

Luke 8:40-56

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[0 : 0 0] Happy Easter to you all. It's good to be with you all this morning. You know, as I was thinking about it this week, it's pretty incredible that we're here today, isn't it? Now, maybe you always come to church on Sunday, so you might not think it's all that incredible that you're here. It is Easter after all, right?

But on the other hand, maybe you don't actually come to church all that often. So maybe you're thinking to yourself, actually, you know what? It is a little incredible that I'm here after all, especially on a day like today. But actually, I don't mean that it's incredible personally, so much as I mean it's a bit incredible historically that we're here.

Why is that? Well, you know, the first followers of Jesus were all devout Jews, you know? And for thousands of years, the day of worship for the Jewish people, the Sabbath, was what? It was the seventh day of the week, Saturday.

But a few decades into the first century, something incredible happened. A whole group of utterly devout Jews in the blink of an eye started meeting on a totally different day of the week. The first day of the week, Sunday.

Now, you have to realize how strange that is. Sociologists, anthropologists, they will all tell us that the hardest and slowest things to change in any culture, in any people group, are the long-standing communal practices that mark out their religious and cultural identity.

[1 : 2 7] It's those identity-marking, community-shaping practices that are the last and the slowest things to change. And that's exactly what the Sabbath was. You know, there were Jews in the first century who would literally rather die than break the Sabbath. That's how important it was.

That's how central it was. But then a few decades into the first century, a whole group of devout Jews suddenly, immediately changed, practically overnight. Now, what in the world could have happened so great, so monumental, to make a group of people do something that all the sociological, all the anthropological experts tell us is practically impossible? What happened? How do you explain it?

What reason would you give? Well, you know, the interesting thing is the answer that they themselves gave again and again and again, all the way down to the very beginning, the answer that they gave was that on the first day of the week, the one true God of Israel, the God that they and their ancestors worshipped, had raised to crucify Jesus bodily from the dead, proving Him to be their long-awaited Messiah and launching God's new creation right in the middle of history, right in the middle of time, starting it on the first day of the week.

These first Christians said that they saw Him and ate with Him and touched Him and talked with Him. What was it that changed them so radically? Why are we sitting here on a Sunday morning? Because on this day of the week, almost 2,000 years ago, God raised Jesus from the dead. That's what Easter is all about, friends. And the passage that we're going to look at this morning shows us why that seemingly incredible fact, that culture, community, life-changing event, we're going to see why that incredible fact that Jesus is the Lord of life is such good news for us today.

[3 : 4 3] For the past few months here at Trinity, if you've been with us, we've been walking through the gospel of Luke, which is one of the earliest accounts of the life of Jesus. And this morning, where we've come up to in our sort of series, walking straight through, is Luke chapter 8, verses 40 through 56.

So if you're visiting this morning, we're just sort of jumping right into the middle of the action. Now, this is a story that actually happens before Jesus' death and resurrection, but it's a story that shows us very clearly what Jesus came to do.

It's like a window into what his eventual death and resurrection would achieve. So let's read Luke 8, verses 40 through 56.

It's page 866 in the Pew Bible. Let me invite you to turn there so you can follow along. Luke chapter 8, verses 40 through 56. If you're new to the Bible, the big numbers are the chapters, the small numbers are the verses, or you can just go to page 866.

That's the easiest way to find it. And we're asking this, if Jesus really is who those earliest Christians said he is, the risen Lord of life, then what difference does it make?

[4 : 54] Well, let's read and find out. Luke chapter 8. Now, when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all 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. And 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?

When all denied it, Peter said, master, the crowd surround 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.

[6 : 00] And he said to her daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, your daughter is dead.

Do not trouble the teacher anymore. But Jesus, on hearing this, answered him, do not fear. Only believe. And she will be well. 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 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. 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 her to eat. And her parents were amazed. But he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

So if Jesus is the risen Lord of life, we see here that it means at least three things for us. First, it means that Jesus heals the sickness that we could not cure.

