Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Power over Death, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 9:23-26
Code: 2266

Would you look with me at Matthew chapter 9...Matthew chapter 9...We're continuing in our examination of verses 18 through 26. Matthew 9 verses 18 through 26, and we've entitled this section, "Jesus' Power Over Death." Nothing is more wonderful...to us than to know that Christ has conquered death. The writer of Hebrews tells us that, "Jesus came to destroy him who had the power of death; and, as a result of that, to deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14 and 15.

In other words, the writer says that men live their entire lives subject to the bondage of the fear of death; but Christ has come to deliver them from that fear. Death is the specter that haunts every person's life. The longer you live, the more inevitably it looms in the future. To know that Christ has conquered that is the ultimate joy...For most of the world, they have no such knowledge...and they fear death.

I suppose in my lifetime, the man who seemed to have it most together, the man who throughout the whole specter of the world's lifestyle, world's religion...throughout all of the demonstration of popularity and media and all of those things, the man who stands out as the man, at least in my lifetime, that the world thought had it most together, was Mahatma Gandhi...Seemed to be at peace. Seemed to have absolute tranquility of soul. Seemed to know nothing of fear...

Fifteen years before Gandhi's death, he wrote this. "I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul. It fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the Bhagavad and Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount." Utterly at peace, utterly comfortable with his Hinduism. Just before his death, he wrote this. "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long, perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in 50 years, I find myself in the slew of despond." Footnote: It was interesting. He must have been reading Pilgrim's Progress. Then he said this. "All about me is darkness, and I am desperately praying for light." Even Mahatma Gandhi, who seemed to have it all together as he began to face the inevitability of death, saw it all falling apart...

People do silly things when they think about dying because of their fear. One man that I read about is a Turkish watchmaker who decided that he wanted to build himself a special grave with an eight-inch window on top...and he planned to install a pushbutton electric alarm bell inside the grave; because, if he was buried alive by mistake, he could push the button and ring the cemetery's guard room. He also planned to have an electric light bulb in there, and he instructed the people who buried him to be

sure they left the bulb on for seven days, came back; and if he was dead, they could then turn it out...

In Brazil, an architect has designed a 39-story skyscraper cemetery. There are a lot of skyscrapers in Brazil. Most of them have living people in them, but this one is gonna have bodies in it, with a capacity of 147,000 corpses. It has a heliport, so the bodies can be flown in quickly. There will be two churches and 21 chapels and comfortable beds for grieving friends. There will also be soothing and somber background music piped in 24 hours a day. This to deal with the incredible burial problem in the crowded portions of Brazil.

You know that Great Britain is the first country in the world to have more cremations than burials? They're facing the fact that there are no places left to put the bodies. In Japan, the graves are so crowded that only if you are in the imperial family can you be assured of or guaranteed a grave...Russia has the world's largest cemetery. It has one cemetery that contains 500,000 corpses. They just built a mausoleum in San Diego. In that one mausoleum, they have room for 70,000 bodies; and adjacent to it, they have a garden; and in that garden is a replica of the tomb from the garden in Jerusalem where they believe Jesus may have risen; and alongside the mausoleum will be that replica. It'll be empty, and the door is always open, so that you can be notified visually that Jesus' tomb is empty; and the message seems to be that those other tombs wherein lies one who knows Him will be emptied someday, as well.

Nonetheless, the earth is pockmarked with graves. They go down. They go up. They're everywhere. Death looms on the horizon of every individual's life. How marvelous it is to realize, then, that Jesus came to conquer death. If you're to look at John chapter 5, that, perhaps, would be as good a place as any to get a focus on this, although we could discuss many passages. Just listen to several verses from John 5.

Verse 21, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to whom He will." Verse 24, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." Verse 26, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself." In chapter 11, He says, "I am the resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." In other words, Jesus claimed to have power over death. He said, "The Father has power over death, and He's given Me power over death." He also said, "Because I live, ye, too, shall live, also."

Now, the work of the Messiah was to conquer death, to remove the fear of death, to do, as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, to take the sting out of death, to take the victory out of the grave, the Messiah would come. "Ultimately, the Messiah would bring about an eternal state...says Revelation 21:4...where there will be no more death. The Messiah would conquer death. If that's true, then anyone who claims to be the Messiah should demonstrate his power over death, right?...

