



# The Authority of Jesus Christ - Over Death

## Matthew 9:18-26

### 1. A Desperate Man (verses 18-19)

### 2. A Desperate Woman (verses 20-21)

### 3. The Healing Authority of Jesus (verses 22-26)

As we enter into our exposition this morning, I want to again remind you of the unique place of chapters 8 and 9 in Matthew's gospel. In Matthew's account of the life of Christ, we are told of a total of 16 specific examples of people whom Jesus healed. Of these 16 healings, eleven of them occur here in chapters 8 and 9. We know that Jesus healed more than 16 people, for there are several verses in Matthew that tell us that Jesus "was going about in all the cities and the villages ... healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (Matt. 8:35). The instances that Matthew records for us are examples of Jesus' wonder-working power. We have already seen Jesus heal a wide variety of diseases. For example, in Matthew 8:1-4, we saw an unclean and isolated leper be cleansed of his leprosy. Then, in Matthew 8:5-13, we saw a servant boy, who was paralyzed and in great pain be healed of his disease. Next we read in Matthew 8:14-15 that Peter's mother-in-law was healed of her fever. Matthew 8:28-34 describes two wild, demon-possessed men who were healed of their demon-possession. And finally, in Matthew 9:1-8, we saw a man who had been a paralytic for years get up and walk.

This morning, we will see once again the healing power and authority of Jesus. Over these weeks we have studied these miracles, I have consistently named my sermon titles with respect to how the passage demonstrated Christ's authority. My first sermon on Matthew chapter 8 was titled, "The Authority of Jesus Christ Over Disease" (Matthew 8:1-17). Next, I preached on "The Authority of Jesus Christ over Demons" (Matthew 8:28-34). I began chapter nine with "The Authority of Jesus Christ over Sin" (Matthew 9:1-8). Today, I have similarly entitled my sermon "The Authority of Jesus Christ over Death" (Matthew 9:18-26). I have titled these sermons in this manner because I believe the titles reflect Matthew's point.

Let us read the text before us this morning:

Matthew 9:18-26

While He was saying these things to them, behold, there came a synagogue official, and bowed down before Him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus rose and began to follow him, and so did His disciples. And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I shall get well." But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." And at once the woman was made well. And when Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players, and the crowd in noisy disorder, He began to say, "Depart; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him. But when the crowd had been put out, He entered and took her by the hand; and the girl arose. And this news went out into all that land.

In this passage, we encounter two people who have reached a point of despair. They are desperate. They have looked to many people for help, but have found no help. Their options have run out. We glean from Matthew's description of these people that they are in crisis mode. And then we find them turning to the only person who can truly help. I trust that you know who that is; it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus wondrously rescues them and saves them from their peril. There is something very good about the trials and difficulties of our lives; they draw us to depend upon the Lord, and not upon ourselves. James tells us that we ought to consider our trials as "nothing but joy," because of the fruit that they will produce in our lives (James 1:2). Peter tells us that we are tested by trials so that our faith might be proven to all (1 Pet. 1:7). Paul tells us that our tribulations cause us to develop a hope, and this hope will not disappoint us (Rom. 5:2-4). In our text this morning, we will read of two people who faced major difficulties in their lives and turned to Jesus for help. They found Him willing to help. Let's first look at...

### 1. A Desperate Man (verses 18-19)

We read in verse 18, "While He was saying these things to them, behold, there came a synagogue official, and bowed down before Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.'"

