

# Blue Monday

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[0:00] I'm pleased to have a seat and a very warm welcome to you. Sorry, I've got a bit of a cold, but we'll get there, okay? Great to see you this morning. My name is Graham. I work here at the church, and it's a real joy to see you, especially if this is your first time.

Can I encourage you to get the scriptures open in front of you? There'll be Bibles in the pews round about. Maybe you can scroll down on your iPhone or whatever it is you do to get your Bible. Luke chapter 8 is where we are this morning, and verses 40 to 56, those that Paul read just a little bit earlier on.

So let's pray, and let's ask that God, by his grace, would be with us and so kind to us this morning. Let's pray. Also, dear Father, we ask that you would be with us now as we turn to your living word. Lord, we ask boldly, Father, for a fresh encounter with you this morning. Would you be with us by your Spirit? Would he help us take our minds off of ourselves?

And would he help us place them firmly on you? And in particular, would he help us place our minds and our affections on your Son, Jesus Christ? And it's boldly in his name that we ask these things. Amen.

[1:15] Amen. So I remember a few weeks back, I opened my inbox, and I got an email, and the email simply read as its title, How to Keep Smiling on the Bluest Day of the Year.

Now, I don't know if you knew this, but I had no idea what that was about, so I read it. And it turns out that January the 16th, so a few weeks ago, I don't know if you knew this, was Blue Monday. Did anybody know it was Blue Monday?

I always thought that was a new order song. But that's a day. Blue Monday is a day. And I read the email, and it said it's cold and dark. We're back to work after the Christmas holidays.

Our bank balance Christmas has left desolate. And this is the day of the year when we feel at our most miserable. And if you believe what the experts who calculate this stuff say, if you believe what the media say, then celebrity deaths, anxiety over Brexit, and fears about a new president in the Oval Office across the pond made this two weeks ago Blue Monday the bluest Monday ever on record.

Ever. And I'm sitting there reading this thing, and I'm thinking, isn't it so weird that we have created a day when we remember how rubbish sometimes the world is?

[2:35] But I'm reading this, and I'm thinking as well, does it not show what we all know to be true, that this world isn't as it is supposed to be?

Now think about it in your own life for a minute. All of us, don't we? We know Blue Mondays. And we know Tragic Tuesdays. And we know Hardship Wednesdays, and so on and so forth.

We know what it is to be broken people, all of us broken people, living our lives in a broken world. Now Luke introduces us this morning to two people who know so horribly that truth.

And they are two very different people, but they have one massive thing in common, and that is that they are suffering terribly. And they are two broken people living in a broken world.

And I think the big lesson what God would say to us through his word this morning as we encounter Jesus Christ, it's that Jesus is the promised saviour who has come to deal with the world's brokenness.

[3:42] And Luke has told us this stuff not so that we would just be informed about Jesus, but actually so that we would see him in his beauty, and that we would put our faith in Jesus.

Our faith would grow. And as our faith in him grows, our love for him grows. So let's pick up this narrative. This is a really quick narrative.

It is brilliant. Verse 40 of chapter 8, if you've got it there. Jesus and his disciples, it's all about the geography here. They've previously been in the country of the Gerasenes, and now they're back at

the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

And what's waiting for them on the shore is a massive crowd. Do you see that? A great crowd, Luke tells us. Now here's what I want you to picture this morning.

Picture this expecting crowd waiting for Jesus. Now in this expecting crowd is a journalist for the local newspaper. I'm a big fan of alliteration.

[ 4 : 40 ] We'll call it the Galilean Gazette, okay? She's in this crowd, this local journalist for the newspaper. And here she is. She's ready to get the scoop on Jesus. And phone in hand, she follows Jesus' every move, and she's live tweeting these events as she sees them happen.

She wants to keep her public as informed and as quickly as possible. And so we're going to follow her as she follows and records Jesus' every move in this section, okay? So here's her first live tweet in verse 40.

Jesus back in town. Jesus back in town. This is the great crowds. If you want to flick back to the beginning of chapter 8, we think it's the same crowds. There's crowds who had gathered to hear Jesus teach.