Look with me at Matthew 11 verse 5. John the Baptist was concerned to know if Jesus was truly the Messiah, the Son of David, the Promised One; and so John sent a couple of his disciples to find out; and in verse 3 of Matthew 11, the disciples came and said, "'Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Are You the Messiah? Are You the Promised One? Are You the One John has been heralding?' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'You go and show John those things which you hear and see...and what are they?...the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are...what?...raised up." Messianic credentials...That's how we know He is the King.

Now, Matthew wants us to understand this, so in chapter 8 and 9, Matthew has presented the miraculous power of the Messiah. He has shown us that Jesus had power over disease in chapter 8 verses 1 to 17. He has shown us that He had power over disorders, physical, spiritual, and moral disorders, in chapter 8 verses 23 through chapter 9 verse 17. And now in chapter 9:18 down through verse 35, he shows us that He has power over death. Disease, disorder, and death. He can give sight to the blind. He can give hearing to the deaf. He can make the dumb to speak, and He can raise the dead; and therein lies the credential of the Messiah...He can do, by way of preview, what He will do in His Kingdom and throughout eternity...

Now, in our text, beginning in verse 18, we focus on His power over death -- the ultimate enemy; and there are three miracles here. The first one is the raising of a dead girl. The second one is giving sight to blind eyes, and the third, giving a voice to one who is dumb.

In some sense, they all illustrate His power over death. In one case, He gives speech to a dead voice. In another, sight to dead eyes; and then pulling it all together, not only can He raise the parts of the body from deadness, but the whole of the body from deadness as He raises this little girl from death.

Now, as we said two weeks ago when we began our study of the verses 18 to 26, we not only wanna focus on the miracle itself of the resurrection; but we wanna watch Jesus, because we will learn here how He worked with people. We not only see the factors involved in His power as God manifest, but we also see the tenderness of His working with people, and that becomes abundantly clear as we look through the passage.

Now, let's review just briefly. The pattern of Jesus in dealing with people, and this is the outline we wanna follow. First of all, Jesus was accessible. Verse 18, look how it begins. "While He spoke these things unto them." Stop right there. You remember last time that we pointed out to you that Jesus was busy in conversation with the Pharisees, the followers of John the Baptist. Everywhere He went was a mass of humanity, crowding, and circling around Him. Always in the midst of a crowd. Always surrounded by people. We see this throughout the flow of the Book of Matthew. You start back in chapter 4, for example, verse 25; and it says, "And there followed Him great multitudes of people."

And you come to chapter 8 and verse 1; and it says, "And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him." And you come to chapter 12 verse 15, "And great multitudes followed Him," and you can go all the way on to chapter 19 and just the 2nd verse there; and it says, "And great multitudes followed Him." And in chapter 20 verse 29, "Great multitude followed Him"; and in chapter 21 verse 8, "A great multitude followed Him."

In other words, His whole life was in accessibility to people. Answering questions. Meeting needs. Preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons...This is a marvelous principle, people. God is accessible. He's there. He can be found. He can be sought out. He is not the god of the pagans. He is not the god whose people cannot find Him, and the god of the Old Testament people to whom the prophet said, "Maybe he's on a vacation. Maybe he's asleep. You better yell a little louder and wake him up." Our God is not so. When Jesus Christ came into the world, and He was God incarnate, God became accessible.

Second, He was not only accessible, He was available; and we move from the crowd to the individual in verse 18. It says, "There came a certain ruler." One man out of the crowd; and down in verse 20, "And behold, a woman." Out of the mass of everything, the focus is on a man and a woman, an individual. He's not just accessible. That is, you can attend His meetings. He's available. You can confront Him individually, and you can move into His life, and He into your life. He came to individual people. He touched a leper. He went home with a centurion who had a paralyzed servant. He touched a woman with a fever, and He dealt with a demon-possessed man. He healed a paralytic; and, here, He meets a...a father who has a dying daughter, and a woman with a severe hemorrhage. I mean He's always available to the individual, and there are two things that that availability involves. One is need, and the other is faith. Where there...wherever there's deep need, wherever there's great faith, He's available.

Look at verse 18. It says, "There came a certain ruler," and the other Gospels tell us he was the ruler of the synagogue. He was the epitome of the religious establishment. He was probably the leading citizen, the most respected and honorable and religious man. He was a part of the establishment that usually was identified against Christ; and, yet, in absolute desperation, because his daughter was dead, he came to Jesus. First time as he came, the daughter was only dying; but, by the time Matthew picks up the account, the daughter's already dead; and the man is desperate. And he comes, therefore, out of deep need; but he also expresses great faith, because in verse 18, he says, "My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay Your hand on her, and she'll live." This is great faith. Great faith.