We find Jesus in the midst of His teaching ministry. He was "saying" or teaching things to the people around him. And while he was doing this, a man comes into the midst of Jesus' "classroom" and desires to speak directly to Jesus. Matthew gives only a short description of this man. He simply says that he was an "official" or a "leader, a ruler." If we take a look at Mark and Luke's account of this incident, we can obtain a little more information about this man. They tell us that this man's name was Jairus, and that he was a ruler in the synagogue in Capernaum. This indicates that he was not a Rabbi, but instead he was an official. His duties did not involve teaching the people in synagogue. Rather, his duties consisted of administering all of the business of the synagogue. This was probably his full-time job. We can assume he was responsible for maintaining the building, including such tasks as cleaning, making repairs, providing security, and overseeing all financial matters pertaining to the building. We can assume he was the man in charge of preparing the details for the regular Shabat

services, which began each Friday evening. For such events he would be responsible for opening the building, ensuring everything was in place, and locking the building afterwards. On Saturday he would be busy also because the synagogue would be bustling with activity during their regular services. He was responsible to make sure that everything ran smoothly. During services, he probably was responsible for some administration tasks which possibly included selecting men who would read portions of the Torah. He was the one in charge of the bringing out of the ark (or chest) that contained Scriptures, and handing them to the Rabbis who used them for teaching. Perhaps you remember the event in Nazareth, when Jesus taught there in the synagogue and the scroll was handed to Him (see Luke 4:17). The synagogue official is the person who handed the scroll to Jesus (see John Gill's commentary). If the building were to be used for other functions, the permission had to be granted by the synagogue official.

As you might imagine, the synagogue official was a man of much influence. This man Jairus who comes to Jesus in verse 18 is one of the leaders in the synagogue in Capernaum. He was not just an ordinary person off the street; he was a leader who was well known and respected. We see him coming to Jesus while Jesus was teaching a crowd, and these people in the crowd likely knew Jairus. Matthew tells us that this man was facing a major crisis in his life; his daughter was dying. We know from Mark and Luke that this girl was 12 years old. At the time of Jesus, on the day when a girl turned 12 years old, her parents would throw a party called a "bath mitzvah." This party was a rite of passage for the young girl into womanhood. Accordingly, Jairus' daughter would have celebrated such an occasion in her life. It definitely would have been the high-point in her life up to this point. But this high-point would soon be eclipsed by a low-point in her life, as her body began to betray her.

At some point, this daughter began to complain of some type of pain or general feeling of weakness or dizziness. Perhaps her parents may have initially thought that their daughter was simply growing up and experiencing the bodily changes that take place as a girl grows into a woman. But, as the weeks went by and her condition worsened, it would become obvious that there was more to her weakness than this. She no longer had a desire to be outdoors, playing with her friends. Soon, she would not even want to get up from her bed, but preferred to sleep all day. Her appetite as well as her strength would leave her. Her parents obviously had very good reason to be concerned.

Rock Valley Bible Church is filled with little girls (and we need more little boys to balance the scale). Men, if you have daughters, imagine what it would feel like to watch your once active and lively girl who used to play and run in the gymnasium after church. Imagine how it would feel to see her slow down and become weaker and weaker, and eventually become bedridden. Imagine watching your daughter no longer have the strength to bring a spoon to her mouth. If you can imagine how this feels, then you will know a bit about the condition of this man here. Certainly, he called the doctors for help. Certainly, he did all that he could do to help his daughter get well again. As a respected man in the synagogue, he had many friends at his disposal, who could come and help him. But no one was able to help her get better. But now, his daughter was near death. She was no longer drinking anything.

