

Find the Power You're Looking For

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Preacher: Craig Campbell

[0:00] A very good morning, everybody. My name is Craig and I work for the church as a pastor in training. I want to add my welcome to all the other welcomes that you've heard this morning already.

! It's really great to be together. So, as Bogdan was saying already, this month we are having this special focus on sharing the good news of Jesus with people around the world that don't know him already.

And so, over the course of March, we're doing these special messages from the Word. And so, our topic this morning is find the power that you're looking for.

So, we're going to be thinking about power this morning. And we know that in our world, we have big problems with power.

Men and women are looking for power. Many people step on other people to get it. And many people suffer when power is abused.

[1:03] The first problem that we have with power is that it is abused. When we think about power, I wonder what comes to mind when you think about power.

I don't think of chess pieces, but that was just a cool picture I found online. But when we think about power, we often think about the big people in our world. The kings and the queens, the presidents, the CEOs of the big companies.

But in actual fact, across all layers of society, we have people using their relative positions of power to trod on other people to benefit themselves.

I think we can probably imagine how that happens. Nearly every day on our news channels, we see examples of people abusing their power for selfish gains.

People abuse other people who are under their care. World leaders throw their weight around like children in the playground. And people in the workplace devote as much time to one-upmanship as they do to their work.

[2:13] And people do this without a care for the consequences and without any feelings of compassion for those that are suffering under their actions.

There's a fellow called Lord Acton. You'll probably recognize his quote rather than his portrait. But this is Lord Acton. And he famously wrote that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Great men are almost always bad men. And I think Lord Acton was right. When sinful hearts are empowered, they suddenly have a greater ability to follow their sinful heart's desires.

And the fallout to following these desires is often much uglier. When kids fight at primary school, there are often tears.

But when kings fight, primary schools get wiped out. And because we've seen so many terrible examples in our lives, on the news, day to day, we actually become quite suspicious of all powerful people.

[3:26] We are skeptical and we often assume the worst in people who enjoy power and status and success. We actually need better examples of power to follow.

The second problem we have with power is that it is fleeting. Power has a time limit. It is limited by death.

Even the greatest men and women in our world won't be powerful forever. They will die. This is perhaps a mercy when we think about the tyrants in our world, but the good kings die too.

Does anybody know how old President Trump is? I want a bit of audience participation. He's 79. He's 79. And in June, he's going to turn 80.

He's going to have his 80th birthday. He's the most powerful man in the world. And he's turning 80 this year. And he doesn't have an answer to death either.

[4:33] In 20 years, he'll be gone. And there's nothing that he can do about it. So power is fleeting. Now, the question, I've said it already, but the question that we're asking ourselves this morning is, can we find the power that we're looking for?

Now, we're not asking, where can we find power for ourselves? Rather, to rephrase the question slightly, it's, how can we find a power which is truly good?

Can truly powerful people also be compassionate and selfless without a sniff of corruption? Can absolute power be wielded lovingly to lift up weak and helpless people?

That's the question that we're asking this morning. So in Luke chapter 8, which Aaron read for us, it'd be good to keep it open in front of you because we're going to track through the story that we've read.

And in Luke chapter 8, we meet a man who not only wields incredible life-changing power, but a man who doesn't use it for his own gain.

[5:48] So this is a different kind of power to what we see in the world around us. Jesus sees and he comprehends human suffering and uses his power to lift up weak and hopeless people.

And not only that, unlike the great men and women of our world, Jesus claims to have the answer to death. His power is absolute, but it is power which is eternal and outlasts death.

And Jesus invites us this morning to have faith that he is the ultimate answer to our suffering, to our shame, to our separation from God.

And only he can give us the hope of life beyond death. So this is a story sandwiched inside another story. And it is about a man called Jairus and about a woman who has suffered for many years.

And we're going to examine this story in three parts. So we're going to first look at how Jesus sees and cares about human suffering. Then we're going to see how one person's faith is commended and see another person invited to have faith in Jesus.

