

Questions Jesus Asked, Part Ten

Luke 8:40-56

1. You matter.

- Mark 5:25-34

2. No one is unnoticed.

3. You are not too busy for someone else.

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We are in the tenth of our summer sermon series called, “Questions Jesus Asked” – exploring some of the more than 300 questions that Jesus asked in the Gospels. We’re finding that there is far more to the questions than just a simple exchange of information; that each question – and our answer – has profound implications on the quality and effectiveness of our spiritual lives and our ability to carry out God’s Kingdom purposes in this world.

I want to say thank you to Pastor April who preached a powerful and creative sermon last week while Shelly and I were out with some of our family. She did great; if you haven’t heard it, go to our church website and watch it or listen to it like I did.

Jesus’ question that we are looking at today is an interesting one. I think you’ll see what I mean as we read it and dive into it. Before I read it to us, I want to remind us to put ourselves into the picture of the story; we read Scripture as participants, not spectators. This story is really easy to do that with – you can easily become a person in the crowd watching what’s going on. Okay? Would you help me honor God’s Word and let’s stand together as I read it to us:

When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they had been waiting for him. A man named Jairus, who was a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house because his only daughter, a twelve-year-old, was dying.

As Jesus moved forward, he faced smothering crowds. A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When everyone denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!”

But Jesus said, “Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me.

¹ Resources:

- Bible Study Series: Best Questions in the Bible <https://jesusplusnothing.com/series/post/JesusQuestions>
- David Neale, *A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition: Luke 1-9* (Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, 2011)
- William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: Luke* (Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1975)
- Daniel Cash and William Griffith, *8 Questions Jesus Asked* (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA 2017)
- Dale and Sandy Larsen, *Questions Jesus Asked* (IVP, Downers Grove, IL 2019)
- Ken Heer, *Luke: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007)

When the woman saw that she couldn't escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.

"Daughter, your faith has healed you," Jesus said. "Go in peace."

While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Don't bother the teacher any longer."

When Jesus heard this, he responded, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting, and she will be healed."

When he came to the house, he didn't allow anyone to enter with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, "Don't cry. She isn't dead. She's only sleeping."

They laughed at him because they knew she was dead.

Taking her hand, Jesus called out, "Child, get up." Her life returned and she got up at once. He directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were beside themselves with joy, but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened. (Luke 8:40-56, ceb)

Thank you for standing; please be seated. The whole of Luke chapter 8 is really a narrative that shows Jesus making disciples, one at a time. The chapter's first verse mentions the disciples, and then right away lists the disciples who were women – equal disciples with the men. Then the camera shot widens as we see the large crowds gathering around him, and Jesus teaches them about discipleship with his great parable on the farmer who was casting seed, and the different types of soils that the seed lands on. Then he calls his followers to live honestly before God and in their relationship with Jesus, making sure that they know whatever they have hidden in the dark of their lives will be brought out into the light.

Well, the crowds are growing, they are pressing in on Jesus, and they are demanding more from him. He needs a break and some space, so he convinces the disciples that they should go to the other side of the lake.

Then we are taken onto the boat with the disciples as they get caught in the squall and are afraid of capsizing and drowning (while Jesus deservedly naps in the boat), but Jesus awakens and commands the waters to be still. Such authority!

As soon as they arrive on the other side of the lake, Jesus is met by a man with multitudes of demons in him. This is a strange and sad and supernatural and strong story that I will tell you more about next week.

That takes us to our passage today – another tale of two people needing healing, and Jesus' and the disciples' interactions.

After the deliverance of the demon possessed guy, Jesus and the disciples get back in the boat and return across the lake. When Jesus and the disciples reach the other side

of the lake, they are immediately confronted with more crowds, more people pushing in on him, demanding healing, trying to get Jesus' attention. Among the crowds, all of the Gospel writers call our attention first to Jairus, who was a person of significant authority as a ruler of the synagogue, or the local Jewish center. If you wanted to influence the people in that community, get this guy on your side. He's begging Jesus to heal his dying daughter.

