

About 3 months ago, we were in Mark 2, where Jesus healed the paralytic. And the question we considered back then, was “What’s our greatest need?” And of course, our greatest need, is forgiveness – We need someone who can **save** us from our sins...

And I suspect that most of us know this in our heads... But we still cry out desperately to God, for healing... And why wouldn’t we?

When we **know** that Jesus has the power to heal, it’s right for us to ask Him for healing. We’ve got no right to demand it, but we can humbly request it...

Today’s Bible reading, is 2 stories of human despair and helplessness, meeting the power of God in Jesus¹.

The first is of a man, whose daughter is dying...

- He’s a very important man – we’re told he’s one of the rulers of the Synagogue.
- Which means, he’s very religious; and
- “He’s very connected into the worshipping community.”

But none of this can help him. His 12 year old daughter is dying, and **no** one can do anything, to save her... And even as the story unfolds, he gets the word, “Don’t bother Jesus anymore – it’s too late. She died.” Oh, the despair of a parent, who’s child has just died...

And the second story, is of a woman (and we're not even told her name), but she's probably got some severe gynaecological problems (she hasn't stopped bleeding for 12 years)...

- She's broke – she's spent every cent she could, on doctors to try and fix it, but they weren't any help;
- By the religious rules, she was unclean – she couldn't go to the temple – nobody could touch her, or they too would become ceremonially unclean;
- And so, for the last 12 years, she would've been totally **disconnected** from the worshipping community... She was an un-touchable – an outcast...

For 12 years, the man had delighted in his daughter, and now she was dying...

For 12 years, the woman had zero chance of conceiving, and for 12 years, she'd been a social and religious outcast...

It doesn't matter what station of life we're from:

- rich / poor
- highly respected / nobody
- very religious / not connected to God at all

It doesn't matter what station of life we come from, **any** of us can find ourselves being in a place of utter despair and helplessness. And when we're in that place, and we reach out to Jesus, that's when the power of God kicks in...

Both these stories, are stories of Jesus, meeting people in their place of deep despair, and miraculously intervening... – the

woman is healed, and Jairus' daughter is raised from the dead...

And as we read these scriptures, we have to always ask the question, "What is God teaching me in this?"

1. Well,

In Jesus Christ, there **is** help for the helpless, and there **is** hope for those who despair.

When you find yourself in that place where fears and anxieties overwhelm, that's a very good time to turn to Jesus...

When there **are** no answers – when there **is** no cure – when **no one else can help**, that's a very good time to turn to Jesus...

You know, some people have the attitude, "Christians are weak". Well, yes we are, and that's why we come to the one who gives us strength...

The ministry of Jesus Christ, has always appealed to those who despair... Sadly, way too often, it's only when we're at our wits end, that we put away our foolish pride, and actually do what we should have done right at the beginning – give ourselves over to Jesus...

2. Secondly, it takes faith.

The woman who haemorrhaged for 12 years – well, she shouldn't have been **in** that jostling crowd, for a start. Every person that she came in contact with, she was making 'impure'. You see, the religious **rules** said, "If you touch someone, that makes them unclean". The religious rules said, "You can't touch Jesus – your impurity will rub-off on him."

But she believed that Jesus was greater than that. And she believed, that if she **could** just touch Jesus, she'd be healed. And she did, and she was...

And Jesus confirmed it. He felt healing power go out from Himself. And when she owned up to what had happened, He said: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

And what about Jairus? When he got the word, "It's too late – your daughter's dead.", what did Jesus say to him??? He said, "Do not fear, only believe." (Don't be afraid – have faith)

Faith, is what holds us to Jesus, in the midst of our deepest despair.

3. But, what sort of faith, does it take:

I want to be really clear about something:

The Gospel of Mark, is **not** about us discovering ourselves, and it's not about us discovering healing – it's about discovering Jesus...

Some people get themselves all focused on this “healing” thing, but the purpose of the Gospel of Mark is for us to focus on Jesus... This isn't about having faith for healing – this is about having faith in Jesus... Mark is revealing who Jesus is. He's already shown us that:

- He's the one who has **power** over the wind and the waves;
- He's the one who has **power** over demons;
- He's the one who has **power** to heal sickness and disease; and
- He has **power** to raise the dead...

This isn't about faith-healing – this is about the **Heal-er** – it's about Jesus – it's about who Jesus is (He's the Son of God)...

A definition that I like use for “faith”, is “To believe in Jesus, and to believe that what Jesus has promised, will happen.”

Let me tell you what faith is **not**: “Faith is **not me** deciding what **I** want to happen, and then believing it into existence... and that's one of the greatest confusions, that we'll come across in the church today – the place of “faith”, when it comes to healing...”