[7 : 10] The woman in this story had been suffering for 12 long years, Luke tells us. She had spent everything she had on doctors, and nothing worked.

One of the other gospel writers actually says that she exhausted herself and wore herself out trying to find a cure. But nothing worked. If you've ever been sick for a long time, maybe you know what it's like to go from doctor to doctor, to go from treatment to treatment.

It's expensive. It's tiring. It's tiring. And when nothing works, you feel hopeless. But here's the thing, you see.

This woman's condition physically is actually all of our condition spiritually. We sort of know that something's not quite right.

There's a little ache. There's a little bleeding inside, as it were. And at first, maybe we think the problem is our work, our job. Maybe we just need to find some meaning or purpose in our vocation.

[8 : 11] Find something that we really love to do. And so we spend so much of our time and energy to get the job that we always wanted. But then, it doesn't quite do the trick.

Something's still not quite right. So, we change our strategy. We think the problem must be a relationship. So we spend even more. And if we get the relationship, it helps for a little while.

But still, the bleeding doesn't stop. So we chase something else. Maybe money or fame or even doing good. Giving money away.

Helping the poor. And yet, the more we spend, the more we try, even the more we succeed, it still doesn't seem to cure our soul sickness. I recently ran across a quote by the actress Helen Mirren.

Do you know her? She said this. She said, I wake up in the morning sometimes wanting to retire from my own ambition. Let me go, I say.

[9 : 13] Let me go. Please, let me go. Haven't I done enough? Prove myself enough to myself. Can't I be left in peace now? Why am I still eaten up with envy at what everyone else is doing? Why always the continuous anxiety, the worry, the one eye over the shoulder, wondering what's around, wondering who's being offered what?

God, I wish I wasn't like that. I'd give anything to know what satisfaction feels like. Friends, how is it that someone at the very top of their career, Helen Mirren has won every major acting award you can think of?

How is it that someone with everything one could ask for, humanly speaking, how is it that for all that, we could still be so spiritually spent? And how is it that Jesus makes any difference?

Well, you have to see something about this woman's condition that would have been very clear to first century readers but isn't so clear to us today. And that's this. Because of the nature of this woman's illness, some sort of hemorrhage, some sort of bleeding issue, she would have been considered ritually unclean by the Jewish law, which means that she couldn't go to the temple, she couldn't enter the worshiping assembly.

In fact, she wasn't even supposed to touch anyone else or else they'd become unclean too. She lived a life of isolation and exclusion because of her sickness.

[10 : 41] That's why she's sneaking through the crowd, because she's not supposed to be there. That's why she tries to get into contact with Jesus anonymously, because she's unclean. But what happens, friends, when she takes hold of Jesus?

It's the opposite of what was supposed to happen. The unclean becomes clean. And it happens, Luke says, immediately.

And to understand how that radical event can be the case, how Jesus can make her clean right away, you actually have to go all the way to the end of Luke's gospel.

You have to follow the story of Jesus all the way to the end where he enters Jerusalem, hailed as the king. But before the week is over, this one everyone hailed as the one we've been waiting for is betrayed and arrested and condemned and then crucified.

And you have to see that in that moment, what's happening is not merely just a sad miscarriage of justice. It's not merely a martyr dying for a good cause. No, friends. It's the very Lord of life taking our uncleanness upon himself.

[12 : 02] All of our hatred, all of our selfishness and pride, all of our envy and jealousy, Jesus took our unclean record upon himself on the cross, taking the penalty of death and God's judgment that it deserved so that he could then give us in return his totally clean record in exchange.

Why are we so spent spiritually? Because deep down we have this heart sickness called sin and nothing that we do can get rid of it.

But if Jesus is the risen Lord of life, then what happened to him on the cross was for our healing. He took our sin to reconcile us to God. He bled so that we could stop bleeding.

After all, friends, what are you looking for in all those things that never satisfy? All those things that you've spent so much of your life to pursue? Deep down, what you're really looking for is the one who created you.