**We see this man coming to Jesus in desperation.** His posture demonstrates this. Matthew describes Jairus as having "bowed down before" Jesus (verse 18). This phrase is often used to describe worship. Mark and Luke both say that he "fell at Jesus' feet" (Mark 5:22; Luke 5:41), begging that Jesus would come and help his daughter. He was a broken man. This man had reached the end of himself and was seeking any sort of help that he could find. For this man to turn to Jesus was truly a desperate act. Think about this man's status as an official of the synagogue. The official position of the synagogue was one of hostility against Jesus. The Pharisees had already developed antagonism toward Jesus, who was eating with tax-gatherers and sinners (Matt. 9:10-11). The Pharisees already disapproved the fact that Jesus did not fast like they did (Matt. 9:14). As we study further in Matthew, we will see that the Pharisees clearly teach their followers that Jesus "casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 9:34). Much of the remainder of Matthew's gospel will record the continued antagonism that the Pharisees had with Jesus. They will accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath (Matt. 12:2, 10). They will crave for a sign from Him. Such craving demonstrates what an evil and adulterous generation they were (Matt. 12:28-29). They will accuse Jesus of transgressing the tradition of the elders (Matt. 15:2). They will test and try to trap Him in His words with difficult questions pertaining to divorce, taxes, the resurrection, and the law (Matt. 19:3; 22:15-46). At one point in the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees were so antagonistic toward Jesus that they commanded that "if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). Thus we can see what a serious situation this man Jairus was putting himself in when he came to Jesus for help. It could quite possibly cost him his job as an official in the synagogue. He might even be cast out of the synagogue completely. As an outcast of the synagogue, he would lose his respectability in the community. His social status would be greatly harmed.

Desperate people do desperate things. I am reminded of a man who was a pastor. I do not know him personally, but I know he had a sick daughter. He turned to the occult in an attempt to save her life. Amazingly, after he begun using a certain device, his daughter was healed. The man was convinced that this device had spiritual powers and had healed his daughter. His ministry was ruined, because he was desperate in looking for health, and he was willing to take desperate measures. I was recently told that these matters took this man's life a few years ago. Desperate people do desperate things.

This man did a desperate thing, by coming to Jesus. Jairus left his daughter at home in the care of his wife. He pushed his way through the crowds that were listening to Jesus. He came to Jesus, and fell at His feet and begged Him, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live" (Matt. 9:18). In an attempt to make a long story short, Matthew leaves out some details. This is somewhat like what happens in *Robinson Crusoe*. I have been reading Robinson Crusoe to my children. We find that Robinson often says, "In a word" to make his story short. This is what Matthew did. He left out the details known from Mark and Luke, who report that when this man left his home to find Jesus, his daughter was still alive but fading fast and was almost dead. He initially asked Jesus to heal his daughter who was dying. Later, upon finding out that she was dead, he continued to plead with Jesus. Matthew simply includes the latter request of Jesus.

By coming to Jesus and asking for help, his social status was on the line. His respectability was on the line. But such things do not matter to desperate people. He could have come to Jesus earlier, before his daughter was at the point of death. But he was not desperate enough at that point in time; he still had hope in another solution to his problem. Now, however, his daughter had crossed a threshold which has caused him to despair. In this man's mind, his daughter was as good as dead. Jesus was his last hope.

Note that this man's hope in Jesus was not a shot in the dark, either. It was not a blind leap of faith. Living in Capernaum, he certainly knew how Jesus had healed the leprosy man (Matt. 8:1-4). He knew of the centurion's servant boy that had been healed (Matt. 8:5-13). He

certainly knew this centurion personally, as he was the one who built the synagogue in Capernaum for them (Luke 7:5). Perhaps He had worked together with the centurion in the financial matters of constructing the building. The centurion may have spoken about what Jesus did for his servant boy. This man Jairus knew of Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-15) who attended the synagogue services. He knew of the many who were brought to Jesus to be healed (Matt. 8:16-17). He knew of the paralytic that had been lowered down through the roof to be healed (Matt. 9:1-8). Capernaum, along with Chorazin and Bethsaida, was a city in which Jesus performed many, many miracles. Perhaps he had heard of the other miracles in those cities. Perhaps he had also heard of the storm that Jesus calmed (Matt. 8:23-27), or of the two out-of-control, demon-possessed men in Gadera, who Jesus had healed (Matt. 8:28-34). For when Jesus and His disciples left Gadera, they returned to Capernaum. Though, Jesus had not yet raised anyone from the dead, Jairus believed that Jesus could help his daughter, "come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live" (Matt. 9:18).