He had a deep need and great faith, and therein lies the ground necessary for the meeting of a soul with God. Notice the middle of verse 18. He worshiped Him. He worshiped. This man had the faith to be saved. Worship is one of Matthew's favorite words. It can be phony worship. It can be. In chapter 18 of Matthew's Gospel and verse 26, I think it a phony worship. Remember, Jesus was telling a story

about a man who owed so much he couldn't pay it. He came and he worshiped the master, and he said, "Ohhhhh, please forgive me. Please forgive me. Please forgive me. I'll pay it all." And the man forgave him, and then that man turned right around to a man who owed him a little, tiny bit, and threw him in prison when he wouldn't pay. Man was a phony. He was a hypocrite. In verse 26, "The servant...that man...fell down and worshiped him, saying, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I'll pay thee all.'" And that worship was phony. So worship can be faked. It can be external. It can be self-serving.

We find a selfish worship also in Matthew 20 verse 20... because there same the mother of James and John. James and John decided they wanna sit on the right and left hand in the Kingdom; and they wanted to be elevated above all the other disciples; and so they sent their mother; and she comes to Jesus; and it says, "She came worshiping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him." Now, that was a self-seeking worship. Worship can be phony or self-seeking, but it can also be real and genuine; and I believe when this man came, he came in a genuineness of heart.

If you were to look, for example, at Matthew 14 verse 33, I think you'd see a genuine worship. Jesus had walked on the water; and when He got to the boat, it says, when they were in the boat, the people who were there "worshiped Him, saying, 'Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.'" Now, there's the real stuff. True worship. You see it in 15, don't you? Chapter 15 verse 21, "Jesus departs into the borders of Tyre and Sidon; and there comes a Gentile woman and says, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter's grievously vexed with a demon.' He didn't answer her a word...He was gonna give a dramatic illustration here...And the disciples said, 'Send that woman away. She's bugging us.' And He answered and said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"

He was showing them how important it was, first of all in His ministry, before He went to the Gentiles, to go to the Jews, and to offer the Kingdom to the Jews. "But she came...persistently, verse 25...and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord help me.'" And I believe her worship is real and genuine; and, in a sense, His sort of ignoring her forces out the reality of her faith. "He answered and said to her, "Is it not right to... to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. Do I owe any obligation to you? A Gentile?' And she said, 'Truth, Lord; what do You mean by that? You're right. I don't deserve anything. I don't deserve anything.'"

Now, there's a meek spirit. "I don't deserve anything; but, Lord, even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is thy faith.'" Now, that's real worship. Not self-seeking. She knew she didn't deserve anything...but the crumbs. So worship can be phony, can be self-seeking; or it can be real; and go back now to Matthew 9; and I think what you'll see here is real worship. "He worshiped Him and said, 'If you just lay Your hand on her, she'll live.'"...He really believed that.

And back in chapter 8, remember in verse 8, the centurion said, "My servant is sick, and if You'll just say the Word, he'll be well." And Jesus said that was the greatest faith He'd ever seen in Israel. But that man only believed that Jesus could heal. This man believes that he can raise the dead. He must believe that He is, in fact, the Christ of God.

By the way, this is more faith than the disciples showed on a lot of occasions. You know that? Chapter 8, the...the waves were rocking the boat. Verse 26, "He said unto them, 'Why are you afraid, O ye of...what kind of faith?...little faith?'" And He said that to them again and again. Chapter 14 verse 31, chapter 16 verse 8, He says, "O ye of little faith. O ye of little faith." Chapter 6 verse 30, "O ye of little faith."

If the disciples believed and had little faith, and this man has this kind of faith, he must have passed the point where his faith was adequate for redemption. I believe the man really believed. He had a deep need. He was desperate, and he had a great faith...and Jesus responds to great faith. Verse 19, "He rose and followed him," and so did the disciples the other Gospels add, and so did the whole crowd. So there's a big mass bulging through the little streets as they wind their way down to this fellow's house. Jesus was accessible, and He was available. He moves away from the mass to follow this one man who had a deep need.