Some people will continually reject Jesus, until they are so desperate for something – they're so desperate for healing of some-kind, whether it be:

- physical healing; or
- emotional; or
- psychological; or
- marriage; or
- financial

And they come to Jesus, because they have a hope that “Maybe Jesus can give me, what I feel I so desperately need...”

And sometimes, in the mercy of God, He grants them their request...

And when they get it, sometimes they’re not so interested in Jesus anymore –

And so E.g.:

the farmer turns to Jesus, to pray for rain, and when the drought’s broken – doesn’t think about Jesus any more.

And sometimes faith is short-lived, because it **didn’t** provide what was desired, “*We even tried Jesus. We had faith that He’d save my wife from cancer, but he didn’t...*” And so, a *misplaced faith, with unrealised expectations, shrivels and dies...*

Faith, is believing in Jesus, and trusting in Jesus... And the **greatest** faith, is a faith that **always** trusts in Jesus, even when the healing doesn’t come... And let’s not pretend here - sometimes the healing doesn’t come. And because Jesus is Lord, when Jesus heals, is entirely up to Him.

This is a very hard message for a pastor to give:

There are so many voices today, that will tell you:

*You just have to believe that they're healed, and they **are** healed;*

And if they're not healed, it's because you don't have enough faith...

When someone is dying, and their loved-ones are desperately praying for a miracle, but God doesn't seem to be answering their prayer, my, how very hard it is, to shake someone out of that kind of 'name-it-and-claim-it' theology, and get them to understand what real faith is. Real faith, is "Faith in Jesus", and a **big** faith, will trust Jesus, no matter what happens...

Not long after we planted our little church out at Westmar, John and Teressa Bear, became Christians.

*And when Teressa (a mother, who had never smoked in her life), got lung cancer,,,,, in obedience to the Scriptures, we anointed her with oil, and we prayed for her healing... And her husband, John said (and Teressa agreed) "We believe that God **has** healed Teressa, and if it's not an earthly, physical healing, it's a spiritual healing at the resurrection..." And that statement of faith brought tears to my eyes, because I rarely hear such a mature, deep faith.*

This couple, who were only pretty new Christians, had faith so strong, that if Jesus didn't heal her, that was OK with them, because they were looking forward to the resurrection...

Wow, what a strong faith....

Of course they wanted healing, and we prayed for healing...
But their faith was strong, and it wasn't shaken when she died...

4. And I share this testimony, because the fourth lesson, is the value of testimony

The bleeding woman snuck up on Jesus, and touched his coat – she didn't want to be seen – she didn't want to be noticed – she was very secretive about it all ...

But Jesus didn't want her faith to remain secret...

“Who touched my clothes?”

“What are you talking about Jesus? There's people everywhere – There's people jostling you all over the place”

³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

A lot of Christians like to keep their faith private – they're a believer, but they're not a sharer **of** their belief. Do you know what their problem is? Fear! The woman came in fear and trembling.

I said this a couple of weeks ago – Jesus doesn't want us to be secret-agent Christians – He wants us to let our light shine...

Do you know how beneficial it is for others, when you give God glory, and testify about what He's done?

When God answers one person's prayer, that should increase the faith of the rest of us (and it should encourage **us** to pray)... The testimony of that woman being healed – can you imagine what that would've done to bolster the faith of Jairus??? Jairus' daughter has just died; And Jesus says to him: **"Do not fear, only believe."**

Imagine how the woman's testimony, would help him to do that.

It's really important, that we share what Jesus has done, so that it increases other people's faith.

5. And finally, in Christ, the merciful touch the unclean

Jesus:

- touched the leper;
- was touched by the haemorrhaging woman;
- He took the dead girl by the hand;
- He travelled to the gentiles;
- He hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes

The religious rules said, "All of these things make you unclean." But here's the thing – the profane doesn't make Jesus dirty – He makes the **impure**, holy...

Oh, it's so easy for the redeemed, to cloister ourselves away, and for us to cut ourselves off from the world... But that's not Jesus' way.

Somebody said to me the other day, “How come our church attracts so many people with so many problems?” And my reply was “You mean, ‘how come we minister to the broken?’ That’s just the way of Jesus, isn’t it...”

If you're looking for a perfect church, filled with perfect people, it doesn't exist... You might be able to find a church or 2 about, where most of the members seem to have their lives all in order, but it's not the perfect church, because any church, that is following the call of Christ, will attract some of the most broken, desperate people, in need of a saviour; and in need of cleansing; and in need of healing...

My prayer, is that we will be disciples of Jesus, who aren't afraid to meet with those who are in the midst of helplessness and deep despair. And we meet with them, because we can help them to meet with Jesus.

And I pray that, as we encounter times of deep despair, we'll always encourage each other on, in faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour...

Amen...

ⁱ Cole, R.A., 1989. *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.