

Cross Culture

God's Story in a Fear-Based Culture

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God's Story in a Fear-Based Culture **1 John 4:18**

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to 1 John 4. Let me encourage you to pull out those notes that are in your celebration guide that will guide our time. In this series, we have been starting out each week with, first, hearing different stories of how our God has transformed our lives, and different people sharing what Christ has done and how God is working in and through us. We've been talking about how God is always at work around us, and we have the privilege of joining at work with Him.

I want to share a couple stories this morning that show that God is not even confining His work to the people who are here in this room and in Birmingham week in and week out. Instead, He's using what we're studying here to impact people in many different places. Here are a couple of examples.

This first one is a four-page letter. I'm not going to read all four pages. I'm going to condense it a little bit, but a four-page letter I received this last week from a man in Phoenix who visited with us a few weeks ago. June 3, he was here when we were talking about John 5 and joining God where He's at work. This is what he writes from Phoenix:

I'm writing to share an experience I had with you on a plane from Birmingham to Phoenix the Monday after I worshiped with you all. Before I got on the plane, I prayed that God would sit someone beside me who needed to know how much He loved them.

He continues and begins to describe how, sure enough, a gentleman sat down next to him. He said he dozed off for about an hour, but when he woke up, he said he simply prayed and began a conversation with this guy next to him. In his words:

I asked him a few questions, and he told me that he was in Birmingham visiting family, but he lived in Phoenix. He was a chef at a country club there. He explained that he had been looking for a new job. I shared my story with him and, all of the sudden, this guy started crying and sharing his heart with me. He had accepted Christ in an earlier age although he felt as though his heart wasn't right with God. He asked me to pray for him. As we were on the final approach into Phoenix, I put my hand on his shoulder, and we wept together and thanked God for the love He has for us.

God used what we're studying here in this study to impact this guy who lives in Phoenix.

Next story. I'm guessing that you're familiar with Rick and Bubba. This is a story that Bubba e-mailed to me this week. Basically, through their radio program, this is something that somebody sent in to them.

Guys, I have to tell you what just happened to me. This morning on my way to work, I was listening to the radio, and I let my speed get away from me, so I was pulled over by a State Trooper. He asked me if I knew why he pulled me over. I told him, "Probably because I was speeding." He said, "Yes," and he asked me why I was speeding. I told him, "I was listening to Rick and Bubba," hoping that would help me. I smiled. He didn't think it was funny. The trooper then began to explain that he had listened to Rick and Bubba, and he hated it when they began to talk about God and what he is doing in their lives.

I took a chance and asked him why that bothered him. He then explained to me why that bothered him. He said that no matter what he did, God wouldn't do anything with his life. Knowing that isn't true, I began to share what God has done and is doing in my life. It wasn't long until I realized that he had not had a personal relationship with Christ. After explaining this to him, I got out of my van, we walked to the back, and I had the privilege of leading this State Trooper to give his heart to Christ.

Now, be careful. Bad theology would take this story and use it as a justification for speeding this week, and that's not the point here, okay? The letter continues:

What a way to start the day. Not only did I not get a ticket, but I also led him to Christ.

Then, he closes out. Listen to what he says, talking to Bubba, "Thank you for being so bold with your faith. It gave me the opportunity to be bold and share my faith." Do you see how, maybe, God uses us, maybe in ways that we don't even see?

Then, one more story and this is from our faith family.

Everyday I have the opportunity to minister to patients who are facing the crisis of cancer in their lives. Today, a patient came in who I have been giving monthly treatments to for several years. This gentleman typically comes in to the chemo treatment room in a wheelchair. Today, he actually walked into the room. I was so excited to see him walking and told him what a blessing that God was making him better and stronger. He told me that he had done many bad things in his life and didn't feel that God could ever love him. Wow. What an appointment from God. I shared with him how Jesus covers all our sin and guilt. I will continue to build this relationship and hopefully be able to lead him to see God's love for him. I've missed many opportunities to share with people who are facing crises in their lives, and I will not continue to do so.