But, thirdly, I love this, Jesus was also touchable. He was touchable. The crowd had heard. The individual man had worshipped, and now we meet a woman who touched. Verse 20, "Behold, a woman who had been diseased with an issue of blood twelve years came behind Him and...literally...grabbed or clutched the tassel hanging from His garment." She had had an issue of blood. That was some kind of a hemorrhage, some uniquely female bleeding problem, probably caused by a fibroid tumor. Could have been carcinoma, but it's likely that if it had, she would not have lived for twelve years. The Levitical law said that when a woman has an issue of blood, when she has this kind of a problem, her clothes are unclean, the bed she's on is unclean, anything she sits on is unclean, and anything she touches is unclean. She was put out of the synagogue, out of a family, out of a marriage relationship. She had been isolated for twelve years as an unclean person. A desperate condition. Shut off from family, friends, fellowship, the synagogue, no one could touch her without being defiled; but she had heard about Jesus; and she, too, had a desperate need; and she, too, had faith; and she kept saying to herself, in verse 21, and the Greek says she kept saying it over and over, "If I can just touch His garment, I'll be well. The Man has so much power, that if I can just touch Him."

And a Jew had four little tassels hanging from an element on his robe, and they were made of blue, and they symbolized, according to Numbers 15 and Deuteronomy 22, they symbolized the identification with the law of God, and they marked a Jew as a Jew; and, as Jesus moved through the crowd, the little tassel would flap back and forth on His back; and she lunged out and grabbed

that...and held on.

Verse 22, what happened? "Jesus turned around, and He saw her, and He said, 'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee well.' The woman was made well from that hour." He responded to that. He was touchable. He was...He was sensitive and responsive...

You know...when Sir James Simpson, great saint, lay dying, a friend wished to comfort him and said to him, "Well, James, soon you will be able to rest on the bosom of Jesus." In his consummate humility, he said this, "Well, I don't know that I can quite do that; but I do think I can take hold of His garment." The woman didn't wanna be exposed in her embarrassment and shame. She just wanted to reach out and touch, but she had the faith to believe that that was all that was necessary, because there was so much power. The ruler had somewhat of an inadequate motive. He really wanted his little girl alive; and the lady had somewhat of an inadequate faith. It was a little superstitious; but Jesus took them where they were, redeemed 'em both...

Now, look for a moment. When it says at the end of verse 21 that she thought she could touch Him, and then Jesus turned around...something happened in there that Matthew doesn't record, but Luke does; and I want you to see it in Luke chapter 8. There's a lot of interplay that...that the other Gospels touch that we can't cover; but I...I want at least show you this. Verse 44 of Luke 8 says, "And when she came behind and touched the border of His garment, immediately the issue of blood stanched," or stopped, was over. She was healed instantly, and I love this. "And Jesus said, 'Who grabbed Me? Who grabbed Me?'...When everybody denied it, and Peter and they that were with Him said, 'Master, the multitude crowd Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, 'Who touched Me? You gotta be kidding. You're being shoved and pushed and jostled all the way down the street, and You're saying, 'Who touched Me?'"...

But Jesus knew the difference between the jostling of the fickle mob and the grasping of a faithful soul. "Who touched Me?" And I love this in verse 46, "Jesus said, 'Somebody has touched Me. Somebody grabbed Me, for I perceive that power is gone out of Me.'" It's an incredible statement. You know what it tells me? That Jesus was so much the channel of the will of the Father, that the Father could heal through Him before He even knew who was involved. When He said, "I came to do the will of Him that sent Me," He meant that. He felt the power go...He was touchable. So sensitive to the one who touched. He knows the difference between somebody who bangs up against Him and is curious, somebody who's a thrill seeker, and somebody who hangs on in desperation and faith. He knows the heart to connect up with. He knows the person to pull outta the crowd, and say, "You're the one."...

Lemme take you to a fourth thought. Not only was He accessible, available, and touchable, but He was impartial. He was impartial. When He turned around to get involved with this one woman, He showed that He was so impartial. He coulda said, "Look, lady, um, could...could you let go of My tassel? I'm... I'm trying to get down to the ruler's house." As somebody said, "Don't hassle my tassel."

"I'm trying to...I got...I got this...listen, if we can get this guy converted, see, this guy runs the synagogue, I mean we can have a revival in this town. I mean, please let go. I mean I gotta be on My way here. This... this is very serious."

No, you see, God has never looked for the superstars and the bright lights and the famous people. He's always been content with folks like us. The Bible says that the prophet Isaiah predicted when the Messiah would come, He would preach the Gospel to the...what?...poor. And Paul said, "Not many noble, and not many mighty, but He's chosen the base and the weak and the ignoble and the foolish things."...I mean we are a motley crew, you know that? Really.