[7:06] So our first point, Jesus sees and cares about human suffering. So look again at the verses. So verse 40, we see that Jesus enters a town and he is met with a huge crowd who are waiting for him and anticipating his next move.

And as Jesus walks through these streets, it tells us that he's nearly crushed by the crowd. There are so many people here who've come to see this man. It is exceedingly busy.

And it is here in this town that he meets a man called Jairus who has no answers to death. Jairus is a successful and important man.

He is the leader of the local synagogue. But his world is utterly falling apart because his daughter is so sick and she is close to death.

Despite the masses of people who've come out to meet Jesus, Jairus manages to get to Jesus and he falls down at Jesus' feet, pleading with Jesus, come to my house and save my daughter before she dies.

[8:24] Jairus' daughter is young. She's only 12 years old. And she is his and his wife's only child. Now, I'm not a father just yet, but Josie and I already feel so much love for our unborn baby boy.

So I can somehow relate to what this man is feeling. But even if you're not a parent, I'm sure you can understand the gut-wrenching distress that this man is experiencing because he is so close to losing his daughter, his pride and joy, the love of his life.

And Jairus is totally out of answers. He has no answer to his daughter's sickness and there's nothing he can do to prevent her from dying. But he has heard that this man Jesus is coming to town and he's heard that he can heal the sick.

Maybe Jesus can help. Now, the British have been famous for their stiff upper lip attitude in times of war and in hardship or in times of pain.

And even from a young age, British people would learn to grin and bear it, bury your emotions, remain calm, or as the phrase goes, keep calm and carry on.

[9:53] Respond unflinchingly to adversity. And as admirable as that attitude is, it can only get you so far.

It can give you the tools to cope with suffering, but it doesn't explain why the suffering is happening and it certainly cannot save your children from dying.

Jairus pleads with Jesus to come to his house and Jesus agrees. But as they make their way through the melee, we are introduced to a woman who has no answer to suffering or shame or separation.

The very fact that this woman isn't named in this passage speaks into her situation. She has suffered with a terrible, persistent bleeding for 12 years, the same length of time as Jairus' daughter has lived for.

And the stigma and the shame of this type of suffering has left her as this unnamed outcast. Her condition has caused her constant physical suffering and has brought her shame in the community and it has separated her from public worship at the temple because of her constant ceremonial uncleanness.

[11:25] Temple worship at that time was central to the lives of the Jewish people. It reminded the Jewish people that they were God's chosen people and it gave their lives meaning and a rhythm.

For this woman to be separated from public worship at the temple, it must have seriously rocked her and caused her to question her identity as a daughter of God.

So we're going to see what happens next then. The next part of the story. Look at verse 44. Verse 44 tells us what happens next.

She came up behind him and she touched the edge of his cloak and immediately her bleeding stopped. Jesus' power immediately and miraculously healed her.

Imagine the sudden relief that she felt. This condition had been ruining her life. for 12 years but now it's gone.

[12:31] Now she can slip away without anybody noticing and get on with her life restored and happy. Not so fast.

Jesus stops in the middle of this moving mass. He's been carried along by the crowds but he stops and he says who touched me? Everyone around him says not me.

And even Peter asks what do you mean? Who touched you? Everyone is pressing around you bumping into you. This crowd is nearly crushing you.

It's like a busy bus. I don't know if you've been on the bus. Sometimes I take the 24 home and if I time it wrong all the James Gillespie kids all pile on as well and it's a nightmare.

You're holding on to one of the little handles and you're getting thrown around and everyone's around you. Or maybe it's like being on the London Underground. I don't know if you've ever been in the Underground during rush hour and everyone's crushing into you cramming into you shoulder to shoulder and you're trying not to look into strangers' eyes if you bump into them.

[13:43] It's a little bit similar but Jesus is insistent. Somebody touched me. I know that power has gone out from me. What an interesting thing to say.

Jesus knows that someone very deliberately touched him and had been affected by his divine power. I want to know who it was, he says.

Own up. Who touched me? It's important to ask what's all the fuss about? Why is Jesus so insistent?

