reveals our deepest insecurities and fears, that reveals our human default to control, to cling to things for security.

By the way, thank you for in you we no longer have to escape. We no longer have to fight for you did not escape. You came to take disease and faith and disease and death head on.

And you call us to a life of radical, radical giving up of our self-sufficiency. And to turn to you that this we have studied here is just a foreshadow of what you would do to raise us as first fruits of a multitude, to sing, to celebrate new life with you and reign with you and worship you in your infinite glory.

So until that day comes, lead us as we live our lives on earth to keep our eyes fixed on you and your resurrecting power.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.