He puts us in situations. He has us where we are in each of our lives across this room for a reason, and we have the privilege of being a part of this mission alongside Him. We're in this series, and we're talking about how to share the gospel. Basically, what we've done is we've talked about our stories of what Christ has done in each of our lives, and then, we started last week looking at different cultures in the world.

We're thinking about sharing the gospel across cultures. We've seen that, in Genesis 3, there were three primary results for consequences of sin: guilt, fear, and shame. The gospel hits on each one of these. Last week, we talked about guilt. We talked about how, although these different effects of sin are prevalent in all cultures, there are many cultures where one kind rises to the top over another. We talked last week about how in Western culture, we

are consumed with this idea of being right or wrong, guilty or innocent. The most comfortable place for us is if I'm okay and you're okay. We don't want to be wrong. We don't want to be found in the wrong on this or that. We live along this, kind of, guilt and innocence paradigm. It may surprise us to know there are people in the world who may not think like us. While guilt and innocence are definitely part of the gospel in all cultures, there are a lot of people in the world who live more along the lines of a fear and power paradigm.

Let me give you a couple of examples. These are some first-hand accounts from some missionaries in other countries. One missionary writes:

As we drew near to this particular village, we could hear the sound of drums. As we drew closer, we could see people dancing and withering on the ground. A man approached us and explained that we could not go any further. The village was doing a sacred rite to improve the economy and bring more trade to the area. So, we were escorted away and not given a chance to share the gospel. We later heard that a human sacrifice had been offered to the spirits that day.

Similarly, a missionary writes:

We arrived in a village where a rainmaking ceremony was about to begin. They invited us to watch. A black bowl was led to the edge of the village where it faced the direction of which the rain would come. The animal's throat was cut, and it fell over on its left side. The delight of all this indicated that the sacrifice was acceptable. The men then cut up the meat and cooked it. As the meat was cooking, an old man began to shout a prayer to the spirits for rain. Soon everyone joined in. After the meat was eaten, the shouting turned into dancing. The villagers danced all afternoon until the rain came. It rained so heavily that everyone had to run for shelter. Did the rituals bring the rain? To the natives it was obvious, and there was no way that we could convince them otherwise.

Now, to many of us, those stories seem ancient. Maybe those kind of stories happened a long time ago, but certainly not today. Well, on the contrary, there are many cultures, especially in Latin America, Asian, and African settings that have this kind of picture on a daily basis; cultures where belief in the supernatural is very real. They don't know the Enlightenment rationalism that has taught us that supernatural things don't happen. Instead, they see spirits and gods and even ancestors and ghosts at work all around them. Those spirits or gods may work in different ways through people. They work through inanimate objects like rocks or trees or in the hills. Everything that happens is attributed to the work of the gods and spirits; if the crops failed, then, obviously, the gods or the spirits are not happy. If things aren't going right in my life, obviously, I've done something wrong. If I'm sick, I need to appease the gods because these gods can be angered, they can be appeased by doing certain rites or rituals. So, there are many cultures...I've seen them face to face...many cultures in the world where they participate in certain rituals at certain times of the year, so that they can appease the gods, or they can turn to the gods when they need help.

We might call it superstition, but it's very real in these cultures. As a result, anyone who has power with the gods has power in that culture. This is why in these particular cultures, whether they are called priests or shamans or witch-doctors, there are people who have a very firm hold on the people in those cultures, because they are the ones that have power, that have sway with the gods who you go to, to have peace or power with the gods. This is

very real in Indonesia and other parts of Asia that I've been in, and African cultures, and even in some of the many forms in the Latin American countries that we are going to this summer.

So, in light of this picture, how does the gospel not just address our guilt? How does it address our fear? Maybe knowing how the gospel addresses fear is a better starting point for sharing the gospel in a culture like this. That seems foreign to us, but let's be honest. We all have some kind of struggle with fear, don't we? Maybe fear is not just limited to other cultures. Maybe there's a sense of fear that is the nature of our lives as a result of sin.