Perhaps you are here today and are facing some very real difficulties of your own. You might be facing major choices in your life, and you might find yourself confused. There are difficulties at your workplace. Things at home are bad and you are in desperate need of help. Your body is failing you. Experiencing these difficulties, perhaps you have sought help from many people. You have spoken with your parents (if they are alive). You have spoken with others here in this church about your decisions. You have talked with your boss, and you are not going to get the raise you need. You have gone to doctors for help, but they have not helped at all. Perhaps you have not found anyone who can help you! If this is your case, Are you desperate enough to turn to Jesus, like this man did? **Do you believe that Jesus has the ability to help you in your trial?**

This is very practical for us this morning. Maybe Jesus will not come and touch your situation and "poof" all is solved. But, He certainly has the authority to do that if He so desires. I am reminded of the *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. At one point in the story *The Magician's Nephew* Digory and Polly were sent by Aslan on a mission, and they are hungry.

"Well, I do think someone might have arranged about our meals," said Digory.

"I'm sure Aslan would have, if you'd asked him," said Fledge.

"Would not he know without being asked?" said Polly.

"I've no doubt he would," said the Horse (still with his mouth full). "But I've a sort of idea he likes to be asked.

Sometimes we need to be brought to a point of utter helplessness before we ask for help. Yet, our asking is often the means God uses to bring us help in our distress. This is the situation we find Jairus in, begging Jesus to help him. I love the response of Jesus, "And Jesus rose and began to follow him, and so did His disciples" (Matt. 9:19). Without hesitation, without a word, without a question, Jesus leaves His teaching ministry and begins to follow Jairus to his home, where his daughter lay dying. On His way to help a desperate man, Jesus encounters ...

## 2. A Desperate Woman (verses 20-21)

Before we look at this woman, let me ask you a question. **Are you patient enough to wait upon Jesus to help you?** The Lord's answers in life do not always come when we want them to and how we want them to come. I am sure that Jairus wanted Jesus to get to his home just as soon as possible. When Jesus was delayed by this woman, I am sure Jairus was not too pleased. He had waited until the last possible moment to ask Jesus for help. There was not a moment to lose. But, do you realize that with Jesus, time is no hindrance to accomplishing His will? In fact, sometimes, delays are for His glory.

I am reminded of what Jesus did when He heard that Lazarus was sick. John writes, "When therefore [Jesus] heard that [Lazarus] was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was" (John 11:6). He purposefully stayed away from Bethany until Lazarus died, "that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (John 11:4). When he finally arrived in Bethany, Martha complained to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Martha did not realize that it was in the plan of God for her brother to die, that Jesus might raise him up again and be glorified by it. Time is no hindrance to Jesus.

I am reminded of the patience of Job. Certainly God could have removed Job's sufferings much earlier than He did. But, it was for God's glory that Job endured. God taught Satan a lesson in the faith of Job. God taught Job a lesson of His sovereignty. Do you believe that Jesus has the ability to help you in your trial? You need to believe that the timing of Jesus is perfect.

Before arriving at the home of Jairus, Jesus deals first with the desperate woman. We pick up her story in verse 20.

And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I shall get well" (Matt. 9:20-21).

Matthew tells us that this woman had "a hemorrhage." We do not know exactly what this problem was. From the Greek text, we get the idea that she had a consistent flow of blood, which could not be stopped. It was probably some sort of "woman's problem" and thus, somewhat shameful. This hemorrhage was not a new problem. It had been going on for twelve years. She had done everything in her power to stop this flow of blood. Mark tells us that she had seen many physicians to solve the problem, but none of them could help her. Financially, she had spent all of her money trying to be cured. This money found its way into the pockets of the physicians. Mark also said that she had "endured much" at the hands of these physicians. Physically, these doctors did not make anything better. In fact, we are told that she "had grown worse" through their care (Mark 5:26). Her case is hopeless. She is incurable, and with no money left, she is helpless. What's even worse is that her society shunned her as well. According to the law, she would have been unclean for this entire time. We read in Leviticus 15 that,