Why is he making such a big deal of this? Why did he need to know? And why does he need to know right now? Wasn't he in a hurry to get to Jairus' daughter? Let's remind ourselves that Luke's Gospel is full of eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life and they've been written so that we might have certainty about who Jesus is and what he came to do on earth.

So this event with Jairus and the woman it's playing out in the presence of hundreds of eyewitnesses. Perhaps what Jesus had to say to this woman was important enough that he wanted everyone to hear it.

[15:03] Verse 47 tells us that the woman had nowhere to hide. If that was me I'd be petrified. Oh no I've really done it now.

I've stepped out of line by reaching out and touching Jesus. I should have waited my turn and asked him to heal me. But we're told that just like Jairus the woman falls at Jesus' feet trembling before

him and she explains to Jesus and to all the crowd what she had done why she had done it and how she had been healed.

But see the way that Jesus speaks to her. He does not scold her or humiliate her in public for getting it wrong. Quite the opposite.

Jesus speaks to her lovingly full of compassion. He says daughter your faith has healed you. Go in peace. this is beautiful.

He calls her daughter. He's effectively saying you might have felt separated from me and questioned your identity as a daughter of God but I am God and I call you my child my daughter.

[16:25] but Jesus also commends her for her faith. Many people were bumping into Jesus. Many people were seeking his healing but her faith is the reason that she has been made well.

She didn't she didn't actually touch Jesus. She merely brushed his clothing but she meant it and she did it with a heart full of faith fully believing that Jesus had the power to heal her.

Jesus is saying I understand why you didn't want to make a big scene and draw attention to your condition but I want to make a big scene of your faith because you had faith in me you can go in peace lovingly treasured by your father in heaven who calls you daughter your suffering is over I have taken your shame away and now you can draw near to God because I've taken away that uncleanness that separated you from him.

I wonder if we can identify with the woman in any way. Perhaps you have suffered significantly and silently with some physical or mental condition or burden.

Maybe you're feeling overwhelmed with shame for things you've done or you feel ashamed or looked down on because of your particular situation.

[18:01] Perhaps you're suffering an identity crisis. The things that should have given you meaning are out of grasp or you've realized that the things that you have relied upon to give your life purpose they're empty and they failed you.

Jesus looks on us with that same compassion and he wishes to teach us the same thing. Only he has the power to deal with our sickness our shame and our separation from God and what we need is not a brush with his robe or a visit to a shrine or touching a holy relic.

What we need is faith in our heart that only Jesus can save us. Jesus' death on the cross is the answer to these things.

The Bible tells us that there is eternal healing and restoration in Jesus for those who have faith in him. And those that acknowledge that the greatest problem is not chronic suffering but chronic sin. he has taken our guilt and our shame on the cross. He's suffered for the wrong things that we have done and he's healed the rift that separates us from God.

[19:29] And he gives our lives true meaning when we choose to follow him. The difference for us is that he doesn't promise us physical healing healing in this life although we do believe that he has the power to miraculously heal if he chooses to.

However, Jesus has promised that today he can take your shame and your uncleanness if like the woman you have faith in him. We're going to talk a little bit more about that in just a minute but we've forgotten about Jairus.

He's standing there. Come on. Hurry up. Come on. So let's look at verse 49. The next part of the story that tells us while Jesus was still speaking someone came from the house of Jairus the synagogue leader.

Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore. At this moment the bottom drops out of Jairus' world.

It's too late. His daughter is dead. The news that he was dreading to hear. But before Jairus has the opportunity to be swallowed up by grief and shock Jesus gently invites Jairus to have faith in him.

[21:01] Don't be afraid. Just believe and she will be healed. I know you are suffering but don't worry. Even now it's not too late.

Believe in me. Believe that I have the power to save your daughter. When they arrive at the house the air is thick with grief.

People are wailing and mourning but Jesus tells the mourners to quieten down. And he says she is not dead but asleep.

How can he say that? The servants have made it abundantly clear that this girl is dead. Is Jesus making a mockery of Jairus' situation?