Even in our culture, I did a little research on different phobias. There are hundreds of diagnosed phobias that we might struggle with, fears. You might recognize some of these. Arachnophobia is the fear of spiders, all right? Aerophobia, the fear of flying. Claustrophobia, the fear of confined spaces. How about dentophobia, the fear of dentists. It's real. Dentophobia, the fear of dentists. Ecclesiophobia, the fear of church. Glossophobia, the fear of speaking in public. Pteronophobia, the fear of being tickled by feathers. Some of you just got a chill, like, "Yeah, that's mine." Hamartophobia is the fear of sinning. Pentheraphobia, anyone know what this one is? Pentheraphobia is the fear of your mother-in-law. Some of you guys are like, "That's it. I've got it. It's finally been diagnosed. Yeah, honey." True, luposlipaphobia, okay? Luposlipaphobia is the fear of being pursued by timberwolves around a kitchen table while wearing socks on a freshly-waxed floor. So, just in case you don't think you're afraid of anything, you can find something to be afraid of.

Fear is all across our culture. Well, how does the gospel address our fear? How does the gospel speak to our fear? Well, we're going to kind of use the pattern that we started last week. We're going to look at one verse and let that catapult us into four stories. The goal is, as a result of this series each week, we'll not only know our story, but we'll know at least one story about how God's story relates to a guilt-based culture, a fear-based culture, and a shame-based culture, so we'll be able to share God's story as a starting point in whatever culture we find ourselves in.

So, 1 John 4. I want you to hear what John says about fear. We'll start on verse 16 through 19. 1 John 4:16 says:

[And] so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

One Verse

I want us to focus on 1 John 4:18. You've got it in your notes there. This is actually the English Standard Version that I use a lot in my study. I think it expresses it concisely in the wording here. It says, *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."* The word that John is using there for fear is "phobos" from which we get "phobia."

Basically, all throughout Scripture, we see a good kind of fear, fearing God in a healthy way, all throughout Scripture. However, we also see a bad kind of fear, a dread, and that's exactly what John is addressing here. In fact, in verse 18 in the original language of the

New Testament, fear is actually the first word. It literally says, "fear is not in love." What he's talking about is how many people who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ struggle with fear. He, basically, says two things, and these are not in your notes, but it's just kind of extra, no charge necessary. However, he said, first of all, that love is incompatible with fear. Love and fear cannot coexist together. If you have love, fear cannot be there. They're incompatible.

Second, love is invincible against fear. "Perfect love casts out fear." Whenever you have love, it's invincible against fear. When love comes on the stage, fear is gone. When we think about fear, there's a real tendency for, even us in this room, to think, "I don't have a bad fear of God. Maybe I fear this person, or maybe I fear this situation, or maybe I fear this happening to me in my life, but fear is not really a big problem." What I want us to see is how fear and the love of God go together because, if we really believe that the God of the universe loves us completely, then we have no reason whatsoever to fear this person or this situation or to fear anything that may happen in our lives.

Four Stories

See how fear and love come together. Fear is cast out by perfect love, and I want us to see that illustrated in the book of Mark. So, take a left with me and go back to Mark 4. What we're going to look at are four stories that are back to back and basically we're coming in on a picture that goes all the way from Mark 4 all the way to the end of Mark 8 that has ten miracles in a row. Mark just gives us a string of miracles, and they're separated here and there, but it's mainly just miracle after miracle after miracle. In fact, what we're going to look at is Mark 4:35 all the way to the end of Mark 5:43, and what we're going to see is four miracles, consecutively listed one after another.

It's just a mounting sense of excitement. It's like, guys, when you're watching baseball, and you see a team hit homeruns back to back to back to back. It's like, "This is amazing." That's kind of the picture we've got here. We've got back to back to back-to-back homeruns by Jesus as they mount one after the other, and they lead to the fourth, which is the ultimate picture that we're going to see here as far as love and fear.