We know that the religious leaders clashed with Jesus, and they wanted to kill Jesus for healing people, but here's one of them begging Jesus to exercise his healing power on his daughter. People might have political and selfish agendas, but when it comes to our own kids and our own needs, things get real, really quick. When people reach the end of their ability to control or fix things, they finally turn to God. None of this guy's authority or power meant much when his twelve-year-old daughter is dying. Jesus could have held a grudge, but he didn't – his grace was willing to respond as soon as the guy had humbled himself and prayed. So Jesus didn't say, "I told you so," or "You should've come to me sooner...". Jesus didn't say, "Who's the bad guy now?" Jesus' response was *not* because the guy had power and authority and could help score Jesus a lot of political points with the people in the community. This was a dad who loved his daughter who was dying, and desperately turned to Jesus in faith and hope. And Jesus quickly responded.

But on the way, with all the crowds pressing in around Jesus, we see this minor story of a woman in need reaching out under everyone's feet and touching just the hem of Jesus' cloak, and she is immediately healed, and suddenly everything freezes as Jesus stops, and then incredible things happen. In this midst of this crazy scene, with all these things going on and the chaos that seems to surround Jesus as he's multitasking miracles, he asks a question: "Who touched me?" And that question reveals some things to us about Jesus, and about how he feels about us and what he will do for us.

What I want you to see first in this story is that...

1. You *matter*.

What you are going to see in this story of both Jairus and the woman is that *you* matter to God!

In this story we've got people on both ends of the spectrum; first there's Jairus who's weighty, well connected, and wealthy. This guy had at his fingertips all the resources anyone would want. He had access to the best medical care of his time. He had people ready to do whatever he asked. But he was powerless in the face of this wasting disease that was killing his twelve-year old girl. And Jesus recognized Jairus at his point of need and his powerlessness, and responded to the man's cries of love for his near-death daughter.

I think of the time for Shelly and me, when our youngest son Brenden was little. Between the ages of 1 and 4 – for nearly three years – he was wasting away and not growing. He was, in fact, dying. We didn't know what it was or why it was happening. To this day, we still don't know for sure. But I can tell you, I can immediately relate to

Jairus' desperate prayers, because I prayed those same prayers for three years. Thankfully, Jesus healed Brenden.

I also think of two of the people I'm praying a lot for right now – our friend, Eddie Miles, and my mother. They both have the same diagnosis of brain cancer. They don't both have access to the same care, but they both have access to medical treatments that most people in the world will never have available to them. But that doesn't matter, because they are both still powerless when it comes to what this cancer can do, and when it comes to what the doctors can and can't do. And Jesus hears their prayers in it all as much as he hears the pleading prayers of the poor in the streets of the most poverty-stricken nations. I know that Jesus hears our prayers as Shelly and I are praying for all of our parents right now.

On the other extreme in the story is the woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years. History tells us that Luke, the writer of this gospel, was a physician, and yet he wrote honestly of what doctors of that time could and couldn't do. He admits that this woman had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but they were unable to do anything for her.

Mark gives us a bit more detail about the desperation of this woman's situation. Let me read Mark's passage to you. In fact, you've been sitting a little while – why don't you stand up again with me as I read this passage of God's Word.

A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors, and had spent everything she had without getting any better. In fact, she had gotten worse. Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. She was thinking, If I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed. Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed. At that very moment, Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said to him, "Don't you see the crowd pressing against you? Yet you ask, 'Who touched me?' But Jesus looked around carefully to see who had done it. The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward. Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth. He responded, "Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease." (Mark 5:25-34, ceb)

Thank you – you can have a seat. Not only had the doctors been unable to help, she had actually gotten worse. She was on the opposite spectrum of the social order of Jairus in both resources, connections, and friends. But they both had need, and they both came to Jesus.

Regardless of their status, they mattered to Jesus. You might be sitting here, or in your living room or office, and you or someone you love has a great need. You and I both have more than we deserve, have access to resources that are more than many people have, and yet in the face of our need, we are powerless. We need Jesus. *Listen:* you *matter* to Jesus. Your life matters to him. Your livelihood matters to him. Your brokenness matters to him. Your need matters to him. You have his attention.