Is he euphemizing her death like we often do when we say Deirdre has passed away or Gerald has gone to a better place? No, I don't think so.

[22:02] I don't think he's euphemizing. Jesus has a true grasp of her situation. The girl is dead, yes, but this is not the end of her story. She won't stay dead.

Now, the mourners, they respond negatively to Jesus. They laugh at Jesus. They know she's dead but they don't believe that Jesus has the power to bring her back.

but taking the girl's parents and his inner circle inside the house, Jesus goes to where the girl is lying and Jesus takes her hand and he says, my child, get up.

Again, his words are beautiful and they are gentle but they're filled with power. Hand in hand, he causes her spirit to return and raises her to life again.

And at once, immediately, she stood up and her parents were astonished. She's alive and her family is restored once more.

[23:07] Now, we are supposed to stop and marvel at these moments like this in the Bible. In case you haven't noticed, this isn't normal.

Jesus has the power which exceeds any power that we see in our world. He can do things that nobody else can do. He's not a marvel superhero.

He's the son of God who has absolute power, even over death. And he lovingly wields his power to lift up the weak and the helpless and point them to his heavenly father.

But just as we saw with the woman, Jesus is seeking to teach Jairus something here. And Luke, the doctor turned gospel writer, has recorded the eyewitness account so that we can learn the same lesson.

But what does Jesus want Jairus and us to know from this story? That he is the only answer to death. Unlike the great men and women in our world, only Jesus has the answer to our final enemy, the grave.

[24:18] Jesus promised to raise the girl from the dead. He says that to Jairus, believe and she'll be healed. And he invited Jairus to have faith beforehand that he had the power to do it.

Jesus extends that same invite to us too. Do you believe that I have power over death? Let's be real.

We will die too. that's the way all of our lives go. But this miracle shows us that death is not the end of the story.

This story points to a future reality where Jesus will resurrect everyone who has ever died.

Everybody that's ever died is going to be resurrected.

resurrected. For those that have faith in him, he has promised he will resurrect to that new life that we were talking about a minute ago where there's no more suffering or shame.

[25:24] But on the other hand, those who reject and mock and laugh at Jesus' offer of salvation and forgiveness will be resurrected to a courtroom and sentenced to eternal punishment.

punishment. We've got to be real here. This is what the Bible tells us. But how can Jesus promise us this new life?

How does he have that power over death? Because in this story, he was soon to endure death himself when he was crucified on the cross for the sins of the world.

But then he conquered death and he broke its power when he was raised from the dead. That's what the resurrection is all about. And the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Jesus' resurrection is described as the first fruit of the harvest. A sign.

[26:33] His resurrection is a sign that guarantees that a harvest is coming. His resurrection guarantees that those who have faith in Jesus, like the woman, like Jairus, will rise like Jesus did to new life.

We will all certainly die. We feel the crushing pain and the hammer blow of death. Death is brutal, death.

But Jesus loves us and he has the power to save us, to lift us up from our brokenness, to give us meaning in our suffering, to give us certainty of a life beyond death, when Jesus in his power will raise us from the dead to be with him if we choose to anchor our lives upon him.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for this morning. We thank you for church.

Thank you that we can come and hear more from your words. Thank you that you've preserved your message of the gospel, of the life of Jesus for us, not so that we can just enjoy a story, but to see that he is the one who has come to the world, the world that he created, to seek and save the lost.

[28:03] Thank you for his incredible power, that he yielded not to serve himself, but to lift up the broken and the weary and the burdened, and those who are suffering with shame and separation and the stigma, and who have acknowledged that their sin is the greatest problem that they have.

Lord, would you help each one of us to see and to understand and to believe that without him our sin separates us from you, but we thank you that Jesus has come to suffer for us and to take our shame and to heal that rift that we have, that separation that we have from you.

Thank you that it is possible now to know you and to be called sons and daughters of yours because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us. Thank you for his power over death and that we can believe and trust that we too will be raised like he was with glorious new bodies to spend eternity with him face to face if we will trust in him and give him our lives today.

So we ask all this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.