Now if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean. Any bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like her bed at menstruation; and

every thing on which she sits shall be unclean, like her uncleanness at that time. Likewise, whoever touches them shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. (Lev. 15:25-27)

For 12 years, she lived as an outsider to the people of Israel. No one could touch her without becoming unclean. No one could sit where she sat without becoming unclean. She was hopeless and ashamed. Perhaps this is why she "came up behind [Jesus]" (Matt. 9:20). The synagogue official boldly presented himself in front of Jesus. He had nothing to hide. But this woman, came humbly behind Jesus in shame. On top of this, her theology had strong elements of superstition in it. In verse 21, we see her theology, "She was saying to herself, 'If I only touch His garment, I shall get well.'" Perhaps she had heard how Jesus had touched the leper and made him clean (Matt. 8:3). Like the leprous man, she too was unclean, and thus, an outcast. Perhaps she had heard how Jesus had touched Peter's mother-in-law, which instantly caused her fever to leave her (Matt. 8:15). Like Peter's mother-in-law, she too was sick and needed a healing. If Jesus had touched them and they were healed, perhaps she could touch Jesus and be healed as well. She was convinced that touching even the edge of His garment would be sufficient to heal her. She assumed that Jesus' power went beyond His skin so that it included the clothes He was wearing.

At this point, the stage is set for Jesus to act. We have two desperate people: a man and a woman. In some ways, they were very different. He was a man. She was a woman. He was concerned with the health of his daughter. She was concerned with her own illness. He boldly approached Jesus from the front. She shamefully approached Jesus from behind. He pleaded with Jesus to heal his daughter. She did not ask Jesus, but presumed that a touch would heal her. Yet, fundamentally, they were very much the same. They approached Jesus in their desperation. As a final resort, they both turned to Him for help. I think that we all need to realize that our backgrounds are very different. Some of the struggles you face are unique to you. My difficulties are unique to me. But in all of our difficulties, our approach to God always travels the same path. The message of the Bible is very clear: God only looks upon those who have reached the end of themselves. God only looks upon those who realize that they have nowhere else to turn, but to God, Himself. Jeremiah writes, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD" (Jer. 17:5).

For those of you who have been reading through the Bible this year according to the plan we distributed in December, you have read of several examples where this has happened. When Hagar and her son, Ishmael, were banished to the wilderness, they were dying of thirst. Hagar lifted her voice to God and wept in her desperation. God was gracious to them and provided them with water (Gen. 21:19). When the people of Israel were under bondage, they "sighed ... and cried out to God for help" (Ex. 2:23). We are told that "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them" (Ex. 2:24-25). God redeemed them out from the slavery of Pharaoh.

I know a man who has been humbled this week. I have known him for more than 10 years now and have always known him to be a very proud and arrogant and self-sufficient guy. However, he has now been unemployed for several months and has struggled in finding another job. It has caused him to consider moving to a home with fewer expenses in another part of the country. He has been humbled this week. Anxiety has filled his soul. He has needed to take medication in order to help him sleep. Up to this point, he has expressed very little interest in God, but he appears to be softening. I have continued to pray that God would utterly break him. I pray that he would see the greatness of his sin, that he would see there is no other option but to turn to God in his time of hopelessness. I pray that God would be gracious to him and grant him repentance. Perhaps there is some issue in your life that God is using to humble you right now. Like this desperate man and like this desperate woman, these circumstances are forcing you to look upon Him in complete dependence for all things. This is not a bad thing; it is a good thing. Hear the promise afresh today, God says, "To this one I will look, ... to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Is. 66:2). This should be your continued posture before the Lord. Here in Capernaum, some 2,000 years ago, Jesus was gracious to this desperate man and woman, right then and there. We see in our third point this morning, ...