I was reading this week a very interesting book called Fearfully and Wonderfully Madewritten by Dr. Paul Brand and Phil Yancey. It's a book you oughta read. Tremendous. In one section of it, he talks about how...the people of God are such an unlikely bunch; and he quotes from novelist Frederick Bookner, who said this. "Who could've predicted that God would choose not Esau, the honest and reliable, but Jacob, the trickster and heel? Who could have predicted that God would put his finger on Noah, who hit the bottle? Or on Moses, who was trying to beat the rap in Midian for braining a man in Egypt. And if it weren't for the honor of the thing, He'd just as soon let Aaron go back and face the music. Who could have predicted that God would choose the prophets who were a ragged lot, mad as hatters, most of 'em."

And then Paul Brand adds, "The exception seems to be the rule. The first humans God created went out and did the only thing God asked 'em not to do. The man he chose to head a new nation known as God's people tried to pawn off his wife on an unsuspecting Pharaoh; and the wife, herself, when told at the ripe old age of 91 that God was ready to deliver the son He had promised her, broke into rasping laughter in the face of God. Rahab, a harlot, became revered for her great faith; and Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, went out of his way to break every proverb he so astutely composed...

Even after Jesus, the pattern continued. The two disciples who did the most to spread the Word after His departure, John and Peter, were the two He had rebuked most often for petty squabbling and muddleheadedness. And the Apostle Paul, who wrote more books than any other Bible writer, was selected for the task while kicking up dust whirls from town to town sniffing out Christians to torture. Jesus had nerve in trusting the high-minded ideals of love and unity and fellowship to this group. No wonder cynics have looked at the church and sighed, "If that group of people is supposed to represent God, I'll quickly vote against Him." Or as Nietzsche expressed it, "His disciples will have to look more saved if I'm to believe in their Savior."

We are a motley crew, aren't we?...The ignoble and the weak and the foolish. We all have this in common: we have a sense of desperate need, and we have faith to believe. So Jesus is impartial. "God is...says the apostle...no respecter of...what? ...persons." There's neither male nor female, Jew

nor Greek, bond or free, rich or poor. All are one...

So Jesus Christ pulls everything to a halt to deal with the outcast woman; and as He deals with her, He doesn't deal with her from a distance. Watch what He says to her. Verse 22 of Matthew 9, "Daughter." Daughter? Wait a minute, that's so intimate. That's so personal. That's so familial. That's so tender. That has so much warmth, so much affection. Daughter -- that just pulls her in..."Be of good comfort; be comforted, daughter." What tenderness. What impartiality..

Then He says this. I love this. "'Your faith has made you well.' And the woman was well from that hour." Now, wait a minute. She'd already been healed. This is in addition to that. She was healed the minute she touched, but when He pulled her out, He said, "There's something else. Your healing didn't have anything to do with your faith, not really. That was a sovereign act of God." If you study the Gospels and the record of Christ, you will find multitudes upon multitudes of people who were healed, and it says nothing about whether they believed or not. Did the little girl who was raised from the dead have faith? Afraid not. How about the paralyzed servant of the centurion who was healed, did he have faith? No.

In fact, you can go through the Gospels and find many, many, many places where people were healed, and there is no indication that they particularly had faith. Healing was a sovereign act on God's part as Jesus demonstrated His deity; and healing is still a sovereign act on God's part. But in addition to the physical healing, He said, "Your faith has," and He did not use the word iahohmy which means to be made well physically. He used the word sodzo, which is the New Testament word to be saved. "'Your faith has saved you,' and she was saved from that hour." Yes, there's a sense in which she was saved from the horrors of the disease; but there is also a redemptive issue here. She was saved...There was a...more than a physical healing.

Look at Mark 10. Lemme see if I can demonstrate this to you. This, to me, is a thrilling truth. Mark 10:46, and we're gonna draw this thing together. Mark 10:46, "They came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people...as always...blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the wayside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!'" He'd identified Him by His Messianic title. "And many charged him that he should hold his peace." "Be quiet, Bartimaeus."

"But he cried the more, a great deal, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!'" This was the cry of his great faith. "And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, 'Be of good comfort; rise; He calleth thee.' And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'What will thou that I should do unto thee?' The bind man said unto Him, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Go thy way. Thy faith hath...and He uses sodzo...saved thee.' And immediately he received his sight, and he followed...whom?... Jesus on the way."