What I want us to see in every single one of these pictures is stories. I want us to see the power of Christ displayed in four different ways. Then, we're going to see a characteristic, or an attribute of Christ that kind of rises to the top in that passage. Then, based on this power and this attribute, we're going to see how His love casts out fear with a promise that is shown here in these stories that is very real for each of our lives.

Jesus has power over nature.

So, let's start with Mark 4:35. Picture the scene.

That day when evening came, he [referring to Jesus] said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other,

"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him."

Do you get the scene? Jesus takes His disciples, and they follow Him into a storm. Don't miss it. The disciples are being obedient to Jesus, and it led them into a storm. They get into the storm, the wind and the waves. Verse 37 talks about a squall. That's a word that can, literally, be referred to as a hurricane-like storm. It's a major storm here on the Sea of Galilee, and they are surrounded by waves coming into the boat. You've got the wind howling. You've got water splashing in everybody's face, and there the Creator of the world is sleeping on a cushion.

It's really kind of funny when you look in the Gospels. The only time we see Jesus sleeping is in the middle of a storm. However, He's sleeping there, and the guys are thinking, "What in the world is He doing?" This is their teacher. This is their person who cares about them, who teaches them, who spends all this time with them, and they go to Him, and they wake Him up and, basically, say, "Don't you care? We're about to drown. We're about to lose our lives here, and you're snoozing."

So Jesus gets up, He yawns, He stretches out, and then He speaks to the wind and waves like He knows them, and He says, "Quiet! Be still!" Literal translation is, "Be muzzled. Say nothing more. You're finished here." Everything gets really quiet. Jesus has the power over nature. That is clear in Mark 4:35-41. He speaks to the wind and the waves, and they quiet down. Now, in verse 40 it says these disciples were scared, they were terrified. Literally, the word in the original language of the New Testament is they were "cowards." They were really going crazy in the middle of the storm, and, maybe, justifiably so.

Now we've got to step further. This is more than just about Jesus having power over nature. After He does this, it says in verse 41, that they were terrified. It uses a different word there. This is the kind of healthy fear. They were terrified, and they looked at each other and said, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him." Here's where I want you to see the characteristic of Christ that is rising to the top here. It's the presence of Christ.

What happens is these guys, when they see Him calm the wind and the waves with the sound of His voice, immediately they know...put yourself in the Jewish mindset. They know in the Old Testament there is only one who has the power to calm the wind and the waves, only one who has this kind of authority, and He is Yahweh Jehovah God. Only God can do that. So, while they were terrified in verse 41, they said to each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him." They are terrified because they realize that, there right in front of them in their boat, was the God of the universe in the flesh. This was not just a mere man. This was God in the flesh right in front of them.

This whole story is told from the disciples' viewpoint to get us to the realization that they came to. It wasn't just about this great storm that was around. It wasn't about this great problem and them being scared. What scared them the most was when they realized that the God of the universe was in the boat right there with them. This was a huge faith lesson for them because they began to realize, no matter how heavy the storm is, no matter how dangerous the situation is, the God of the universe was right there in the middle with them, and He was not indifferent to them, sleeping like it didn't matter. He was right there in the boat with them.

Now, where we miss this in the many sermons I've heard preached on this text, immediately we go into, "With Christ, you won't face any storms in life. With Christ, you can trust Him, and your storms will be gone tomorrow." That is not what this passage is teaching us, and it is not what Mark was intending to teach in the first century. Remember

the context here. Mark is writing to a group of believers who are being persecuted in their faith, heavy persecution for their Christianity. They were tempted in the middle of that persecution to think that God was not with them, that God was indifferent to their struggles, and Mark is reminding them that, even amidst the heavy struggles that you're facing, the persecution that surrounds you, the God of the universe is not indifferent. He is right there with you. He is present with you.

