

The Conqueror of Death

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[0 : 0 0] Now, let's turn for a short time to the passage we read this evening, Luke chapter 8, and looking especially at verses 49 to 56, that passage through to the end of the chapter.

We can read at verse 50, which is one of the great emphases of the passage, but Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, Do not fear, only believe, and she will be well.

There are so many ways in which we can see the pressure that was on the Lord in his ministry, especially the pressure of people seeking him, looking to have help from him in different ways.

And one of the ways that this passage actually sets that out is how you see that even on the way to deal with Jairus' daughter, he has to stop to deal with someone else, and then get back to dealing with Jairus' daughter. In between times, he deals with this woman that had this hemorrhage of blood for 12 years, and only then is he able to go back and attend to the request of Jairus to come to his house and see to his daughter. And that really tells us the, I mean, we talk about our lives being stressful, and at many times we think of the world in which we live as imposing so many stressful situations upon us. But that's really just a drop in the ocean compared to the stress and the pressure that the Lord experienced throughout the entirety of his ministry.

And as we come to this event, we can see that there are a number of things mentioned throughout the passage that we can just mention in introduction, really, and then come to look more closely at this passage dealing with Jairus' daughter. There's an emphasis here on the need for faith. That's the case with both of these people. This woman who had the issue, the discharge of blood, he said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well. And as we come to Jairus' daughter, when he speaks to Jairus just after that, after he's been told that his daughter is dead, don't trouble the teacher anymore, Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, do not fear, only believe, and she will be well, or all will be well.

[2 : 3 6] And there's also, of course, the fact that Jesus is dealing with two very different people, not just in terms of their gender, but their circumstances. And yet they both need Jesus as much one, the one as much as the other. The fact that the ruler of the synagogue has a certain status doesn't mean he's any less needy of Christ's touch than this poor woman who has had this discharge of blood. And of course, that's something we apply even to this gathering tonight, for all the variety of our experience and the variety of circumstances we have. There is an equal need of Christ's hand upon us, of Christ's touch, of Christ's power working in our experience. And the other thing that you find through these chapters, through this passage here as well, is the way that the Lord shows his lordship.

He deals with certain events involving demons, he casts them out. He deals with disease, he actually heals. He deals with this dead girl and raises her to life. In other words, he has the power to overcome and even reverse death. And as the Lord, he shows himself to be the Lord over demons and disease and death. And all of that's important to ourselves as we come to face another communion and to have the privilege of looking forward to another communion. When we come to the communion where we remember the death of Jesus, we remember the death of the Lord Jesus, and that he died as our Lord, and that as he rose from the dead, so his resurrection triumph adds another dimension, if you like, to our understanding of his lordship. We don't come to remember him in the Lord's Supper as one who is now dead, though it's this very real death that we remember. We come to the Lord's Supper seeking to meet with the living

Christ as we remember the death he died on the cross. Now, first of all, look at this briefly, the Father's appeal. The situation is one of extreme crisis for him. He came to Jesus and falling at his feet. You read there in verse 41, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about 12 years of age, and she was dying. Now, that, of course, is a very critical situation, and you can understand the anxiety of this man with his daughter's condition. She is fast reaching the point of death, and he wants Jesus to come to his house and deal with that situation. But before that can happen, then this woman comes, who has this discharge of blood, and secretly she reaches out and touches the hem of his garment. Now, you imagine how Jairus must have felt with such a critical situation, and without a minute to spare, and yet here is this woman intervening, meaning that Jesus cannot go as quickly as Jairus himself would like him to go to his house for Christ to deal with his daughter there.

You can think the anxiety in his mind as Jesus has to turn aside and spend time dealing with this woman. We don't know how long that took. It would have taken a considerable time, sure, by the time you go through all the different aspects of what happened there. But you see, the thing is, it made no difference whatsoever would have made no difference had he spent another day there. The outcome would still have been the same as far as this daughter of Jairus is concerned, and as far as his situation was concerned. You cast your mind to the incident with Lazarus when Lazarus died, Jesus wasn't there when he died. And he remained for days before he actually went to Mary and Martha to the house of the deceased. And he actually said to the disciples, I'm glad for your sakes that I wasn't there to the intent that you may believe. It doesn't make any difference whatsoever to Jesus how long we have to wait for him to do something. It's not going to affect the outcome. It's not going to be something which is going to prevent Jesus from doing what he must do. He has control over the whole situation with these two people prominent in it.

And it doesn't matter whether it's this woman's immediate need of healing or the daughter of Jairus that she will have died by the time he's not going to do something. And every time he reaches the house, he doesn't panic. It makes no difference. He's still the Lord of the situation.