Now it's worth for a minute just thinking about this crowd. Why are they following Jesus? What are they doing? Why are they waiting for him? And I think the way that Luke describes it up to this point, it's more than this crowd we're just chasing the novelty of Jesus' teaching.

There was something about, as they heard him teach, there was something about what he was saying that resonated deep within their souls. There was something about his story that kind of made sense to their story.

[ 5 : 58 ] Tim Keller, he read a book of his recently. He's a preacher in America. He comments on his conversion to Christianity. And he talks about how he read the Bible, and he calls it a book that he read that began to understand him.

He was reading the Bible, but actually the Bible was reading him. Now, I just wonder, as we pass over this crowd this morning, is that where you are? As we've journeyed with Jesus over these last few months, as we've heard his teaching, is there something about him and what he's saying and what God's word is saying to us that's hitting you?

Can I say, if that's true for you, then don't just pass over what's going on here. Come and chat it out with somebody, but we'll talk it out. So here at verse 40, here's this crowd, and they're ready to welcome Jesus back to town, here back in town.

Second live update from our roving reporter, verse 41. Jairus on his knees. So look what Luke says to us there.

Enter stage left, this man Jairus. Do you see how we get his name? We get his name as if to see Luke saying as he records this, you can go to the synagogue, you can find this man called Jairus, and you can ask him about all these things.

[ 7 : 10 ] That's why he gives us his name. Here's Jairus. Who is he? Verse 41. He's the ruler of the local synagogue. He's responsible for the spiritual life of this local community, and he's an important and a well-respected religious man in this society.

He's the kind of guy, if you think about it in modern terms, he's the kind of guy who would get nominated for an MBE. He's definitely the kind of guy who you'd want as a referee on your CV. Everybody loves Jairus.

He's well-respected. But where is he as he meets Jesus in these verses? Where is he? He's on his knees. Now, why is he on his knees? Well, notice a few things that Luke tells us here about Jairus. And as we look at them together, enter into his pain. Verse 42. His daughter is sick. His daughter is sick.

Now, parents, we've all been there, haven't we? Midnight trips to the sick kids just across the road there. Your heart pounding, your mind all over the place. You can't think straight.

[ 8 : 15 ] We know it to be true, don't we? The sickness of children is a massively distressing thing. But do you notice how Jairus' daughter isn't just sick? She's dying.

She's his only daughter. And do you notice how old she is? She's 12 years old. She's got the whole of her life in front of her.

She should be out playing catch with her friends in the backyard. But what is she doing? She's sitting in the living room and she's fighting for her life. And I think we identify with that sense of pain, don't we?

As we think about what we see every day on our news, as we encounter the suffering of children, as we hear of stories of toddlers born with chronic symptoms, as we hear stories of children who are facing terminal illnesses, is there not something in all of us that resonates about life's tragic unfairness?

This isn't how it should be. This isn't how it should be. Well, here is the pain of living in a broken world, a world that we know is not how it should be, and here is that pain staring Jairus right in the face.

[ 9 : 25 ] Now, what does Jairus do? Well, see how Luke tries to convey to us his sheer desperation. He pleaded with Jesus. He, or your version might say, he implored Jesus.

We get the impression that he quite literally begged Jesus to come with him. Such was the seriousness of the situation and the pain and anxiety in his own heart. Now, what is Jesus going to do?

Well, third live update from our reporter, end of verse 42. Jesus is on his way. Jesus is on his way. Now, imagine the sense of hope that Jairus has at this point.

The only individual on the planet that he knows about who can do something about his daughter's situation is coming with him. Now, that must have filled him with massive hope at this point.

And it's worth pausing at this point in the story and thinking about Jesus as we meet him here.

Would you notice the sheer beauty of Jesus Christ as we meet him here?

[ 10 : 26 ] Now, I remember when I became a Christian in my late teens, early 20s, and I found in Christianity a world view. I found in Christianity and in the Bible things and truths that made sense.

They made sense of me. They made sense of the world that I saw, the world that I lived in. And they made sense and told me about a God who cared and had done something about it. But far from being just a set of propositional truths at the very center of the Christian faith, I met a beautiful Christ.