He's teaching them faith...don't miss this. Faith is not confidence that bad things won't happen. Faith is not confidence that the storm will end tomorrow. Faith is confident that, no matter how heavy the storm is, God is right there in the middle of that storm with you. Here's where the love casts out fear. Jesus has power over nature. We see His presence. He is there with them, and the promise that He gives to these guys and to all who follow and trust in Him, He says, "You are not alone."

Please don't miss this. Based on this passage, I cannot guarantee you this morning that you will not face trials and tribulation and struggles in this life. I cannot guarantee you that the storm you find yourself in now will be over tomorrow if you just trust in Jesus. I can't guarantee you that, but I can guarantee you this: The same Christ who spoke to the Sea of Galilee, and the wind and the waves obeyed Him, is the same God who holds every atom in its place in the universe. He's the same God who calls the stars by name, and He's the same Christ that said to us He will be with us always until the very end of the age. Don't miss this. The power of God is most clearly displayed, not in keeping us from storms, but getting us through storms. Does that make sense? Maybe His power and His presence are most clearly displayed, not in sheltering us from storms, but in walking with us through the middle of them.

Ladies and gentlemen, if that seems callous to you, I give you a picture of the cross, who, Christ, when He went to the cross, experienced the ultimate suffering, the ultimate pain, so that you and I could experience salvation. He says, "I'm not unfamiliar with your suffering. In fact, I'm familiar with it, more familiar than you could ever imagine. When you walk through it, I am right there with you. You are not alone." I hope that is encouraging to men and women across this room who are walking through some storms in their own life at this point, that the God of the universe is in the boat with you, that He has not left you alone.

Jesus has power over demons.

That leads us to our second story, Mark 5:1. We're going to read through verse 20. It's a longer story, the longest story that we're going to read here, and I want you to follow along, get the details here. Imagine this. It says:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he often had been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from a distance he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted to the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you will not torture me!" For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go in to them." He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and the countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man that had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man - and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave the region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Here we've gotten a scene that, let's be honest, seems a little out of touch, unreal to us. Did that really happen? I want to remind you, based on where we started this morning, there are cultures in this world where this kind of picture is very real, this picture of the supernatural. Basically, what we've got in Mark 5:1-20 is Jesus coming face to face with demons, and we see them submitting to them.

I want you to see Jesus' power over demons in this passage. Jesus has power over nature. Second, He has power over demons. This is beautiful. I love this particular passage. Even before He cast the demons out, we see them submitting to Him. You saw what they did. They come up, and they run up to Him, or they're living in this one guy...a legion of demons, thousands, living in this one guy. They run up to Him, and they run up through this guy to Jesus, and they bow down. I love this picture. Isn't it good to know that, even though the devil and all his demons hate and loathe everything about God, when they come into His presence, they have nothing to do but to fall on their face. Isn't that a great picture?

So, they fall on their face, and he says, "Jesus, you're the Son of the Most High God." The title for God throughout the Old Testament most often used by Gentiles, the nations, to refer to the greatness of Almighty God, the God of Israel. He knows who Jesus is, and then, he begins pleading with Jesus not to send him out of the area. He's begging Him to do this or that, and he can't do anything. Did you catch that phrase, "Jesus gave them permission to go in to the pigs."? He can't do anything apart from the permission of Jesus.

Now, that whole picture is there before He even casts them out. Their inferiority, His superiority; Jesus has power over demons. What I want us to do is take that picture and see how it comes to bear on this one guy's life and, just as we saw the presence of Christ rise to the top in the first story, I want you to see the peace of Christ rise to the top in this story, in this guy's life, in verse three and verse four. It said repeatedly, "No one was able to help

him." No one. They even tried to chain him up and that didn't work. No one was able to help him.

Put yourself in this guy's shoes. He's lost everything. He's lost all hope of relationships with family and friends. You don't invite this guy to your party. He's lost all hope of interacting with people that he loves or might love him. He's lost all decency. He's running around with no clothes in the tombs. He's lost all self control. He's cutting himself. He's hurting himself. He's lost all purpose for living; all peace in his life is gone. No one, it says in verses three and four, is able to help him.