### 3. The Healing Authority of Jesus (verses 22-26)

In verse 20, we see that this woman was successful in her mission to touch the garment of Jesus. In verse 22, we see the woman being healed. We read, "But Jesus turning and seeing her said, 'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' And at once the woman was made well." Jesus demonstrates His great compassion, when He addresses this woman. He used the tender term, "Daughter." He could have rebuked her for her superstitious faith. He could have rejected her as one unclean. But Jesus had learned what it meant when God said, "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6; Matt. 9:13). We see that He was sensitive to her fears as well when He said, "take courage." From the other gospel accounts, we know that she touched His garments and was healed of her ailments immediately. "The flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction" (Mark 5:29). Jesus knew that power had gone forth from Him and responded by asking, "Who touched my garments" (Mark 5:30). Because of the great crowd surrounding Him, His disciples could not believe this question. "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" (Mark 5:31). With fear and trembling, this woman came, fell down to Jesus and explained the whole situation (Mark 5:34). He sought to calm her fears by saying, "take courage, [I have good news for you], your faith has made you well" (Matt. 5:22). She was cured! She was cleansed! She could now come back into society and be a normal person again! Jesus had restored her to health on account of her faith in Jesus' power to make her well again! She stands as a testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ.

This woman simply believed that Jesus had the power and the authority to restore her health. Likewise, you simply need to believe that Jesus has the authority to forgive your sin. Her faith was not perfect; it was filled with superstition. But her faith was in the right person. Her faith was in the one who received sinners. This is the gospel which we believe: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Sinners are saved from their sin when they trust in Jesus' power to forgive their sin. Mark and Luke speak of two healings: she was healed of blood, and her faith saved her. **I exhort you to believe the gospel!**

In verse 23, we pick up again the story of the desperate man, "And ... Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players, and the crowd in noisy disorder." This was a clear indication that the child had breathed her last. It was the tradition of the Jews in those days to have flute-players come after a person died to help in mourning for the dead. In addition, they often brought in women, who would come grieving and mourn with the family as well. We do not know how many flute-players there were, but it was the rule among the Jews that even the poorest in Israel had at least two flute-players. Certainly there were more for such an honored man as this synagogue official (Misn. Ketuboth

4:4, as quoted by D. A. Carson and John Gill in their commentaries on Matthew). Not only were flute-players present, but the house was literally filled with mourners for this child. Matthew used the word, "crowd" to describe all of them in the house. When Jesus saw all of this commotion, He told everyone in the house to "Depart; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." At this point they "began laughing at Him" (verse 24). They knew that there was no doubt that the child had died. This is precisely the point! The child had died! In verse 25 we are told that the crowd left the house. Mark tells us that only seven people remained in the house: The child, the child's two parents, Jesus and three of His disciples, Peter, James and John (Mark 5:40). Jesus approached the corpse of the girl, took her hand in His and said, "Talitha kum!" (which means, "Little girl, (I say to you), arise!") (Mark 5:41). According to the law, if you touch a corpse, you are ceremonially defiled and declared to be unclean (Numbers 19:11). However, rather than being defiled by the corpse, Jesus instills life into the corpse. Verse 25 says, "and the girl arose." **Thereby, Jesus demonstrated His authority over death.**

How similar this is to our salvation! We were spiritually dead until Jesus came and made us alive. Ephesians 2:5 says, "even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ." When we are made alive, we are granted repentance and faith. Sure, we may have previously looked alive, in that we were living and moving and breathing, but spiritually we were dead. We were unable to comprehend the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14) until we received "the Spirit who is from God" (1 Cor. 2:12). I heard a man recently explain it this way. Do you realize that right now, at this very moment, you have all sorts of radio signals and television signals running through your body. Here in Rockford, we have WTVO, WREX, and WBBM all passing through your body right now. However, without a radio tuner, it all goes undetected. With a tuner, however, these radio waves that are going through your body are able to make all sorts of sense! When God gives to you a spiritual tuner to understand, He makes you alive to understand and believe the things in His Word! Without a spiritual tuner, you cannot understand.

