

“It’s Not Too Late, Trust Me”
Luke 8:40-56
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Leonia Presbyterian Church 5/18/14

Intro:

I work with children and teenagers, that’s what I do and one of the best bibles made for children came out a couple of years ago (if you can get one of these, it will be the best \$12 you spend all year!); We’ve already heard the scripture read -- But I’d like us to get it again, only this time, using this (The Jesus Storybook Bible) And as I read I want you to pay attention to the 3 main people Jesus addresses in the story:

Now there are a lot of people in this story: crowds of people at the temple, Jesus’ disciples, a whole neighborhood of people mourning for the little girl who died. But who are the three main people who Jesus addresses directly in the story?

Jairus, the little girl’s father and ruler of the synagogue
The Woman who was sick for 12 yrs.
The Little Girl

Excellent!! You get a cookie and a cup of coffee after church just for being good listeners!

The meeting, the encounter between Jesus, and each of the three people reveals, or shines a spotlight on something TRUE about God – that you and I desperately need to know. And just as important – there’s a whole world out there, full of people who didn’t come to church today – and they desperately need to know what’s true about God too.

JAIRUS (Direct Access to God)

So the first person we meet in the story is Jairus. He’s the father of the little girl, who’s about 12 yrs old, and she’s dying. His little girl is not getting better. He’s the Ruler of the Synagogue which means he’s a powerful man, respected in his community, prominent. Yet he’s completely powerless to do the one thing that’s most important to him: help his only daughter. He can’t save her. Jairus and his wife have money, they know people of influence and skill, these are people who have resources. But none of these things can save their daughter.

Have you ever needed to change something in your life, desperately, or help someone you loved – and even though you have access to all kinds of resources –you’ve been completely powerless to do it?

Jairus is here, at the bedside of his only daughter, desperate to help her, and he can't. But **Then he remembers Jesus**. He runs out of the house, pushes through the crowd and doesn't stop until he gets to Jesus, and although there's a crowd around him, Jesus responds directly to Jairus.

Here's the first true thing about God we need to understand: Jairus had access to Jesus! And we do too! God is NOT distant or unreachable or unresponsive or uninterested in Jairus. And the same goes for us: You can get to God if you have a need, we have access to God! If you asked people both inside the church, and people outside who wouldn't ever think of coming to church, many people believe God isn't accessible, isn't easy to get to – God is distant. But the truth is, we can get to God, God is a completely accessible, reachable responsive God!

And this idea of access, is one of the things we love to do at our ministry New City Kids, this idea of Access:

- Getting kids in a terrible school system access to academic excellence and achievement;
- seeing them access all their musical and artistic giftedness,
- to see them flourish and grow despite facing some of the toughest and most devastating life circumstances at home.
- We love to see teenagers get access to a regular paycheck and the sense of self worth that creates in them,
- And the chance to be a younger child's role model as they tutor them,
- To see them get access to college when no one in their family has ever gone before and lack of finances would normally keep them from even attempting to go.
- Access to 30 ft. sailboats and the New York City Harbor thru our City Sail program,
- and access to abuse and domestic violence therapy and counseling through the Brighter Day program ...

Giving our kids access to all this makes New City a place where they can be introduced to Jesus, and have access to Him. They meet the One and only One with actual power, power to change so many of the things they desperately need to change in their lives.

Just like Jairus, you and I, and anyone who longs for it, has access to God. God is reachable, God is available to you.

The Sick Woman – (Noticed)

Who is the next person Jesus meets in the story? After the Sick Woman touched just the hem of Jesus coat, and was instantly healed, he stops and says "Who touched me?" He was nearly crushed by the crowd around him, but he says "Someone touched me, I know that power has gone out from me." And the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. **She could not go unnoticed.**

2000 years ago in Jewish culture, this woman – because she was continually hemorrhaging – couldn't have children and was therefore considered worthless in her community. She was also considered unclean because of her constant bleeding. For 12 years people in her community rejected her, she was shamed, and labeled worthless.

I love that Jesus asks “Who touched me?”

He knew who she was – He was God!