Deep down, you're looking for peace with God. And if Jesus is the Lord of life, then he does just that. He actually heals the sickness that we could not cure and brings us peace with God.

[13 : 20] But the story continues. In the second half of the passage, tragedy strikes. While Jesus is engaging with the healed woman in the midst of the crowd, messengers come from Jairus' house.

Your daughter is dead, they say. Don't trouble the teacher anymore. But it's here, in the face of this tragedy, that we see something else about Jesus. We see that if Jesus is the Lord of life, then he defeats the enemy that we could not conquer.

It seems that time has run out for Jairus, doesn't it? This man who came to Jesus in desperation, falling at his feet.

Jairus, we're told, is the ruler of the synagogue. He was sort of the administrator, the head of what was going on. He was very respectable. And yet here he is, falling down, begging.

Begging Jesus to come heal his daughter. But now, here at the end of the story, it's too late. The time that Jesus spent healing the woman in the crowd, stopping to engage with her, the time that Jesus had for that woman has meant that Jairus' time has run out.

[14 : 39] You imagine the bitter irony for Jairus? His only daughter, 12 years old, we're told. And this woman, sick for 12 years. This woman had been sick for as long as his daughter had been

alive.

Surely Jesus could have let that woman wait a few more hours to save time and come heal his only daughter before it was too late, right? But now it was too late.

Death had come. Death, that great last word. The veil, the curtain that hangs ready to fall when the time for our short play here on earth has run out.

And for Jairus' daughter, the curtain had fell. And the last word had been spoken. So why trouble the teacher anymore? After all, what good can a mere teacher do in the face of death's thick curtain when it falls, when time runs out?

But then something strange happens. Jesus looks straight at Jairus and says, trust me. And then to the house, past the mourners, into the room with father and mother and his closest disciples, and he takes the girl by the hand.

[16:08] And he actually says the words that Jairus would have said nearly every morning for the past 12 years. Child, it's time to get up. And as easily as you or I would wake someone from a light afternoon rest, Jesus reaches down into death itself and with a word calls Jairus' only daughter up from the grave and back to life.

Do you see now why Jesus said to the mourners at the door, she's not dead but sleeping? Because for Jesus, death has no more power than a bit of fitful sleep. Child, arise.

It's time to get up. Friends, if Jesus is the living Lord, if in his own resurrection he's not merely come back from death but gone through death and out the other side into indestructible life, then that curtain's been torn and death no longer gets the last word.

And time. The time that Jairus thought he had lost. Friends, time is something that God has for us in unending supply.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God conquered death and made time for us. The time of the new creation. Time that will not grow old.

[17:32] Time that will not grow short. Time that began on that first Sunday over 2,000 years ago and will continue into the new heavens and new earth when God makes all things new. And our fallen time will finally be swallowed up in his time.

Can you imagine if your life wasn't a constant battle against the clock, against the ticking of time? How many of us are riddled with the anxiety that our time is short?

And so, what do we need? We need to live life to the fullest, right? We need to capture every moment. We need to savor every second. We need to get the best experiences and find what makes our hearts sing. And on top of that, we also have to capture it on Instagram and send it to all of our friends.

And we've got to get it in all now because sooner or later, your time is going to come up and the curtain will fall.

But friends, is that a weight that any of us can bear? As long as death is the final word, time is always our enemy and never our friend.

[18:48] But if Jesus has been raised, all that changes. Death isn't the last word. And so now, time isn't working against us.

Maybe you won't get to see the pyramids before you die. Maybe you won't write the great American novel. Maybe you won't ever get married and have a family.

Maybe life won't look at all like you expected it. But you see, that can't crush you anymore. It can't end you anymore.

Because in Jesus Christ, we see where God is taking all of creation. God isn't going to abandon his good creation or us. He's going to heal it and restore it and transfigure it and glorify it.

In time, God will make all things new. And one day, the glory of God will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. If Jesus is the Lord of life, then that's what's in store. That's where you're headed. And he's defeated that enemy that we could not conquer.