You see...

2. No one is *unnoticed*.

It's clear that Jairus had no trouble getting Jesus' attention. Despite the crowd crushing in around Jesus, people got out of Jairus' way so that he and his entourage could approach Jesus. Jairus was probably one of the first to be in Jesus' face as he stepped off the boat and back onto the shore. Jairus' servants probably formed a human chain around Jairus and Jesus, keeping the crowds at bay. So it wasn't hard for Jesus to notice Jairus.

The woman, on the other hand, was among the unnoticed and intentionally ignored. The bleeding would make her, and anyone who came in contact with her, ceremonially unclean. This is why she would have tried to sneak through the crowd unnoticed. She probably figured that if Jesus usually healed by touching, He would never touch her.²

Maybe you feel like her. Maybe you feel like everyone else is so busy pushing their way to Jesus that you are left behind or underfoot. Can I be honest with you? Sometimes I feel that way. As a pastor, so much of my work is helping everyone else get to Jesus. I spend my life doing all I can to introduce you to Jesus, to help you better understand Jesus, helping you to know how to get closer to Jesus, and helping you introduce others to Jesus. But there are times when it feels like I'm bleeding and it won't ever stop. And I get weaker by the day, sometimes by the hour. Whatever energy I have is spent helping everyone else get to Jesus. I feel like there are so many other people in front of me, that Jesus just might walk right by me and not notice. And I don't even have the social issues this woman had; she was an unclean pariah. She felt not only would she go unnoticed by Jesus, she believed she *deserved* to go unnoticed by Jesus; we see this in the way she approached him. She was unclean.

The woman had *hoped* to go unnoticed. But here's the thing, friends, and I'm preaching to myself, too: you cannot reach out in faith and touch Jesus without His being aware and responsive. Jesus pulled her out of the crowd and spoke to her as a valued individual. She had lived in embarrassment and shame, but Jesus treated her with dignity. She had no resources, but Jesus wasn't charging a fee for His services. She had interrupted Him while He was on His way to an important man's house, but in that moment, she was the most important person in the crowd. She came in faith, and Jesus sent her home in peace, (having) been healed because of her faith.³

You matter to Jesus. No one goes unnoticed by Jesus. These are two things we learn from Jesus' question, "Who touched me?" Jesus was so aware of the work that he was doing for the Kingdom of God and so full of love, that it was no small thing that power went out of him because of the small step of faith that woman made.

So, finally, there is an example in Jesus' actions that applies to us; that teaches us how to treat others, as well. You see, even as we come to Jesus, Jesus expects us to take him to others in need. Everyone matters to Jesus, and no one is unnoticed by him; therefore,

² Ken Heer, *Luke: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 133.

³ Ken Heer, *ibid*

everyone matters to you; to us as a church, and no one should go unnoticed by you, or by us. You see...

3. You are not *too busy* for *someone else*.

Henri Nouwen was a Catholic priest and prolific spiritual writer and book author who recently passed away. I love his writing. In fact, your church Leadership Team is reading two of his books this year as part of our leadership development. At one point he was a sought-after author, speaker, and professor at Notre Dame. Eventually he left all of that to become a sort of chaplain at one of the L'Arche communities. L'Arche communities are people with and without intellectual disabilities living, working, praying, and playing together in community. There are over 150 communities around the world, over 20 of which are here in the US, three of which are in the state of Washington.

