

Matthew 9:14 – 26

^{9:14} Then the disciples of John came to him, asking, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, ‘The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. ¹⁷ Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.’

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before him, and said, ‘My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.’ ¹⁹ Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did his disciples. ²⁰ And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak; ²¹ for she was saying to herself [literally ‘in herself’], ‘If I only touch his garment, I will get well [lit. ‘be saved’].’ ²² But Jesus turning and seeing her said, ‘Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well [lit. ‘saved you’].’ At once the woman was made well. ²³ When Jesus came into the official’s house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, ²⁴ he said, ‘Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.’ And they began laughing at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been sent out, he entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ This news spread throughout all that land.

Cultural Background

- Israel’s ceremonial laws taught them in a preliminary way about the division between life and death. Hence, dead bodies were considered unclean (Lev.22:4), and you would become unclean if you touched one. A man’s semen from masturbation or a wet dream represented life passing into death, and made him unclean (Lev.15:16; Dt.23:10). And a woman’s menstrual cycle, or additional blood flow, represented life passing into death (Lev.15:19 – 27). Thus, both the bleeding woman and the dead daughter were considered unclean.

Background: Israel’s Prophetic Hope

- ^{Ezekiel 36:25} Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness... ²⁶ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
- ^{Jeremiah 31:31} I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke ... ³³ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days...I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Questions on the Mismatched Things

1. What common thread runs through v.14 – 17? Mismatched things
 - a. Why would other Jews expect Jesus and his disciples to fast?
 - b. How does Jesus answer that? By comparing his ministry to a wedding celebration. You don't fast while the bridegroom is there
 - c. What does this mean about how Jesus saw himself and his ministry? It was a time of fulfillment, a time to celebrate, a time of invitation.
 - d. The mismatched cloth represents how Jesus has not come to mend an old garment, but to give an entirely new garment. Notice the semantic tie to Jesus' garment in v.21? Matthew will highlight a comparison there.
 - e. The mismatched wineskins represent how Jesus has not come to align the internal and the external, in some way (i.e. he will place the Spirit of God in humanity and overcome human sinfulness, uncleanness, and death, first in himself, and then in others)
2. Probably the key point being raised by v.14 – 17 is the contrast between old and new, Moses and Jesus, old covenant and new covenant. We'll look at v.18 – 26 to see that illustrated.

Questions on the Two Daughters

1. What's going on with the synagogue official in the first third of the story? What are some words that would describe how the father feels?
2. Why is coming to Jesus shameful or humbling for the father?
 - a. First, if something bad happened to you, or your young daughter, many Jews at that time assumed that you did something wrong, and God was punishing you. So the fact that his daughter just died wasn't just a painful thing, it was a shameful thing.
 - b. Second, Jesus was a renegade rabbi. The Jewish leaders in the mainstream didn't endorse him. So for the father to be a synagogue official – a man of the establishment – and come to this rogue teacher, was shameful. That carried some embarrassment with it.
 - c. But in this case, he was desperate enough, and loved his daughter enough. 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.' When we feel shame, we are tempted to hide the best and most precious thing about us: our deepest needs. But death – *and the desire for God to triumph over death* – brings this father and his family out into the open.
 - d. Illus: In the Harry Potter story, Severus Snape didn't want anyone to know that he had cherished an unrequited love for Lily Evans Potter, Harry's mother. Lily Evans had married James Potter, and Snape was furious about that. He betrayed the Potter family to Lord Voldemort, thinking that Voldemort would only kill young, one year old Harry, and perhaps James Potter as well, leaving Lily alive and alone. Voldemort wound up killing Lily as well, though. Snape grieved and thought it was a mark of weakness. Dumbledore tried to correct him. He said to Snape: "You know how and why she died. Make sure it was not in vain. Help me protect Lily's son." "He does not need protection. The Dark Lord has gone – " "The Dark Lord will return, and Harry Potter will be in terrible danger when he does." There was a long pause, and slowly Snape regained control of himself, mastered his own breathing. At last he said, "Very well. Very well. But never – never tell, Dumbledore! This must be between us! Swear it! I cannot bear...especially Potter's son...I want your word!" "My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?" Dumbledore sighed, looking down into Snape's ferocious, anguished face. "If you insist..." (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*) Snape still felt ashamed of his love.
 - e. APPLICATION: Sometimes we're embarrassed when we bring forth our deepest needs, what is actually the best of you and me. Sometimes we don't like Jesus for making us come out to him publicly. Every time I tell my own story, I say that my parents' divorce has something to do with my coming to Jesus. It took a long time for me to get over my embarrassment about my weakness: my lack of emotional stability, my selfish ways of trying to stabilize my own life, my lack of meaning, my lack of foundation for finding other people valuable. I also felt vulnerable that my hope for other people to be healed and transformed was also part of my reason for coming to Jesus. And yet, that is all part of my story, and part of reality. At some point, I felt the Lord saying to me, 'Why are you ashamed about this part of you? You wanted more. I think that it's a very good part of who you are. A wonderful part.' I've come to enjoy talking about all that because it helps other people understand what I felt and how Jesus met me. Self-sufficiency is the illusion. It's our needs that are the reality. Our need for Jesus is the best part of us.
3. What's going on with the hemorrhaging woman?