A beautiful Christ, an incomparable Jesus. That's what we see as we meet him here. A Christ, as John Owen famously said, a Christ who is fully fit to be our Savior.

One who is full of compassion and full of power. I just wonder if some of us this morning, we need to either capture for the first time, and that would be great.

Capture or recapture the sense of Christ's beauty. He is simply a beautiful Christ as we meet him here. Look at him as we meet him here. He gets involved in Jairus' pain.

[ 11 : 37 ] He moves towards Jairus' suffering. I mean, think about it if you take a step back for a minute. The Jesus that Luke has presented to us up until this point. Here is God in the flesh.

Here he is, come down. Here is God in the beginning, come down. The creator and sustainer of all things, come down, stepping into our brokenness. And here he is reaching out to people, broken people, in their pain and in their brokenness.

Now that is the kind of Savior that we need. That is the kind of Savior that we need. Jesus Christ is not just an unsympathetic and distant individual. He's not. Here is a Savior who has power to change things and has the willingness and the compassion to make it happen.

Jesus cares deeply about this man Jairus as he meets him here. And because Jesus cares, Jesus goes with him. But as he goes forth, live update from our reporter, end of verse 42, what happens? The crowds crush in. Jesus is on his way and he is swarmed by these people on every side, desperate to get to him. And emerging from this crowd, fighting her way.

[ 12 : 51 ] I think she's a great little example of what it means to persevere. You can imagine her elbows and things. Here she is, this woman fighting her way towards Jesus. And Luke introduces us to us.

And like Jairus, she's desperate as well. Now look what Luke tells us about her. Verse 43. If you have it there. He tells us about her condition.

Remember Luke, doctor himself. He's into these things. He tells us about her condition. She suffers badly from discharge of blood. She suffers badly from hemorrhages.

That's what it means. In this culture and under this ceremonial law, she is deemed and declared unclean. She's considered a contaminating threat to all of society.

If she, unclean, comes in contact with you and touches you, you're unclean too. And because of that, I think she's treated as an outcast in this society.

[ 13 : 49 ] Notice the second thing that Luke tells us about her. To add to that pain, the duration of her condition. Do you notice it there? How long she's been suffering? Twelve years.

Now that's a long time to suffer. Now just think about what you were doing twelve years ago. I'll do the maths for you. 2004. 2004, what were you doing?

Well, I looked it up this week. Lance Armstrong just won his sixth consecutive Tour de France. Tony Blair was at number ten. And the Spice Girls breaking up was still raw in the memory of many. Do you see how twelve years is a long time? A lot can change in twelve years. But we need to understand that nothing has changed for this woman in twelve years. Nothing has changed for you. She's been an outcast for twelve years. Twelve years of rejection, of shame, and exclusion. And to add to that, do you notice how Luke tells us about the hopelessness of her condition?

[14:50] She spent a considerable sum of money, all of her living in fact, in trying to stop her bleeding. And she's had no success. She is the patient who puzzles doctors, puzzles doctors, bamboozles them at the Galilean Royal Infirmary.

She is the person who no medical insurance company will go near because she is the incurable patient. And the truth is, in her heart of hearts, she's resigned herself to her living the rest of her life in exclusion, in isolation, and rejection.

But here's Jesus. She's got to get to him. She's got to get to him. She fights her way to the front and she touches Jesus' garment.

And the fifth live update from a reporter, end of verse 47. Unclean woman made well. So this woman steps forward and with fear and trembling, she tells her quite incredible story to the watching and listening crowd of how one touch of Jesus' garment, one touch, and the source of twelve years' worth of frustration, of hurt and pain is gone in an instant.

And feel the drama of this moment. The crowd, they see this going on, they hear her testimony, they look at Jesus. And what will he do?

[16:16] Will he lambast her publicly for touching his garment? How dare you? Will he rebuke her for touching him and making him unclean? Well, again, would you notice the sheer beauty of Jesus as we see him react in this moment?

He takes an interest in this moment. No one is simply just a face in the crowd for Jesus. No one is an awkward inconvenience for him.