This miracle that Jesus did was undeniable. The crowd of mourners quickly became news reporters, spreading the news of what they had seen and heard. Matthew writes, "This news went out into all that land" (Matt. 9:26). If you turned on your television at all yesterday, you certainly saw the sad news about the Space Shuttle Columbia crashing over Texas upon re-entering the atmosphere. All of the major networks gathered eye-witnesses and experts to testify to what they knew about what happened (or what the next steps will be). If these television stations were around at the time of Jesus, there would have been news reports from all around Capernaum of the child who was dead, but is now living. Perhaps Dan Rather would have asked one of the witnesses, "Could you please tell me what you saw?" A witness might reply, "Sure! I'm a flute-player. I often go to homes to play my flute to help the people of Capernaum mourn the death of their loved ones. This morning my job took me to the home of Jairus, the synagogue official. His daughter died today. I've seen lots of dead people before, so I knew what they looked like. And she was dead. Then, that prophet from Nazareth came along and told everybody to leave the house. At first I was hesitant, because of the reputation of this man. But Jairus was telling everybody to listen to Him. Of all people, I was shocked that Jairus appeared to be on Jesus' side. Anyway, there were only a few of them in the house. In a little bit, the girl walked right outside, appearing to be in fine health. I think that she is now down the street playing with her friends."

There was a crowd in the home, so there would have been plenty of eye-witnesses. Dan Rather would have been on television all day long! "This news went out into all that land" (Matt. 9:26). It became known far and wide what Jesus had done for Jairus' daughter! Jesus had raised her from the dead! This man from Nazareth has the ability to raise the dead! Certainly these events brought attention to Jesus. Certainly these events testified that His claims of Messiah were true. When we step back from our passage this morning, we realize that Matthew is seeking to show us Jesus' credentials. Jesus can heal disease that no doctor can heal. He can calm storms that no fisherman can handle. He can cast out the demons that no exorcist could subdue. He can forgive sins that no other mortal can claim to do. He can raise people from the dead! Jesus Christ is the Messiah of whom the Scriptures foretold. Jesus Christ is the object of our faith. His death, burial, and resurrection are your only hope. Do you believe this? Are you desperate enough to trust in Him for all things?

We have an opportunity now to express our faith in Him, by celebrating the Lord's Supper together. We practice the Lord's Supper because Jesus told us to do this as a way in which we proclaim our faith in Him. In 1 Corinthians 11:26, we are told "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." If there are difficulties in your life that you are seeking to solve on your own strength or by your own power or using your own means, I would call you this morning to repent. Trust in Jesus, alone, for your burdens, for your worries, for your problems, for your hardships, and for your strength to overcome. Before we celebrate the supper together, we are told first to examine ourselves, that we might not "eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor. 11:27).

I believe that the message this morning is clear. Are you desperate this morning? Have you forsaken all confidence in yourself? Paul was a desperate man. He said, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). He counted all of his religious attainments to be regarded as nothing, in light of the value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. He had more religious credentials than anyone else who has ever walked the planet. He did everything according to the law. But all of that was considered to be nothing. In desperation, he grabbed hold of one thing: Christ Jesus. And in Christ Jesus, he sought "a righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ... not a righteousness of my own derived from the Law" (Phil. 3:9).

If you are a desperate man this morning, who has come to realize that you have no hope in this world apart from the forgiveness of sins that you have found in Jesus alone, I invite you to celebrate this supper with us. If you are a desperate woman this morning, who has found the things of the world to be useless to save your soul and have placed your faith in Jesus, who saves by grace alone through faith alone, I invite you to celebrate this supper with us. If you have not reached a point of utter desperation, then let the elements pass you by this morning. Do not take of them. Better to let them pass than to shame the Lord by taking the elements in unbelief.

1 Cor. 11: 23-25

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 2, 2003 by Steve Brandon.  
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