[19:56] But there's one last thing to see. The resurrection of Jesus doesn't just deal with the sickness that we couldn't heal or the enemy that we could not conquer.

The resurrection of Jesus actually meets the deep longing that we couldn't even dare to voice. Let's come back to the woman in the crowd for a minute.

She's just grabbed Jesus' robe. She's immediately been healed. And then Jesus stops. Who was it that touched me? He says.

Now, that's an odd question for Jesus to ask, isn't it? And the disciples, Peter, of course, looks at Jesus and says, Ah, Jesus.

There's like a million people touching you right now. They're pressing in on us. But it's an odd question, not just because of the setting, but because of who Jesus is.

[21 : 01] All of the New Testament gospels in their own way unfold for us the unsettling and breathtaking reality that in Jesus, God has come in human flesh to rescue his lost world.

And if that's true, if Jesus is fully human and fully God, then presumably, he knows who it was that touched him. Right? So what's Jesus up to?

Well, like a good counselor, Jesus isn't asking the question because he doesn't know the answer. He's asking the question so the woman has the chance to answer it for herself.

This is Jesus' way of calling her out of hiding. This is Jesus' way of saying, I want you to be known.

On the one hand, this passage is putting before us the necessity of believing in Jesus, isn't it?

Jesus says to Jairus, trust me, believe me. And he's saying the same thing to all of us here this morning. Trust me. And if he is the Lord of life, then each of us must make a very personal decision to trust him, to reach out and take hold of him for ourselves.

[22 : 24] We can't actually stay neutral. We have to decide. But on the other hand, believing doesn't just end there.

The woman in the crowd took hold of Jesus. She was made well, but Jesus stops and wants her to be known. In other words, the call to believe is the call to belong.

And isn't that the deep longing that we often don't even dare to voice? That we want to be known.

That we want to belong. That we want to be a part of something that's bigger and more beautiful than ourselves. And when the risen Jesus calls us to himself, that's what he does.

He calls us into his people, into his body, so that at last we can truly belong, so that we can finally find out who we were truly meant to be. Notice Jesus calls this woman daughter.

[23 : 34] which is to say, you're not an outcast anymore. You're not a forgotten or unwanted face in the crowd.

You're known. You belong. This is who you were meant to be. You know, in many ways, I confess this hasn't been a very conventional Easter sermon.

We haven't talked much about the historical credibility of the resurrection, have we? Of course, the reasons are there. Lots of them, in fact. There's really no better way to explain why Christianity began in the first place.

After all, there were quite a few people in the first century who made claims of being the Messiah, Israel's long-awaited king. And one by one, nearly all of them were killed by the governing Roman authorities.

You can't have people running around saying they're the king when you're the empire, can you?

And the reason why you've never heard of any of those other messianic first century movements is because as soon as that would-be Messiah was executed by the Romans, the movement disbanded and dissolved immediately.

[24 : 45] After all, everybody knew that a dead Messiah wasn't the Messiah. Especially a Messiah crucified by the very Roman oppressors he was meant to overthrow.

What made Jesus any different? Why didn't his followers just dissolve and disband like all the others? It's hard to explain.

Was it because a few of his followers had a warm, fuzzy feeling that his teachings and his spirit lived on in their hearts even after he was gone? Some would try to say something like that.

That's an explanation some would give. But even if that had been the case, you know, that wouldn't have led devout first century Jews to call their crucified failure the long-awaited king of Israel.

And they wouldn't have used the word resurrection to describe that sort of spiritual experience. So what happened? You know, I think we often misunderstand faith.

[25 : 52] We think it's this leap into the dark. Sometimes I think faith is more like being backed into a corner. There's always a side door to slip out of.

There's always some way to suspend judgment or construe things differently. But once you start searching it out for yourself, the reasons are hard to get away from. And friends, you need to do that.

You need to search this out for yourself. The stakes are too high not to. Think about it. If your wife came home one day and told you that she was pregnant, you'd probably get a pregnancy test and

figure that one out.

