

# Matthew 9:18–34

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[ 0 : 00 ] 9, 18 to 34. This is what God's word says. While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live. And Jesus rose and followed him with his disciples.

And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment. For she said to herself, If only I touch his garment, I will be made well. Jesus turned, and seeing her, he said, Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well. And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all the district. And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, Have mercy on us, son of David. When he entered the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to him, Yes, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done to you. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, See that no one knows about it. But they went away and spread his fame through all the district. As they were going away, behold, a demon oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. When the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke and the crowds marveled, saying, Never was anything like this seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the prince of demons. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

You may be seated. Good morning. My heart is filled with the question, Is there really any hope for the hope for the helpless? Let me put it a couple different ways? Can Jesus do anything with your desperation? I mean, if you consider the text that we just read, it would appear that for some, he does. Yet I'm convinced that if I were to ask you to share your responses to the reading with the person seated next to you today, our reactions would be far more varied than those of the ones in the ones in the text itself. Did you see how it closed? The crowds marveled and the Pharisees mumbled. The crowds marveled for they had just seen Jesus bring hope to the helpless. They had just witnessed in four successive moments on a particular day an extraordinary, act of health, happiness, and hope for those that had been harassed.

If you were to share your thoughts with the person near you, I'm not going to ask you to do it, but if you were, my guess would be that we would have more to say than simply marveling that these things are true or even mumbling that anytime we read things like this, Jesus is basically introducing us to stuff of the devil and the sooner we get rid of it all, the better off we'll all be.

My guess is you'd say something like, well, I'd like to believe that. It'd be nice to believe that. Some of you might say, I'm asking him to provide hope to my helpless situation. I like health in the midst of my hapless state. Others would say, I've been longing for that for years. If you knew the condition of my life, if you knew the condition of the ones I loved, if you knew what tears fall from my face when no one's around, you would know that I've been asking for this.

[ 5 : 22 ] Others would say, yeah, it hasn't happened, and I'm pretty sure it's not going to happen. You know, if our tears here this morning were indelible ink, our collective faces would be stained with the sorrows of the lives that we live.

And as your pastor, I'm acquainted with this text through an experiential lens.

I mean, don't you love the ruler in verse 18? In the midst of his desperation, who comes in and kneels before him and says, my daughter has died, but if you come, she'll live.

This word even that Matthew throws in front of his desperation, behold, a ruler came, is the same kind of word he's going to lay down a couple of more times in the text.

Behold, a woman came. Behold, a demon-possessed man was brought. It's almost like he's trying to say to the reader, desperation is willing to interrupt.

[ 6 : 54 ] And for the ruler, a resurrection from the dead. Verse 20, 20, a woman who had suffered a discharge of blood for 12 years with a touch.

The immediacy of relief. I mean, this Jesus provides hope to those whose loved ones have died? Health to those who suffer chronic-like conditions that wreak havoc upon their life.

Verse 27, he passed on from there and two men followed him, crying aloud, have mercy on his seven. David, these are blind men. Death, this disease, this disorder of the human body, this disability.

How many do we have in our midst who longing for the relief of disability? Or this last one, going away, behold, a demon-possessed man was mute and brought to him.

[ 8 : 15 ] This sense that even these external spiritual forces that you don't know how to name that evidently had locked this guy's mouth down, evidently had a few friends who were like, you know, if I could just get him to Jesus, there might be some hope for the helpless.

I read that text and I I'm thinking pastorally in the sense of I've been many times at the grave side of an infant, a young child, small caskets, tears, tears, tears, Jesus, I've I've seen people with chronic illnesses that endure decade on decade.

Jesus, will you do anything for my desperation? Disabilities.

Well, I've lived it in the smallest of ways. I know I've probably brought a lot of weight on your mind this morning already, so let me bring you some relief. You know, when I was five, I lost sight of my left eye, so I've only got one eye.

That's not quite like two blind men, but, you know, I've got my own little quiet like disability, but it's all, I've never been able to park in those spots, you know, because they wouldn't go for me, but I've often thought about when I get to heaven, what's the one thing I'm going to ask for, the two things I'm going to ask for, in a humorous way, I've always thought, you know, when I get to heaven, I'm asking for two eyes and the weekend's off.