However, then he comes face to face with Jesus, the Jesus who has power over demons, and you get down to verse 15, and it says, *"They came and they saw this man..."* Look at the picture. *"They saw a man who had been possessed by a legion of demons sitting there dressed and in his right mind."* They were afraid. This guy's whole life had been transformed. Everything had changed by coming face to face with Jesus. It's the exact parallel we saw in the first story here in the second story. Jesus standing up and taking the raging wind and waves, and He calms them and brings stillness just by the sound of His voice. He does the same thing.

Now, He does it in this man's life. The rage that was inside of Him is now gone, and the peace of Christ rules. I want you to see the promise here, the love that casts out fear. Jesus is saying, "Not only are you not alone, but you are safe in me." Now, follow with me here. "You're safe in me." Not safe in that you are sheltered from struggle, not safe in that nothing bad will happen to you, but safe in the fact that there is absolutely nothing the Adversary can do to Christ-followers apart from the permission of Christ Himself. Did you catch that? There's absolutely nothing.

I think we have a tendency to give Satan more credit than he deserves. "Satan is doing this", or "Satan is doing that." Don't forget that Satan is on a leash, ladies and gentlemen, and even though the Bible itself calls him "the prince of this world," he is not the king of kings, and he is not the lord of all lords. Jesus has all authority over him and, as a result, He says to His children, "There is absolutely nothing he can do to strip away the inheritance that I have given you in your heart, in your soul, in your spirit. You are completely safe, ultimately safe, in me."

Now, some of us think, "This is kind of out there Dave. You kind of went off the deep-end. You're talking about this supernatural thing. Haven't you heard about the Enlightenment and rationalism? Supernatural things, they are just the kind of things we make up." On the contrary, ladies and gentlemen, the Bible talks about how our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers and the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm, and I have good news. Jesus Christ has superiority over them all. As a result, we are safe in Him. The peace of Christ is rising in this man's life that casts out fear.

Jesus has power over disease.

Next homerun. Skip to verse 21. Actually, these two back to back homeruns are kind of sandwiched in between each other, so we're actually going to read to the end of the chapter, and we're going to see how one story starts and then picks up in the end, and the other story is sandwiched in the middle. Look at verse 21.

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and

put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Two stories, one sandwiched in the middle of the other. Let's start with the one that is sandwiched in the middle. This woman who has been subject to bleeding for twelve years has struggled with this physically. There's a whole crowd crawling around Jesus. It's a beautiful picture. The language of the New Testament says, "She thought to herself..." The picture is, "She kept saying to herself over and over again, 'If only I could touch His clothes. If only I could touch His clothes. If only I could touch His clothes.'"

So, she does. She comes up, and she reaches out and touches. Then, she runs away. She tries to kind of hide in the crowd, but immediately, she feels something, and she knows that she's healed. I want you to see that not only does Jesus have power over nature and power

over demons, but He has power over disease. However, we can't stop there because if we stop there and see that Jesus has power over disease and leave it at that, then we'll miss the whole point of the passage.

This passage does not end with this woman getting healed and running away, and Jesus continuing on. The point of the story has yet to come. Jesus stops immediately and says, "Who touched me?" The disciples are like, "Who do you think touched you? You have a whole crowd of people around you." He says, "No, somebody touched me. Somebody was healed. Power went from me." He calls out and finally this woman comes to Jesus, falls at His feet trembling.

I want you to put yourself in her shoes. Just as we've seen the presence of Christ and the peace of Christ, I want you to see the healing of Christ in this passage. I want you to see it holistically because it's deeper than just her physical struggle. Here's a woman, who for 12 years, has struggled physically with this issue of blood...for 12 years, and she's gone to all the doctors, and the doctors haven't been able to do anything about it. Mark tells us that. He goes out of his way to tell us that. You look at Luke's account of the story. He doesn't mention the doctors because Luke was a doctor, and he didn't want to say anything bad about doctors, but Mark makes it clear. The doctors could do nothing about this woman's sickness.