Right? Because if it's true, your life is about to change big time. The resurrection of Jesus is the same way.

You can't just let his call to believe and to belong just slip by. There's too much at stake. At the end of the day, this is about you finally knowing why you're here and who you really are.

[27 : 06] This is about being known by the God who made you. And it means for those of us who have come to believe and who do now belong that there's a whole new task before us.

If believing is belonging, then membership, this belonging, is mission. Of course, our passage ends with a bit of an anti-climax, doesn't it? Jesus says, don't tell anyone.

Imagine if that was my ending application of this sermon. Don't tell anybody. A strange bit of reverse psychology, maybe.

No. What's Jesus doing here? Well, you have to see that in the historical moment, this is a bit of a provisional measure, you see. There's a crowd on the other side of Jairus' front door ready to make him a military king and go marching against the Romans.

But that's not what he came to do. He came to inaugurate God's kingdom, God's new creation.

That's the program.

[28 : 16] And the whole new task before us is, how are we as a church going to live in light of his resurrection? Maybe for some of us it will mean a renewed trust in God's timing.

Like Jairus. A resilient hope that Jesus' timing is always good. That even if we can't quite see how it will all come together, we can trust this Lord of life who has made time for us.

Or two, maybe it will mean a renewed courage to come out of hiding like the woman in the crowd and let others know what Jesus has done for us.

She was so afraid of their rejection that she didn't want people to know that she had taken hold of Jesus. And yet what happens? Jesus stands up as her defense and he vindicates her.

And in publicly professing all that Jesus had done for her, she finds not less acceptance, not less peace, but more. Third, maybe living in light of the resurrection will mean for us a renewed compassion to meet people in their need and to minister to them.

[29 : 41] Jesus is greeted by a hurting and desperate father and he goes. He's grabbed by a hurting and desperate woman and he stops. Living in light of the resurrection means seeing the world not as a place for us to use up as a means to our own ends and our own purposes, but to see it as God's world that he loves, that he's entered into, and that he's promised to make new.

Just this week I was in my backyard and something caught me totally by surprise. Now if you know me, you know that I'm a terrible gardener. The previous owners of our home made these wonderful flower beds, but I think I've actually killed more plants than I've managed to keep alive in the last two years of our owning the place.

But out I was, out in our backyard, and suddenly there, this beautiful flower out of the blue had come pushing up through the dirt in one of the beds.

Now I would love to tell you the name of that flower, but I have absolutely no idea. I wasn't anticipating it. It was just there. But here's the thing.

As these flowers come pushing out of the dirt, it sort of makes me want to get my hands dirty. It sort of makes me want to learn how to become a better gardener.

[31 : 09] And you see, the resurrection of Jesus, living in light of his resurrection, is like that. In the midst of the old, though we had made a mess of things, Jesus, the Lord of life, has broken through.

God's new creation has been launched into the world, and rather than causing us to pull back, if we're united to him by faith, the resurrection makes us want to get down and get our hands dirty. because we know that if he's come up, there's more to come. God's new creation has been set loose in the world, and one day it will be all in all.

And right now, we want to be a part of it. So friends, right now, live in light of it. Jesus is the Lord of life.

He's conquered sin and death. So believe, and belong, and be about the mission. Let's pray.

[32 : 20] Lord Jesus, we praise you this morning that you have entered into our human frailty and our finitude and our death, and you've made time for us, and you've swallowed sin, and you've broken death's power, and you live forever.

God, I pray for those of us here today for whom this is a familiar message. Would it become new, Lord Jesus? And by your spirit, would you call us out into the great task that you've set before us to

live in light of all that you've done and all that you are, to be about your mission in the world of making things new.

And Father, I pray for those here who are searching or questioning or who are just here because a friend invited them. God, I pray that they would come to see how good you are and how good of news it is that Jesus is risen.

Father, would you continue to speak to them and draw them to yourself, help them to believe, we pray, and help us to live the lives of joy and peace and courage that your resurrection means.

We ask this, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.