But because He was human too, He wanted to meet her face to face!

The Lord of the Universe wanted to know a rejected, outcast, seemingly worthless person -- intimately, face to face. “Who touched me?”

Have you ever, like this woman, felt that shame (rejection, worthlessness); Have you ever convinced yourself or let someone else convince you that you couldn't possibly be worth God's notice? Jesus knew that's how this woman felt, and he knew how the people in that crowd had rejected her and made her feel so ashamed. “I want to know you,” he says, “I've noticed you, in fact, I know all about you.”

Don't you see? **The second true thing about God is that there's no such thing as being unnoticed or forgotten by God.** In fact, just the opposite is true – God knows us, intimately, and wants to know us better, face to face.

Now this is the point where some of you might be thinking – “You know, I actually don't WANT God to notice me, because if He does, I'm in big trouble!!”. Let's be real, some of us are in touch with the fact that if we had to stand before God, we'd have some explaining to do!

Now I'm not making this up, the bible's pretty clear that each one of us will stand before God at the end of our life here -- But this is where we can get Good News:

God says “While you were STILL SINNING, Christ died for you. “(Romans 5:8) “When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, canceling everything that stood against us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

The Good News that people who follow Jesus Christ talk about is that God not only notices you and I, but right smack in the middle of our sin -- not AFTER we've got it together, not after we tried to be good, but while we were still right in the middle of being the worst that we could be, **Jesus Christ, died the death we should have died so we can live the life we were meant to live.**

* So when God notices us, looks at us, if we have trusted Him – trusted that He is who He says He is, and trusted our lives into care, When God sees us He sees Jesus in our place:

2 cor 5:21 says:

“He who knew no sin (Jesus) became sin for us, so we might become the righteousness of God” – When God notices us, sees you, there’s no need to be afraid or hide. There’s no such thing as being unnoticed with God.

The Little Girl

So finally we come to this little girl. She’s breathed her last breath, and for her, for her parents – it really is too late. Her spirit is gone. She is surrounded by a crowd, all her neighbors and relatives, they’re wailing, crying out with grief. What do we do when there really is an ending, and it’s too late?

Two years ago, my dear friends got the call from their son’s college that there’s been an accident, and their son had died. It was too late. There have been other accidents, other losses. We all know.

It was too late for this little girl. But then ... Jesus came through that crowd to her, and ... it wasn’t. It really was NOT too late. How can this be? How can it really be too late, and yet ... not be? Because this God who is accessible, who we can get to face to face, this God who notices us and knows us, intimately – this God is fully and completely able to reach down into death, and **give us life**. *Because his sacrifice on the Cross overpowered death completely.*

The bible puts it this way: “Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable/everlasting/permanent, and we will be changed. Then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”

Don’t you see? When it really is too late, Jesus comes, sits next to your beside and says “my daughter, my son, it’s time to get up! I am making all the sad things come untrue!”

Now my children might tell you that they’re not exactly sure which book I love best, the bible, or the seven books in the Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis. In these books, Aslan is the Great Lion, Creator and King of Narnia, and 4 children from England visit Narnia and have all kinds of adventures there. I have looked, but I haven’t found anything yet that does a better job describing how God meets us when it really is too late, and gives us life:

This is from the very end, of the very last book:

“Then Aslan turned to them and said:

“You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be.”

Lucy said, “We’re so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.”

“No fear of that,” said Aslan. “Have you not guessed?”

Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.

“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are – as you used to call it in the Shadowlands – dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Friends, to use a very old fashioned word, I beseech you today: DO NOT walk out of this place today holding onto a lie: a lie that tells you you can't get to God, or that God doesn't notice you, or that (whatever your circumstance may be) that it is just too late and your story is over. DO NOT hold those heavy burdens anymore, they're too heavy to carry.

Come and lay those lies at the feet of Jesus. Lay them at the foot of the Cross. God says to you today: My son, My daughter, come to me, I'm available; I know you, and want to know you more; and whatever it is, it is not too late, trust me, don't be afraid.

Prayer:

Benediction:

And now may the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.