So, she comes to Him, but her problem is not just physical. If she's had this issue for 12 years, the Old Testament law said a couple of things. First of all, she was unclean because of her sickness. As a result, she was not permitted to experience the worship, the religious life of the Jewish people. She could not go to the temple. She was defiled and, not only that, but second, because she was defiled and unclean, she couldn't even relate to other people around her. She couldn't touch other people if she was unclean because that would make them unclean. She could defile them.

So, here's a woman who's been ostracized from the religious and the social life of her day completely. She goes to this crowd interacting with all of these people, touching all these people, and then is so bold as to touch Jesus, this teacher, this miracle worker Himself, to touch Him, risking defiling Him. She thinks she'll touch Him and get away as quick as she can. However, He stops, and He turns and says, "Who touched me?" She comes to Him, and He looks at her, and He says, "Your faith has healed you."

The picture for healed there is more than just a physical healing. It's a word that's used other places in the New Testament to talk about how we are saved and we are delivered and made whole, and it's emphasized by what He does next. He says, "Go in peace, shalom." The picture of shalom, peace in the Old Testament is that of wholeness, rightness in your relationship with God. "Go in peace. You are freed from your suffering." This is more than just being healed of this issue of blood. Her whole life was made whole. That was the point. The point, just like we saw last week with Jesus forgiving this man's sins and then giving him the ability to walk. His forgiveness of sins was the whole point of that passage. This woman's life, not just experiencing physical healing, but experiencing holistic healing from an interaction with Jesus. Don't miss the picture here of a love that casts out fear.

Here is the Creator of the world in the flesh walking through a throng of people, going to perform an incredible miracle. This one woman who is ostracized in her culture touches His garment and, all of the sudden, the Creator of the world in the flesh turns and looks at her and gives her His full attention and stoops down and says, "Your faith has healed you." I want you to see the love that casts out fears. Jesus says, "Ma'am, daughter..." It's a picture of affection. "I care for you."

Don't miss this. The beauty of this passage is showing us Christ stopping, amidst all the crowds, turning to this woman who is ostracized and making her whole. I want to remind you, ladies and gentlemen, across this room, even with the hundreds of people that are gathered here this morning, that the God of the universe is concerned about you. He stops for you. He focuses His attention on you and His compassion and His power and His grace and His mercy. Please don't miss it, not just for the person beside you, behind you, or in front of you, there for you right where you are sitting. He cares for you and desires to make you whole. He desires to give His peace to you and bring healing in that way to you.

Does that mean healing from a physical sickness? Does that mean healing from my disease? Maybe, maybe not, but it definitely means healing in the middle of that. It definitely means complete and total salvation which far supersedes any disease this world might bring us in contact with. "I care for you."

Jesus has power over death.

That sets the stage, this picture of you're free from all suffering. What do you mean? Well, you've got this other story that's kind of bookending this one story in the middle, and you've got Jesus going to this man's daughter. This man is desperate. He was a synagogue ruler. It was not popular for synagogue rulers or Pharisees or teachers of the law or anybody like that to go to Jesus for help. Jesus was the bad guy. He goes to Jesus, and he says, "I need you to help me."

At the end of the story, we see Jesus going to this girl. He walks in, and He says, "She's not dead, she's asleep." Everybody laughs at Him. This is not Jesus making a medical diagnosis, that maybe she's just in a coma. She's dead, but Jesus is saying her death is temporary.

He walks in and says these words, "*Talitha koum*" in Aramaic, which is the language Jesus spoke in, and all of the sudden, she rises up and walks around.