I think there's massive application for us that would want to follow him, isn't there? If you think about your week, the people that you're going to come in contact with, how are you going to react to them? I think he sets us a marvelous example of how we treat with people, especially those who we think, actually, we couldn't really be bothered with this right now.

Jesus cares. Big lesson for us there, I think. We may well have expected words of judgment from Jesus' lips, but instead, you see how we get words of grace.

What does he say? He says, daughter, your faith has made you well. In fact, if you're on the ball, it's the exact same words as Jesus said to the sinful woman, if you want to look at it there, back at chapter 7 and verse 50.

[17:34] Exact same words. And so I think we can understand that Jesus is telling her that she's been more than just physically healed.

Actually, Jesus is telling her because of her faith in him, she has been forgiven of her sin completely. Now, how does that work?

There's a slight tension here. As an unclean woman touches a clean man, he should be unclean. Her uncleanness should be transmitted to him.

And yet, instead, what do we see? His cleanness transferred to her. And there's a wonderful picture of the gospel there, isn't there? This isn't a cheap swap.

Actually, this is pointing to a costly substitution. As Jesus would, later on in this gospel, as he would set his face to the cross, as he would go there and die and be treated as one who is unclean and cursed, and take our uncleanness upon himself and give us his righteousness, his cleanness.

[18:45] That's what Martin Luther called the great exchange. And what does that mean? Well, look what he says to the woman. That she is now at peace with God.

You see, forgiveness from sin, dealing with sin, is right at the heart of the salvation mission that Jesus has come on. Now, think about it in life.

Life is full of sweet words, isn't it? I love you. The tests were negative. Would you like the job? Life is full of sweet words.

But here are the sweetest words that any human being could ever hear from the lips of Jesus. Go in peace. A reconciled relationship with the God who created you.

And everlasting life in him. Unclean woman made well. And as Luke tells this story, the camera is firmly on this woman at this point.

[ 19 : 50 ] And all of a sudden we remember that there's another guy in the background. He also is suffering terribly at this point. Camera swings back to Jairus. She's been there this whole time.

He's watched this whole thing unfold. He's listened to the woman's testimony. He's listened to her words of praise. He's heard the crowd gasp. He's seen the woman dance for joy.

And naturally he's thrilled for her. But, but, but, my daughter is dying. And as he sees Jesus being sidelined by all these different people, he's so aware that time is rapidly running out of sight for his little girl.

And Jesus is getting more and more distracted. His daughter's best shot at life slipping right through his fingers. In fact, it gets really bad.

Sixth update from our live reporter, verse 49. Devastating news for Jairus. His little girl's condition has become absolutely terminal.

[ 20 : 50 ] The way the Greek verb there is, the way it's written there, it almost sharpens the irreversibility and finality of this news. She is dead. She's dead.

And yet, Jesus, would you see what he says here to Jairus? He has the audacity to tell him that all will be well. And Jesus calls him to have faith in him.

I remember well when I first started to date my wife. She, I was living in Edinburgh at the time. She was living in Dorchester, which is in the sunny south coast of England.

And I used to fly down to see her. And I remember one of the first times I ever went down to see her, her and her friends decided that they were going cliff climbing. Now, they asked me if I wanted to come.

I'd never been cliff climbing in my life. I hate heights. But, in my mind, I needed to impress this girl. And if you want to capture the princess, you need to slay the dragon.

[ 21 : 52 ] So, I'm there. And it comes to my shock climbing this cliff. And with all the adrenaline pumping and with an awful lot of male pride, I somehow, somehow managed to scale this cliff and get to the top.

And I'm so chuffed with myself. And then it suddenly dawns on me, I have got no idea how I'm getting down. No idea how I'm getting down.

I don't know why I didn't think of that at the bottom. But I've got no idea how I'm getting down. And the guy at the bottom shouts up to me, the guy that's holding the ropes, all you need to do is lean back and just walk your way down.

As casually as that. That's all you need to do. And he said, I've got you. My life literally on his word. Literally on his word. And that is what the Bible is saying here about what real biblical Christian faith is. It is placing the whole weight of your life on the word of a person.