[7 : 40] And isn't that such a precious thing, coming to the Lord's table? You're coming to this Lord, to this Lord, to whom it makes no difference whatsoever. What our thoughts of timescale may be, what our thoughts may be of him being too late for us, or whatever. He is the Lord of all our circumstances, and all our worries and all our anxieties will not make a slightest difference to the ability of Christ to deal with them.

And look at how he responded to this father's appeal. The father's appeal to Jesus and then the Lord's amazing response. And I'm using the word amazing because it's something, in fact, which we find at the end of the chapter, and we'll refer to it there, and her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened. It's an amazing response.

Now, first of all, this father has brought bad news. Because after he has dealt with the woman and her problem, as he then comes back to Jairus and to deal with his request, some people come from his house and say, your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore. They're really saying, there's no point now.

It's too late. It's gone beyond the point of being able to help. She's dead. So let's just accept it and don't trouble him anymore. And of course, Jesus' response to that is, as we'll see, one which says that it doesn't matter what the situation is, just believe and she will be well. Now, that's something that we ourselves can often be guilty of, of thinking, well, it's gone past the point where I should have done certain things for the Lord, and it's too late now, and I really can't really now do it at the stage in my life that I've come to. Or perhaps the situation has gone beyond what we think is now controllable, and it's gone too far, and it's gone on too long. So let's just leave it at that, and let's try and move on without really dealing with the situation itself. No, the Lord is saying, don't fear. Don't be afraid. Only believe. That doesn't really make any difference again to him.

What he requires of us is to believe. And that's really what he's saying. Only believe. Don't fear. Only believe. The bad news has switched the man Jairus about his daughter, but now he's immediately told good news by Jesus. And Jesus is saying, yes, that's true. The report you've had is certainly as it is. But don't be afraid. That's such a wonderful injection, isn't it, always, from the truth of God, from the lips of God, from the lips of Christ, where he says to us about our circumstances, I know why you're afraid. I know why you're saying what you're saying. I know why you're thinking what you're thinking. I know you're saying that it's gone beyond a remedy now, or that it's too late now to do something about it. But he says, no, don't be afraid. Only believe. Trust in Christ will actually mean that ultimately all things will work well for us. That doesn't mean that things will be as we expect them to be always. It sometimes will be that it's very different to what we would have preferred them to be. But it is always the case that trusting in Jesus for whatever we need to do, and especially if it's something we know that he himself requires of us, such as testifying for him, or coming to take communion at his command, any of these things, what he's saying is, yes, you've got certain fears, you've got certain fears, you've got certain things that maybe in your mind are working away and putting some sort of doubt there. Maybe you're saying, ah, well, it's been so many years now and it's too late and it's gone by me. Maybe you're saying, well, just I'm so young and really I don't know if I should do it. What he's saying is, only believe. It doesn't require anything else, just that you believe. And as you believe and as you trust in him, this is the promise that you meet with, all will be well. He will make sure that he'll take care of all your fears. And what do you really, what's really coming across to us from that is this, isn't it? That here is someone who is Lord of death. The Lord of death, as we'll see in a minute, as he raises this girl back from the dead and brings her to life. And really he's saying to us, if I am the Lord of death, don't you trust me to take care of your life? If I can handle and deal with and take care of such a big issue as death in a way that really shows that I have power over it, that it's in my grasp, that is under my lordship, are you going to doubt when it comes to taking care of your life? Can I not do that?

[13 : 08] seeing you know I can take care of death? Nothing in our life is beyond his ability to deal with, to control, to take care of. Only believe, he says, and it will be well. Only believe, trust in him.

There are so many things that make us afraid in life. Our past, things in the present, things about the future. But it really comes back to this great statement of Jesus, doesn't it?

Whether it's something in our past that's troubling us, whether it's something about our past, whether it's something in our present circumstances that's causing us distress and pain and anxiety and worry, whether it's fear for the future, how things will develop, how things will be with our family, with our children, with our grandchildren. It doesn't matter really. The emphasis of Christ is still the same. Don't be afraid. Only believe, trust, and all will be well. Now of course, as the account moves on, in verse 52 there, you can see, as they reached the house, all 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. Now that would have been for Jairus a test of his faith. Here was somebody who'd been told by Jesus, don't be afraid, just believe. And yet he's meeting with all of this scoffing, all of this laughter, as Jesus says, not just not dead, but sleeping. And that too is something that we are very conscious of ourselves.

Many people tonight laugh at our faith. They laugh at the fact that you believe the Bible, that you follow the Bible, that the Bible is precious to you. They laugh at the fact that you live by faith in someone you've never physically seen, that you believe in God, who you've never physically seen, that you hear the voice of Jesus through the scriptures, that you believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, that you believe that he has changed you inwardly, though you've never seen him. It's all to do with faith, isn't it? And that's what Jesus really is saying to us. Whatever the reaction of those around, only believe and all will be well. The same emphasis. And then he selects, very interestingly, he selects Peter and John and James. When you see there in verse 51, 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. Why did he make that selection? Why did he not allow others to come into the house? Well, you might think it's surely to do with just avoiding a great commotion or avoiding the obvious interest, the intense interest that these people would have in what Jesus was about to do, and maybe just needing some room or space to do what he had to do without being pressed again by so many people trying to get into the house.