[ 10 : 17 ] Yeah. That's what this pastor's looking for. Glad to get in, thank you for reconciliation, but when it comes to restoration, when it comes to restoring, give me two eyes so I can take it all in and I don't want to have to do anything on the weekends.

Give me any job you want up here. But there's a lot of people walking around that can't see. A lot of people harassed by forces that they can't even name that have destroyed their life.

A lot of people notice all these things deal with the human body. A lot of things going on with you that don't seem right. We wrestle. But here it is.

Jesus follows the man home and the girl arose. The woman interrupts out of desperation, if I could just get to him, I think there's hope for my life in him.

And she's immediately relieved. I mean, you talk about a walking male clinic, this is the man. blindness.

[ 11 : 44 ] You know how many times I've sat in eye doctor's offices since I was five? All those little things coming down, click, click, click, click. Look at this. Can you see now? Can you see now? Can you see now? I remember it when my mom was washing my eye.

Can you see now? No. Can you see now? No. No. No. 57 years later, no. No.

No. What do we do with a text like this? Real issues.

Real pain. Every person, under the sound of my voice, understands the desperation of the human condition.

and it's either pain that you feel for yourself or notice twice in the text, pain that you wish you could make right for someone else.

[ 12 : 50 ] Right? I mean, the ruler of the synagogue was a Jewish religious man of quite extraordinary strength, power, and evidently wealth. And he left to find out what Jesus would do for his daughter, someone else.

Even the last one, the mute is brought to him. Sometimes the pain that you experience in the world in which we live says, if I could, and you go to bet on it, don't you?

If I could just relieve this in their life. Others, it's yourself. it's come, it's here.

Man, would I like it to go away. So what do we do? How do we understand a text like this?

Can we get relief from Jesus, from death, from disease, from disability, from demons, from a body that just seems to be all wrongly suited for this world?

[ 14 : 09 ] In the text which we have read, each of these people got their wish. That's what's kind of troubling about it, you know? I mean, who do I identify with here?

Not the characters in the text. Much as I like to. They got their wish. A girl was raised from the dead. A woman was weighed well from her condition. Two men went on their way spreading his fame and taking in all the sights of spring. and the mute man spoke. You know, interestingly, these things were the kinds of things that a prophet that had died long before Jesus came on the scene said would happen when the good shepherd came.

I know it's a strange text, but Isaiah continues to do more than talk about bridegrooms and wedding guests. Isaiah did more than talk about garments of righteousness that could fix more than a band-aid would ever cover.

Jesus and Isaiah talked more about wineskins that actually could heal you from the inside and solve all this stuff. He actually talked about shepherds that would heal and the helpless that would receive hope.

[ 15 : 30 ] And he talked about dead that would be raised. And he actually prophesied that blind people would see and that the mute would speak and that the death would hear and that he would carry our sorrows and our sicknesses and our illness.

That somehow when God would show up, these things would occur. And what Matthew is saying is it happened in a narrow window of human history over a three-year period when Jesus the Nazarene walked the earth.

death. But what about me? You ask, can faith in Jesus make all this come true?

See, this is one of the scary things about the text. When you look at how faith is the agency of the action, verse 22, take heart, my daughter, your faith has made you well.

Verse 29, he touched their eyes saying, according to your faith be it done to you. And all of a sudden, you and I feel like we don't have enough faith.

[ 16 : 43 ] If I just had enough faith. Can faith which reconciles me to God through Christ and the forgiveness of my sins, can that faith restore my body to health in this life and or the next?

So what do you want from Jesus today? What do you want? Careful. Be careful what you wish for. The human condition. First of all, let's get this straight. deeply as I'm feeling these things this morning myself, we need to understand that not everybody that's battling some deficiency, not everybody undergoing some disorder, not everybody in the midst of a disease sits here today and views it as that which must be restored.