[ 22 : 50 ] And Jesus is calling Jairus here to an all out trust in him. To lean the whole weight of his life on Jesus' words.

He's saying, Jairus, I know it doesn't make sense to you. But trust me, I've got this one. And isn't it interesting in passing that Jesus allows Jairus to be in that place of utter hopelessness?

To experience probably the lowest point in his life. Why? Surely it's to teach Jairus something about who Jesus is. Now was there an element of doubt in Jairus' mind?

There must have been. Was he tempted to walk away bitter and disappointed? Surely he must have been. But while everyone else around him is laughing, Jairus trusts Jesus' words.

And what an example of faith this man is. And Jairus goes with Jesus back to his house. And it's a great bit of the narrative here.

[ 23 : 56 ] Jairus and Jesus reach the house. They enter it with James, Peter, and John. And picture the scene as they get there. They hear the wailing outside. They see the tears of sadness.

They are surrounded on every side with mourning. And Jesus then proceeds to pronounce his take on the status of this little girl. And that takes us to the seventh live update from our reporter, verse 52.

Jesus is having a laugh. Jesus' assessment is that this little girl is not dead, but asleep. Now think about his words there for a minute.

Because you've really got two ways of that going down, isn't there? Two ways of looking at it.

Firstly, that that is massively inhumane and insensitive. I mean, has Jesus just made an awkward joke that sometimes we make in nervous situations?

Has he massively misjudged this situation? And actually, he just needs to get out of there. Or, or, does he know exactly what he's talking about?

[ 25 : 03 ] There's an interesting choice of phrase there, isn't it? Asleep. Now we sometimes, in our culture, we use it, don't we, to talk about people who have died. We talk about them being asleep. But here, Jesus isn't using it as a nicety.

Actually, it's very deliberate language. Now, you don't need to look it up now, but maybe look it up later. Jesus is referring to the words of the prophet Daniel, who had many years previously spoken about resurrection life being given on the final day to God's people who were asleep.

So what is Jesus speaking about here? He's speaking about resurrection life. He's speaking about how death is under his authority. And he's speaking about how life is a power that is his alone to give.

And so he takes the girl by the hands. And the eighth and final live update from our reporter. Dead girl lives.

Dead girl lives. And she gets up. Notice how he tells it. Luke tells it here. She gets up and she's given something to eat. A funny little comment.

[ 26 : 12 ] But surely it's to show us that this wasn't an optical illusion. This actually happened. She was hungry and he said, give her something to eat. No David Blaine on the scene here. She was hungry.

She needed something to eat. There's a reality about it. And think about what's going on here. Here is the creator of the world. And as it was in the beginning, here he is speaking his words and giving life.

Unclean woman made well. Dead girl lives. Jesus is the promised saviour who has come to deal with the world's brokenness.

And the thing for us to see is that none of this has come from left field. It's exactly what God had promised he would do. This section is, well the whole book really, but this section is full of Isaiah imagery.

The prophet Isaiah, God speaking through him to that generation of his people, calling them to trust him despite their suffering. The song that we sang at the start, Mighty to Save, that's what God is saying about himself to his people.

[ 27 : 19 ] And God is saying that he will send a rescuer. He will send a king who will come and put everything right again. And he will come and renew the entire world. And that king will bring about restoration.

And he will bring wholeness. And he will bring cleanness. And he will bring forgiveness. And this king's reign will mean the end of all fear, of all death, of all sickness.

And here is that promised king. And here he is bringing his kingdom. And here is a foretaste of what it will look like. You can think of it a little bit like a new housing estate.

There's tons of them going up around Edinburgh just now. But I don't know if you've ever been to see a house at a new housing estate. And you go to this estate and all you can see in front of you is rubble, is concrete, is mud, is mess, is slabs, is debris.

It's like a bombsite going on in front of you. But in the middle of all of this is the show house. And what are you invited to do? You're invited to come and see the show house.