I think, in that case, the word sodzois used to indicate that, not only was the man healed, but the man also received salvation. There was a saving element. His soul. If he had that kind of faith, that was sufficient to save his soul if he believed that this was the Lord and this was the Son of David.

Look at Luke 7 verse 44, tremendous account. Thrilling, and I wanna show you this is a most important parallel. Luke 7:44, there's a woman...and it says in verse 44, "Jesus turned to the woman...and you'll get the story as we go...and said, 'Simon, Simon, do you see this woman? I entered into your house: You gave Me no water for My feet, but she washed My feet. She has washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil you did not anoint, but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I saw unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.' And He said unto her, 'Thy sins are forgiven.'"

Listen, this woman demonstrated so much love and so much worship and so much respect for Christ that it was enough to bring her redemption, and He forgave her sin. "And when they were eating that were eating with Him began to say within themselves, 'Who is this that forgiveth sins also? Who can do this?' And He said to the woman...watch this, same identical phrase used in the healings that we've read before...'Thy faith hath saved thee.'"

There is no healing here. There is only the forgiveness of sin; and that phrase, with the word sodzoin it in the Greek, is used to speak of her salvation. That's why I say we have to see that aspect when the phrase uses the word sodzo.

Luke 17, you remember the story? Ten lepers came to Jesus. "He saw them. He said, 'Go to the priest...in verse 14 of Luke 17...Go to the priests.' It came to pass that as they went, they were cleansed." Now watch. Ten came, ten were sent, ten were cleansed. That is katharidzo, katharidzo, to be washed, cleansed. "One of them when he saw that he was healed, turned around and with a loud voice glorified God, fell down on his face at His feet, the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, 'Were not there ten cleansed? Where are the nine?' There are not found that returned to give glory to God, except this stranger? Just one came back?"

What'd He say to that one? "Arise, go thy way. Thy...same phrase...thy faith hath...and He uses sodzo...saved thee." It's one thing to be katharidzo. It's something else to be sodzo, see. There is a cleansing of ten. There is a saving of one. Of one. So when the word is used for saving, it's unfortunate the English Bible doesn't make that distinction, because I believe it implies a redemptive aspect. As I said before, faith is not necessary for healing. Do you know there are people who have diseases who get well who aren't Christians?...And there are Christians who die...That is a sovereign thing...Sometimes God does honor our faith in healing; but always does He honor our faith in saving...

Well, you see, Jesus loved people. He was accessible. You can turn back to Matthew 9 now. He was a accessible. He was available. He was touchable. He was impartial...Little outcast lady was as important to Him as the ruler of the synagogue. God deliver us from playing to the expensive seats, you know? And ignoring the needy.

In the book, A Night to Remember, Walter Lord tells about the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. I think...think it was in the month of April; and when it hit The American, which is the New York paper, the headline said, "John Jacob Astor, millionaire, drowns." Other people also drowned, but that's the way it is with the world. Only the rich and the famous get the press. Not so with Christ. If you learn anything from this, will you not only learn how powerful He is, but will you learn how accessible, available, touchable, and impartial He is? That's how it is with God. That's how it should be with those who represent Him.

And I wanna close with this. Fifthly, He was powerful. He was powerful. He was powerful. We can be the first four, but it gets a little sticky here. I can sympathize with you and hold out my hand to hold onto yours; but if you're sick, I can't heal you; and if you're dead, I can't raise you. This is what sets Him apart. Verse 23, I just love this. "And Jesus came to the ruler's house." Now, the interlude has taken so long, the girl's dead. "And He came and He saw the musicians and the people making a noise." Now wait a minute, this is...this is a girl dead. What's all this racket?

You know, have you ever gone to a funeral home. Somebody's dead. I mean it's so quiet in there. Everybody walks around whispering, black suits, very quiet. You go sneaking down little halls and little rooms, little quiet caskets, little organs playing. Very quiet. Somebody drops something, you just, you know, oooohhhhh. Our...our culture is that you get real quiet. Their culture, you get really noisy. Real noisy. Racket all over the place. People making a whole buncha noise.