[16 : 41] And that would be a very easy way of understanding the passage, and there'd be nothing wrong with that. But there's something else that's very interesting in the fact that he took Peter and James and John.

But of course, when you go to the Mount of Transfiguration, and you find that he takes Peter and James and John with him into the Mount of Transfiguration, and then in Luke's gospel particularly, you actually read of the subject that Moses and Elijah and Jesus were discussing on the Mount of Transfiguration when they appeared with him in his glory. They were discussing, they spoke about his exodus, as it says literally. That means his going out of the world, his death on the cross, and what would follow on from that. That was the great topic of conversation on the Mount of Transfiguration. In the middle of that glory, there was a death being discussed. And then you go forward to the Garden of Gethsemane. It's not in Luke that you find the emphasis in Mark, for example, Mark 14 and verse 33. He chose Peter and James and John, the same three disciples. He took them with him into that area of the garden where he himself then knelt down and prayed. And what he said to them was, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. So they are again in the presence of a reference to death. And as they see the Lord, though they did fall asleep in that situation, nevertheless, they were in the presence of Jesus wrestling with death. And here they are with Jesus in the presence of death, where this young lady is dead and he brings her to life. In other words, he's really educating these three men in regard to his mastery of death, his relationship with death, the way that he's going to meet death and overcome it. He's showing that in the miracle of raising the daughter of Jairus to life. And he'll show it even more as he goes on from Gethsemane, where he wrestles with the cup, the cup of death that the father has put into his hands, where he goes from there to the cross, where he dies the death of the cross, and where he comes days later to rise from the dead, where death is overcome in the victory of his resurrection.

And these three men would feature prominently in the way in which the early church emphasized the lordship of Jesus over death, and where he would actually be presented as the one who had conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And that, of course, is also, as fits in with what we said earlier, is so very important for us that we come to the lord's supper as we remember the lord's death in the lord's supper. We can see that in that too, we come to the lord of death as he has mastered it and overcome it, and in himself conquered it for his people. Now you notice how he takes this young girl, taking her by the hand, he called, saying, child arise. Or sometimes the translations use the original Aramaic there, talithakumi, which just means young woman or young child arise. But what's interesting there too is not just the powerful and efficacious words of Christ when he speaks to death, death cannot but actually respond. And he's the only one who can do that. You can't speak to death and I can't speak to death, and something then happens. But he did, as he did with Lazarus, with the body of Lazarus in the tomb. For four days the body of Lazarus had been in that sepulcher, and yet when Jesus came and stood by that sepulcher and spoke these powerful words, Lazarus come out, there's an instant response.

Death can no longer hold its claim or keep its hold upon that body. And that goes forward to the emphasis in the bible of our own resurrection from the dearest believers in Christ. That's what awaits us, that the dead in the graves shall hear his voice and they shall come forth to everlasting life.

[21 : 20] But yet along with that, along with the powerful voice, there is what seems a very ordinary thing. Verse 54, taking her by the hand, he called saying, child arise.

That's just like a parent going to a sleeping child and actually bringing them out of their sleep and putting them into a situation where they need to get washed and get up and put on their clothes or whatever.

You just take them by the hand and that's just an ordinary kind of everyday thing. What is that emphasizing for us? Well, it's emphasizing for us that raising someone from the dead for Jesus is no more difficult than a parent taking a young child out of sleep.

He took her by the hand and he said, child arise. And her spirit returned and she got up at once. That's the Jesus we're dealing with.

That's the Jesus that we come into people. That's the Jesus that we remember in the Lord's Supper. Her spirit returned. And he personally conveys life to us.

[22 : 37] And that too is so important. You come to remember the death of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. The Jesus who now lives forevermore. How have you come yourself to be in the position of taking communion and remembering the Lord's death?

Because he has done for you spiritually what he did for this child literally. He has taken hold of your life and brought you out from the dead and given you life.

And he has done it. No one else has done it in his place. Christ's own personal touch and power has come into your life.

And that's why you want to take communion. That's why you want to remember him. Because the one you're remembering is the one that has changed you forever. And he's done it and nobody else but him.

And so she rose from the dead. She got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. That's very like what you find in chapter 24 of Luke about himself having risen from the dead.

[23 : 47] And in verses 41 to 43 there. While they were still disbelieving, those disciples who had come along with him for joy and were marvelling, he said, Have you anything here to eat?