[ 28 : 29 ] And the show house is perfect in every way, isn't it? Perfect in every way. Curtains, beautiful granite tabletops. It's a beautiful show house. And the guy who's trying to sell you this plot of land where your house is going to be, he says, I know you can't see it now.

I know you can't see it now. But trust me, this is what it will look like. Here is what it is like here.

Here is a preview of the kingdom that one day Jesus will bring in its fullness.

A kingdom where pain will be a distant memory. A kingdom where sin no longer dogs, God's people. A kingdom where death and disease are banished forever.

And so here are two very different people. One religious flying leader. Flying religious leader, not a, you know.

And the other, an unclean outsider. But both of them, do you notice two very different people, the same reaction. And you'll notice it there in the text. How did they respond to Jesus? They fell at his feet in awe and trembling.

[ 29 : 38 ] Because they put their faith in him, they both join the same family of faith. And as we read this today, Luke is calling for his readers to have exactly the same reaction as these two people

have.

To fall at his feet and to embrace Jesus Christ as your savior. To trust him and to follow him. He is the one who has all power and all authority to be the savior that we need.

But not only is he able to be the savior that we need. Do you see here, he is willing to be that savior. Jesus really is the promised savior come to deal with the world's brokenness.

And as we close, you know, I was thinking of Jairus and this woman this week. I was thinking about this text. I was trying to imagine how they would have felt the day after this.

So picture the scene in their houses, wherever they live. They have a good night's sleep. They wake up and they think to themselves, did we dream of that? Jairus, he goes through to check on his daughter.

[ 30 : 43 ] She's there. It really happened. The unclean woman, whatever she does, she thinks things have changed for me. And so they get dressed and they go out of the house. My question of this text to me, to you.

Do you think life was the same for them? Do you think they went about their business, their day, just exactly the same as they did the day before? Do you see how an encounter with Jesus has flipped, completely flipped how they view the world and they view themselves?

And this is where it really hit home for me this week. My life as a Christian, my life as a Christian, it's not defined by Blue Monday. It's not defined by Blue Monday.

Of course, as we were singing earlier, the storms of life, they hit me. Hardships come my way. My emotions, they go up and down all the time.

My sin, I still struggle with it all the time. But my life is not defined by Blue Monday. My life is defined by Easter Sunday.

[ 31 : 45 ] It's actually defined by the one who has the word of life. And it's held by the one who has the word of life.

And it means whatever comes my way today, tomorrow, this week, this year, it means that I can trust Jesus Christ. And I want to live for him because he has forgiven my sin.

He has dealt with my biggest problem. He has ushered me into this living relationship with the God who created me. And I can call him Father. He has given me fullness of joy.

And I celebrate the fact that my Lord has conquered the grave. And so the question I want to leave you with this morning is, what defines you? What defines you?

You know, maybe you're not a Christian here this morning. And actually this passage has, even in your head now as you're mulling it over, has asked you to ask some serious questions about the way that you understand the world and that he understands you.

[ 32 : 48 ] If that's where you are this morning, then come and grab me or come and grab Paul or anyone else sitting around you and we'll chat it out. But if you are a Christian here this morning, let me ask you, as I ask myself from this passage this week, does Christ define me?

Does he define me? Here is, says Luke, here is your beautiful Savior. Here he is. Here is Jesus full of love and compassion.

Here is Jesus full of authority and power. Here is Jesus giving life. And here is Jesus mighty and willing to save.

We'll finish with this Charles Spurgeon quote. He was a famous Baptist preacher down in England many years ago. He wrote this, We serve no inanimate, imaginary or dying God.

We serve our God who has immortality. So then, like loyal subjects, let us cry to him, Long live the King of Kings.

[ 33 : 55 ] Amen. Let's pray together. Oh, our dear Father, in the stillness now, we bring you our thoughts and we bring you our prayers, knowing that you know where we are before you.

And we do thank you for our time together this morning. And we pray that we would be people who treasure the Lord Jesus Christ.

We would be people who are captivated by his sheer beauty. And that we would be people who are defined by having him as our Savior. So, Lord, we ask that you would help us this week to live as people who have our identity in him, by your Spirit.

And we pray these things in his name. Amen.