Now, lemme tell you what went on. Three basic things went on in a Jewish funeral. By the way, the girl's been dead long enough for the funeral to start, so they knew she was very sick, and they've already been on call ready to move in. So you have professional mourners and they came in. They were professional shriekers. They screamed and shrieked and wailed and all this. But lemme tell you the three things that were part. First of all, there was the rending of garments. You were supposed to rip your clothes. That was symbolic of your grief, and they had 39 different rules and regulations on how to rip your clothes...According to the Talmud, you had to do it while you were standing up. You had to do it over your heart or near your heart. If you were a mother and father, it had to be right over your heart. If you were not the mother or father, it could be anywhere near. And you had to rip it big enough to stick your fist through; and then you had to leave the rip for seven days; and for the next 30, you could stitch it with big stitches, but you couldn't sew it permanently, so people would know you still felt bad. And in order for women not to expose themselves in an indiscreet manner by ripping their clothes, they would rip their undergarment; and then wear it backwards. And there were 39

different things.

So here it all begins. Everybody is somewhere ripping their clothes; and, believe me, this woulda been a big funeral, because this was a very important man; and they're all in there tearing their clothes. The second thing was the wailing, and the professional women would come in and begin to wail. They would have been paid, and they would've learned the domestic history of the whole family, so they would be bringing up the names of everybody who had ever died in that family, and erupting old sorrows long ago buried. "Oh, remember Alice. Oh, remember Charlie," and would go on and on. They would bring everything up, and they would wail and shriek and scream and make all this racket. Trying to touch every tender cord they possibly could for every person who'd ever died.

The third thing were, you'll notice in verse 23, the musicians. Flute players. They had all different kinds of flutes; but they'd come in and play flutes. The Talmud says this, "The husband is bound to bury his dead wife and to make lamentations in mourning for her according to the custom of all countries; and also the very poorest among the Israelites will not allow her less than two flutes and one wailing woman." I mean even if you were in abject poverty, you had to hire one wailing woman and two flutes. Now, if you're wealthy, the Talmud said, it should be in accord with your wealth.

So here is a man who probably had a lot of means; and the place was filled with flutes; and you could imagine what a mess. Ripping and tearing, screaming and shrieking and wailing, and guys all over the place playing flutes. In fact, they did this in the Roman world, too, and they said, and Seneca wrote that, "There were so many flute players playing, and there was so much screaming at the death of Emperor Claudius that they felt that Claudius himself probably heard it, even though he was dead."...

So you can see what a funeral was like in those times. Jesus saw the musicians and the people making all this noise. Verse 24, watch. "And He said to them, 'Go away. Get out. The Prince of Peace arrives.' He says, 'Go away.'" "Why, this is proper. The Talmud requires all this. We're doing what we're supposed to do." "Go away." Reason? "The girl is not dead. She's sleeping." "What do you mean?"

Look what it says at the end of verse 24. "They laughed in His face."...What is He saying? The girl is not dead. Doesn't He know? Of course He knows she's dead. Been reported already that she's dead, and He knows He's gonna raise her from the dead. Of course He knows she's dead; but what He's saying is, "You cannot treat her death as death. You must treat it as sleep, because it is so temporary." See? That's what He's saying. "You have to treat her as if she's just asleep." And the implication is, "'Cause I'm gonna raise her from the dead," and that's why they laughed. They laughed in His face. "He's gonna wake her up."

That'll tell you a little bit about the fact that they were paid mourners, right? When their weeping turned to laughing that fast. They could cry for this child, or they could laugh at Jesus in an instant; and so they mocked Him in the face. In fact, the verb means they laughed hard. They really laughed hard, as the scornful laughter of a superior who laughs over someone who is stupid. By the way, that verb is only used in this story, and it is used in this story three times. It is the kind of scornful laughter reserved for mocking a fool. Only a fool would think He could raise her from the dead.

And they had seen other miracles, you see, this crowd in Capernaum; but they still didn't believe. Just what Jesus said, "If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe the One raised from the dead." But, anyway, "He said, 'Stop. Go away.' And they laughed in His face." Verse 25, "When the people were put forth, He got rid of 'em, He went in, took her by the hand...and the other Gospel record says..."He said to her, "Toletha pumi." Know what that means? Little girl, arise. Little girl, arise. "Took her by the hand, and the girl arose."

You know what it says? It says, "The parents...in the other Gospels...were astonished." And Jesus told 'em not to tell anybody, but they couldn't resist it, and they just put more pressure on Him as His enemies moved in closer.