Once, when Nouwen was looking back on his years as a professor at Notre Dame, "he said with a funny twinkle in his eye, 'I have always been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I slowly discovered that my interruptions were my work.'"⁴ That's what we see Jesus practicing in this story. We've all had days when what we've planned to do is constantly being interrupted by what demands our attention. Imagine what it was like for Jesus! He was so exhausted from the constant pressure that he and his friends took a boat across the lake to get some space. Jesus was so tired that he fell asleep right away, and was sleeping through a storm! His frightened disciples interrupt his much-needed nap, and he commands the storm to be stilled. As soon as they arrive at the other side, Jesus has to deal with the spiritually and emotionally exhausting exorcism of a man with multiple demons holed up within him. Then, for his kindness, the town rejects Jesus. So back across the lake they come, only to be confronted once more with enormous crowds, and the urgency of a dying twelve-year-old girl. Jesus is on a mission, fighting crowds to get to the girl. Time is of the essence; she is near death. Jesus could've ignored her interruption and kept on going. But he didn't; he stopped, acknowledged the woman, and gave her all of his attention. The disciples are frustrated; they know how important Jairus is. You don't keep a man like that waiting. They see the golden opportunity this is for Jesus to heal Jairus' daughter; doing so will score huge points and raise them to celebrity status among the elite. They are incredulous that Jesus would stop the procession in the midst of a crowd when everyone is pushing and shoving Jesus. *Everyone* is touching Jesus. But Jesus didn't see the woman as an interruption; this woman *was* his mission. As a result, as one author says, "Two women were healed that day – a twelve-year-old girl and a woman who had been ill for twelve years. Two women were healed – two who experienced the touch of Jesus, who allowed himself to be interrupted."⁵

Every day, you and I are torn between choices – each of which is important. How will we decide which to do? Choose people first. Because people matter and no one is unnoticed, we choose people first.

⁴ Henri J. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004), 56

⁵ Cash and Griffith, *ibid*, pg 28

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor who was martyred in a German concentration camp during WWII. He once wrote, "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans ... sending us people with claims and petitions. ... It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this, but actually they are disdainful of God's "crooked yet straight path."⁶

I tried putting this into practice this week. Shelly and I were in Salem helping my parents, and I took my mom to her daily radiation treatments for her brain cancer. While she was in treatment, I had a short, typically quiet time to myself that I could do some reading and studying for the sermon today. Normally, writing a sermon takes me about 12-15 hours of research, writing, editing, and re-writing. The time with my parents is so demanding that I knew I was going to need every moment I got. But the first day, as mom came out and we were getting ready to leave, there was a woman sitting nearby, clearly upset. She was trying to be quiet and hold back the tears. She was called to her appointment, but as we walked by, I simply touched her shoulder, and looked her in the eye, acknowledging that I see her. She unleashed her tears. I simply said, "I notice, and I am praying for you."

The next day, a different woman sat down across from me. I really wanted to pretend I didn't notice her, but she made sure I saw her looking at me. She asked why I was there. I told her, and returned the question. She then commenced to spend the rest of the time telling me about her health issues, the latest being cancer. I listened intently, thinking about this sermon, but nevertheless, I asked her questions and sharing my concern for her. The next day, I thought I'd finally get some reading in, but unbelievably, across from me was an old friend from when I was growing up. He and I were in grade school through high school together, played baseball together (he was a pitcher and I played first base; we had the most pick offs in the league). He and I doubled dated sisters several times. I haven't seen him in over 30 years, but I recognized him immediately. He told me all about his fiancé who was starting treatment for both tumors and leukemia. I'm praying for them, too.

Here's the thing: I got nothing done on those days. Now, I did some of this sermon on Friday evening as Shelly drove the second half of our trip back to Yakima. Then I spent most of yesterday finishing my sermon. I don't normally like to do that; I try to have it done by Thursday so that it has time to spiritually simmer. But what normally takes 12-15 hours, took only ten this time. And I felt like I could practice what I'm preaching. So can you at the same time.

Listen: I am the woman who has felt the emotional and physical hemorrhage. But Jesus stops for me as I reach for him. So I'm trying to practice stopping for others. The decisions aren't always easy, but I want to get better at choosing people. Would you do the same? While I pray for you, please pray for me.

Prayer

⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Martyred Christian*. "Christianity Today," Vol. 30, no. 1.

Pastor Roger, benediction:

May you find comfort in the knowledge that you matter to Jesus, that he stops everything to turn his full attention to you, and give you his healing. None are unnoticed by him. May we leave this place determined to allow interruptions in our lives, that we may notice others in need, and acknowledge that they matter to us and to God the Father, in the name of Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.