You got to know that. If you're feeling really good today, you got two feet, two hands, two eyes, one mind, do what you want, go where you want, you need to know that not everybody wishes they were like you.

Don't wrongfully assume that if you don't have these things that the people who do have them wish that they could have done differently. I've heard this too. I've encountered this strange truth in the world in which we walk.

[ 18 : 18 ] People have said to me, you know, if you gave me a choice to not have the condition that is so distressing, I wouldn't ask for it to be taken away.

And I go, really? Who are you? But it's true. Not everyone battling these things is sitting here this morning asking for immediate, complete, Matthew 9-like restoration.

So don't wrongfully assume it. Some would not trade their weakness for your wellness, perhaps because they see your wellness as your chief disadvantage in life and in death.

amen. Am I going to get an amen out of that from somebody? Besides, be careful what you ask for because if you limit your request to things that he will do for you in this life and in your body right now in ways that would alleviate the malady of the human condition, that fix is going to be temporary at best.

Okay, you give me two eyes. I'd have better peripheral vision. My wife wouldn't have to sit next to me in the car and worry every time that I'm going to run over some pedestrian who's walking across the alley from my left.

[ 20 : 01 ] Can't you see that guy? No, I can't see that guy. Thank God I'm with you. You'd have killed about 800 people in Chicago by now. But you give me two eyes.

Live it out. I go on the ground. I can't, I'm not going to see anything. These are temporary fixes at best.

None of the people in this text are still around to triumph their interaction with Jesus. As great as a life as it must have been for that little girl, she's dead.

As wonderful as it must have been for the woman to be released from the chronic condition of blood flowing all the time, making her unclean, creating in her as a social outcast the inability to get on with life or with anybody else.

As much as it must have been wonderful to be relieved from that condition, her life is now ended.

Those blind guys who ran trumpeting and seeing and jumping and hollering, they're dead.

[ 21 : 28 ] That man who finally got to say a word, his tongue now lies silent. We've got to get this straight. Be careful what you wish for in regard to what Jesus will do for our human condition because first of all, not everyone needs what you think they need, so don't presume your wellness on their weakness, and secondly, even if we get all the things we want now, it might be over tomorrow.

The young girl in a matter of some years, the woman in the course of some later month, the blind man passed from the face of the earth in the blink of an eye, and the mute man, well, his tongue no longer speaks.

So that's what we need to do with this text, be careful what you ask for, which makes me come to you and say as your pastor, please, please understand your biggest need.

According to Matthew, our biggest needs are not related to our physical frame, but to our spiritual condition. In the end, a full and complete restoration of your body will only be worth it if your sins have been fully forgiven and you have reconciliation with God.

Can I say it again? In the end, a full restoration of all that you feel is wrong with your body will only be worth it if you've actually been reconciled to God.

[ 23 : 25 ] Because only then will that fullness, that restorative completeness be able to enjoy the everlasting happinesses and pleasures that await us in heaven.

And without it, you'll have two eyes eyes for eternity to see all that you're missing. You'll have a life to live eternally knowing that you are yet dead.

You'll have a tongue that was born to employ praises to God that is locked up under the hold of the devil. You will have chronic, chronic condition that flows in the sea of regret.

Isn't that what the healing of the paralytic proved to us? Now, I know you can't remember what I preached a couple of weeks ago, but can we just turn the page back to Matthew 9, 1 through 8 for a moment?

Can you just put your eyes on that paradigmatic scene, that principle that's put down when he walked in and he saw a paralytic lying on a bed and he looked at the man and he says, take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven.

[ 25 : 00 ] Quite different than the verse we have in ours, take courage, your daughter will live. Here it is, take son, your sins are forgiven and they're like, what? You think you have the power to forgive sins?

Only God forgives sins and he says to them, hey, if you want to know what's harder or easier, it's certainly easier for me to say your sins are forgiven but in order that you might know I can forgive sins, I tell you take up your pallet and walk and the man took up his pallet and walked and what we learned just a few weeks ago was that the miracles in his ministry prove the message he's proclaiming and him as the messenger.