Luke 8:55 has an important word to add to this. It says, "And her spirit came again." That means that she was truly dead, "and her spirit came to her again, and she arose." You know, Jesus didn't have to touch the little girl. Didn't have to reach out His hand to her. Coulda just said the word, but it is the way of God to be tender. Do you understand that? It is the way of God to be gentle. It is the way of God to be affectionate and loving. It is the way of God's people to greet one another with a holy kiss as an extension of His affection toward them.

And verse 26 says, "The fame of this went abroad into all that land." You know what they said about Him? "He has power over disease. He has power over disorders. He has power over death. He can redeem." And so Matthew reaches a pinnacle in his presentation of the power of Jesus Christ. "He is the One...says John...who holds the keys of hell and death."...Great truth.

Beloved, we have no need to fear death, none at all. The poet put it this way. I love this. "No longer must the mourners weep, nor call departed children dead. For death is transformed into sleep, and every grave becomes a bed."...As a young man, D. L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon. He decided that he would hunt the Gospels to try to find one of Christ's funeral sermons, but he searched in vain. He found that every time Christ attended a funeral, He broke it up by raising the person from the dead; and so He never gave a funeral sermon. When the dead heard His voice, they immediately sprang to life.

We should rejoice in death, because we have conquered death. He will not leave His Holy One to see corruption. He will show us the path of life. In His presence, His fullness of joy, and at His right hand

are treasures for ever more. I think Arthur Brisbane captured it for me when I look at a funeral. Arthur Brisbane wanted to demonstrate what a funeral was like, so he pictured a crowd of grieving caterpillars, all wearing black suits; and all these caterpillars are crawling along mourning; and they're carrying the corpse of a cocoon to its final resting place. The poor distressed caterpillars, weeping; and above them is fluttering around this incredibly beautiful butterfly, looking down in utter disbelief...Christ gives us hope.

Two weeks ago, when I preached the first half of this sermon, it touched somebody's heart; and they wrote me this letter. "Dear John, My family and I have had a tragic loss. My younger brother was shot and killed Thursday afternoon. He was a professional auto repossesser for the last four years, first working in the Valley, and then in Los Angeles. He had just decided to move his work back to the Valley, because he felt doing the type of work he did that Los Angeles was not a safe area. He had been working in the Valley since last week and seemed to feel much safer.

"On Thursday afternoon, he and his partner went to an address in Burbank, the city where our family has lived for the past 14 years, to repossess a car that the owner had failed to make his payments on. My brother's partner went up to the door where the owner of the vehicle lived to tell the man that his car was being repossessed unless he could make a payment on the spot. The man allegedly said, 'Take the car,' so my brother and his partner proceeded to take the vehicle when, suddenly, the man came out of his apartment with a rifle. My brother immediately told the man that there would be no problem. They wouldn't take the car. The man then fired one shot from the gun, hitting my brother in the chest and instantly killing him.

"I and my family are having a rough time dealing with this incident, even though we all know there was a reason why Jesus allowed this to happen. Your sermon today on Jesus' power over death was timely and brought great comfort to myself and my two sisters, who are both Christians; but we were attending Grace today for the first time. My brother was a wonderful, warm human being, who would help anyone, be it a stranger or a friend, in a time of need. He was one of those people that would stop to help someone who was stranded in their car, even though he might be on his way to work. Sometimes I feel like everything is okay, and that I'm at peace knowing he's with the Lord. But then there are those other times when all I can think about is my brother lying in the street, and I'd give anything to have him back. But I know that he will be back when Jesus raises the dead, and I have that joy to look forward to. I thank you and the Lord for the message today and the knowledge that my brother is at peace. In Jesus' name." It's a great hope, isn't it? It's the only thing that can sustain, to know that He has power over death. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for our time this morning, for how You've ministered to us in the Word. Meet every need in this place. For those who do not know You, maybe this be the day they open their heart to believe. For those who do, may there be a deepening of commitment. For those You're calling to join and unite with Your church, may they respond today. Be obedient...

While your heads are bowed, just in a final second, if you don't know Christ, right where you sit, just open your heart to Him. Invite Him to come in and save you and forgive your sin and...show you His mercy and salvation, give you victory over death. He'll do that.

Father, bring those that You would have to come and touch every life with the great hope that is ours, because You have the power over death. Bring us together again tonight in anticipation that You're gonna speak to us as we open up our heart to share the things that You've been doing there. Thank You for this day and this people. We give You all the glory. In Christ's name. Amen.

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