And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate before them. Why? And why does he command here that something be given to this girl to eat after he's taken her back from the dead?

Well, it's to show that she is in fact really back from the dead. Herself completely. Body and soul. You see, it says there, Her spirit returned.

And there's an answer to people who doubt that there's such a thing beyond death as life beyond the grave. Her spirit returned. And she got up at once.

The spirit returned into her body. Which is what happens in the resurrection as well. The spirit and the body coming to be reconstituted together in that wonderful, mysterious union between them.

[24 : 53] And here is the same thing happening with this woman, with this young girl, literally. And Jesus orders that something be given to eat so that people will say, It's not a ghost.

It's not a spirit. It's not something other than the very same person now brought back from the state of the dead. And then there's a reaction.

Her parents were amazed. But he charged them to tell no one what had happened. That's something you find very often in the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus giving instruction to people that he had dealt with and healed and so on. That they were not going to, they were not to tell others of what they had seen, what they had happened.

And there's all this different variety of, a variety of views as to why that was the case. And I think it's probably the best one is that he knew at this point that things were not yet at the stage where he could be delivered over to be taken captive and then examined and then go to the death of the cross.

[26 : 05] He's in charge, you see, of the whole thing. He knows that it's not that stage yet. And so he keeps things largely hidden until the time has come for that to take place. But anyway, he says, he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

But her parents were amazed. Amazed, no wonder. Some commentators refer to the Gospel of Luke as the Gospel of amazement.

Because all the way through it, and it's very deliberate on Luke's part, the ways structured this Gospel, you'll find that very often people are said to have been amazed or they wondered at him.

There are five words for amazed or wondered in the language of the New Testament. And they're all used in the Gospel of Luke. And mostly to do with being amazed at Jesus, at something to do with what he said or what he's done.

His parents here, her parents rather, were amazed. And do we not want to come to the Communion with a sense of amazement?

[27 : 20] Is that not something we would want to recapture if we've lost it in a sense? What is more amazing than that we should have the privilege of remembering such an amazing thing as the death of Jesus Christ?

What's more amazing than the fact that he's brought us to life in order that we be given the privilege of remembering him in his death?

We should pray that God will indeed increase in us that sense of amazement at our Lord and who he is and what he's done and what he's doing for us and what he will yet do for us.

And a sense of amazement at what's happened in our lives. It doesn't matter whether we're able to really explain it properly or not. As John Newton said, near the time of his death, that one thing he was certainly sure of, he wasn't as good as he would like to be.

Not was he as good as he should be. But he said, I know I'm not what I used to be. I know I'm not what I used to be.

[28 : 36] And if you say that coming here this evening, you take that with you with a sense of amazement to the Lord's Supper. And you say, Lord, I am amazed that you should have looked at me.

That I should be given this privilege to know you as the Lord of life and death. And to remember you now as you require of me in the Lord's Supper.

You know, I've mentioned a few times about the songwriter Ellie Holcomb. One of the songs she has is called You Love Me Best. Here are a few verses from it just to conclude this evening.

My mother, she holds me. When I'm weak, she consoles me. My troubles weigh on her mind. My tears fall down from her eyes.

But you, you loved me better. And there may come a day when all other loves have gone away. When darkness hems me in, you'll be right where you've always been.

[29 : 43] Closer than the heart within my chest. Because you love me best. The ring around my finger to have and hold forever.

It circles round like years that we've walked through joys and tears. But you, you have loved me better. And there will come a day when the loves we've lost will all be raised.

And we will sing a song of the one who's loved us all along. The weary world will finally find her rest.

Because you, you have loved us best. May God bless these thoughts on his word to us.

We'll conclude this evening by singing in Psalm 116. Sing Psalm's version this time, Psalm 116. And that's on page 154.

[30 : 44] Sing verses 1 to 9. I love the Lord because he heard my voice. He listened when I cried to him for aid. I'll call on him as long as I shall live.

Because he turned to hear me when I prayed. Verses 1 to 9. These first four stanzas. Psalm 116. I love the Lord. I love the Lord because he heard my voice.

He listened when I cried to him for aid. I'll call on him as long as I shall live.

He could return to hear me when I prayed. The courts of death's crypt and entangled me.

On me became the young which shot the grave. With grief and trouble I was overcome.

[32 : 07] Then on the name of God I called, Lord, save. The Lord as God is kind and full of peace.

Both righteous and compassionate is he. The Lord protects all of childlike death.

When I was in great need, he rescued me. Rest, O my soul, God, has been good to you.

For you, O Lord, have saved my soul from death. Rest, my feet from stumbling and my eyes from tears.

That I may live for you while I have breath. Rest, my heart, have saved my soul from death. If you allow me to get to the main door, please, after the vocation.

[33 : 31] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen. Amen.