Jesus has power over nature, He has power over demons, He has power over disease, but ladies and gentlemen, He has power over death. It's in that picture that I want you to see, not only the presence of Christ and the peace of Christ and the healing of Christ, but I also want you to see the hope of Christ. Look at the interaction between Jesus and this guy Jairus who is desperate. While they are going there to his house, they get sidetracked. This woman is healed, but then somebody comes and says, "Sorry Jairus. Your daughter's already dead. It's too late. Don't bother the teacher anymore." When everybody else's faces go down, Jesus looks at Jairus in the eye and says, "Do not fear. Keep on believing." In other words, "Don't give up. Keep on believing."

Hope...hope that is real. It's not ignoring the despair of the situation. We know that. Jesus knew the hurt was real for this man to hear this about his daughter. It's the same picture we see over in John 11 when Lazarus dies and Martha and Mary are weeping. What does verse 35 say that Jesus did with them? He wept with them. He knows their tears. He knows your tears. He knows the pain. He knows the despair that is there. He is not unfamiliar with that.

At the same time, in the middle of real despair, He gives real hope. This is not a hope that He gives Jairus that maybe things are going to work out all right. Maybe His team will win. Maybe things will work out the way He planned. He hopes. He wishes. He desires. That's not biblical hope. Biblical hope says, "We have confidence that this will happen. Don't be afraid. You believe. Keep on believing." They walk in, and He raises His daughter to life. He says, "She's not dead. She's asleep. Her death is temporary."

I remind you that 1 Corinthians 15:51 uses the same word. "*We will not all sleep but we will*

all be changed. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord he has given us the victory over death." Here's a love that casts out fear. It's Jesus saying to all who trust in Him, "Not only are you not alone. Not only you're safe in me, and I care for you." But He says to all who trust in Him, "You will live forever." Death is temporary. "I'm the resurrection and the life," He said in John 11, "He who believes in me, even though he dies, he will live."

One of my favorite preachers from the past is D.L. Moody. Hundreds of years ago, he traveled around the United States and Europe preaching and saw tons of people come to faith in Christ. When he was a young man, he was called to preach a funeral sermon. He began to search the Gospels to find one of Jesus' funeral messages only to discover that He never preached one. He found, instead, that Jesus broke up every funeral He attended by raising the dead person back to life. When the dead heard His voice, they immediately came to life. Isn't that great? Every time Jesus tried to preach a funeral, they rose up, and the funeral was done just like that. You want Jesus to preach your funeral.

Ladies and gentlemen, even though you die, you will live through faith in Christ. If He has conquered death, He has taken the fear of death out of the picture, then what do we have to fear? What can man do to us? What can nature do to us? What can demons do to us? What can disease do to us? Death has been conquered. Therefore, we have no reason to fear no matter what this world brings us. Death hits in unexplainable, tragic ways. Many times, completely senseless ways, and God has not promised to give us explanations for how that works.

Father's Day is a very exciting day for me as I celebrate my first today. At the same time, it's still a pretty tender day. I think about my own dad, who I miss more now than the day after he passed away unexpectedly, just like that, from a heart attack. Everything was going great until that moment. I remind you that heart attacks do not have the last word; cancer does not have the last word; AIDS does not have the last word; Alzheimer's and Parkinson's do not have the last word; tsunamis and earthquakes do not have the last word; car accidents do not have the last word; tornadoes do not have the last word; hurricanes do not have the last word. The one who has all power over nature, all power over demons, all power over disease, and all power over death, He has the last word, and He says to you who trusts in Him, "You're not alone. You're safe in me. I care for you, and you will live forever. Therefore, let my love cast out all your fear." Fear is not a must. You don't need fear anymore. It is incompatible with the Christian life altogether.

Bow your heads with me. God, we praise you for the deliverance you've given us, the power you've given us in fear. God, I pray for men and women across this room that your gospel and your story and your power, these characteristics of Christ and promises from Christ, that they will be very real to men and women across this room. Let these truths ring in our hearts and our minds, and that you will bring us out from all fear. I pray for people all across this room that have never come to a point where they have trusted in you to save them from their sins. You are the one who conquered death and conquered sin and conquered the grave. I pray that that will be a reality for the first time to people all across this room this morning. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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