The miracles are confirming the truth that he actually can accomplish the reason for which he came, chapter 1, verse 55, in order to forgive sins. That Jesus is doing, yes, yes, in our chapter he's doing bodily restoration but not outside the context of spiritual reconciliation.

He can heal your body and if you reject him you still end up in hell. So get it straight. You want something from Jesus that actually brings together reconciliation to God and the restoration of my body.

And that's what his kingdom promises to do. one day if not this day.

[ 26 : 43 ] If he never gives me another eye in this life, he'll give me everything I need to see properly in the life to come. If he doesn't raise you up from your sickness and we stand over you one day in this auditorium with a casket in front of us and think of your life, though you be dead yet you might live.

Some of you need to remember this. When we finally got this building, first thing Lisa said when we closed the deal and it was all signed, thank God I know where I'm going to have your funeral. to

which I said, what makes you think I'm going first?

No. But let's get it straight. I'm standing in front of you today, but there will be a day when there's a box here, it's going to get rolled out there, carried down the stairs, into a hearse, six blocks down, right to the cemetery that's there, and I'm going to lay there and wait for the resurrection.

I'm going to lay there and wait for the resurrection, already reconciled to God, but yet waiting for the restoration of my body. This is the hope of the Christian faith that he will do for you everything you see here, and if not today, on that day.

So get it right. Oh, may we be reconciled to God by faith and receive forgiveness of sins as we come to the message of Jesus.

[ 28 : 27 ] But oh, may my body one day be restored fully, completely, rightly. May I be a man in my right mind. May my thoughts be ordered according to your word.

may my distresses, my diseases, my difficulties, my despair, my depression, my feeling trapped, my inability to get out and be right, may it all come true.

May it all come true. The Bible says it's true. And remember, he's decided for his own mysterious reasons why not to do it all now.

I don't get him. I don't understand it. I grieve over it at times. I grieve over your pain. But God is God.

He keeps his own counsel. He's not telling us why you've got to handle the things you've got to handle. In fact, our youth group already knows, do you not?

[ 29 : 41 ] Our youth group already knows. What's the question, youth group? What is our only hope in life and in death?

And the answer? The answer? The answer? The answer? The answer? The answer? Say it again for me, that we belong in body and soul.

Come on, preach to this congregation, will you not? We belong both in body and soul to a faithful Savior.

And he will make it so. Jesus went to the cross, carry yours. Paul had his thorn, man, he prayed to get rid of it.

Endure yours. There's hope. For the helpless. For the helpless. not merely for restoration, but for reconciliation.

[ 31 : 00 ] But without reconciliation, you will not have restoration. Even so, may we not, may this not keep us from praying.

The Bible says we're supposed to pray for the sick. God still does grant healing. even now, in this life, if you're depressed, if you're diseased, if you're disabled, if you're longing for something for you or someone else, if you want God to pull back the eternal curtain of his kingdom and restore something in the immediacy of this world, then you need to pray for that.

You call us, elders will come, we'll pray for you. Why? Because God still heals, God still restores. You're not going to promise it. But I believe it.

these four miracles prove that in the next life, you will not be without anything that will keep you from fully enjoying the benefits of heaven.

And the agency of that is faith. Faith requires what? Hope. Hope means you have not yet received that for which you are hoping.

[ 32 : 37 ] Is there hope for the helpless? Yes. It requires your faith in a future full day. And until then, the infirmed will sing praises to God.

Until then, the disabled will lift hands in the auditorium. Until then, families that have children who die will say yet I will praise the Lord.

individuals who don't feel right in their body will persevere for full restoration. And those who go to sleep crying on behalf of others will have hope in an eternal day.

By faith in Christ you can be spiritually reconciled to God. You must be. by faith in Christ your bodily restoration is in view.

I know it's in view because what he did for these he'll do for you. Our heavenly father as one said we're tired of being tired tired.

[ 34 : 13 ] We're sick of being sick. We're done with all the dying. We want an interruption.

We want restoration. Help us to live in faith until we receive it in full. And thank you for the down payment that these people give to us.

That what came to them is yet coming for those of us who believe. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.  
Amen.