- a. What is her story? Why does she feel a need for Jesus? She's been suffering with a chronic condition that is humiliating and limiting. It comes from her own body, a hemorrhage she's had for 12 years, which is a chronic, abnormal condition, possibly a fibroid tumor of the uterus. It was at least embarrassing. She might have suffered physically as well, but we're not sure. Chronic loss of blood might have meant anemia and physical weakness for her. And of course, other people had to treat her as unclean, untouchable, outcast.
 - b. How do you think Jesus would read the following quote by comedian Jim Carrey? "This one is very close to me," says Jim Carrey of *The Majestic*, the film he's making about a blacklisted writer who gets in a car accident, loses his memory, and becomes a small-town hero. "I'm growing up, and there's a lot of me I haven't shown yet to people. In a way, this is the first time I'll ever reveal the wounds... Acting is always about finding out what your character wants, and this character, not unlike myself, is dying for self-respect. I grew up wanting to be this special miracle, and I've tried to prove that my whole life because of this black hole that is my need." ---Jim Carrey, 'Just Praying for an Oscar', TIME magazine, June 25, 2001, p.79
 - c. What's it like for her to come to Jesus? How does she feel? Timid, afraid, nervous, self-conscious. But she also has to have courage for herself. Like the synagogue ruler on behalf of his daughter, she has to come forward
 - d. Why does she want to touch the fringe of Jesus' cloak? What does the fringe or hem symbolize? The *authority* of that person. That's why David cut off the fringe of Saul's garment in the cave, initially to show his authority over Saul (1 Sam.24:4), but immediately felt bad that he had violated the king's authority (1 Sam.24:5-15). So she is trusting in Jesus' authority.
 - e. Where else have we seen Jesus touch an unclean thing or person? The leper in Mt.8:1 – 4. He was also willing to go into the centurion's house in 8:5 – 13. He engaged the two demoniacs from the tombs, which were unclean in 8:28 – 34.
 - f. Jesus heals her publicly. How do you think she felt about that? Maybe joy, but it's also not what she expected. She came quietly, and secretly, speaking 'in herself.' But Jesus does his work publicly, even when the problem is deep within us. Jesus stopped, turns to her and says, 'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' People around her would have asked, 'Hey, what were you just healed of? Who are you? Ohhhhh...you're that woman! Underneath that cloak and veil, you're the woman who has lived on the outskirts of our town for the last twelve years! Yeah, you had that thing with your body...'
 - g. APPLICATION: When we are ashamed, we try to hide the work of Jesus in us. But Jesus doesn't let us. I'm not saying that he has us share with everyone at every time, even those who aren't ready. Indeed, in Mt.7:6, when Jesus speaks of not throwing pearls before swine, he tells us to use discernment. But when the time comes and the situation is right, Jesus will have us share publicly. His healing of our sin is inevitably public, just as his healing of our bodies is inevitably public. And he will bring us to the place where we care about him getting the glory through our weakness, more than caring how people perceive our weakness. Even in the ways we are still 'works in progress', and are still needing Jesus' healing and transformation in us, there will be times where the Holy Spirit will say, 'You are healed to bear witness to Jesus. Take courage.'
4. How does the synagogue official feel about the woman, especially while his daughter is on his mind?
 - a. 'The hemorrhaging woman is an intrusion into the story of my daughter's healing. She is an interruption.'
 - b. It's possible that the synagogue official is the one who told the hemorrhaging woman to leave the community!! He may have been the one who maintained the distinction between clean and unclean. But now he finds that distinction evaporating. He and his family are just as unclean as the bleeding woman because of his daughter's death. And he is just as sinful. So he is seeing that on the deepest level, all human beings come before Jesus equally sinful and unclean.
 5. How does Jesus see the two situations?
 - a. Of course, Jesus has compassion on the bleeding woman.
 - b. Jesus calls her 'daughter.' Who had just used that term? The synagogue official had called his little girl 'daughter.' So Jesus is asking him to (1) think of his own daughter here, and have hope that Jesus will indeed raise her from the dead; and (2) to welcome the bleeding woman into Jesus' community as well. Jesus has just tied the bleeding woman and the dead girl together. This is poignant if the synagogue official had been the one to tell the hemorrhaging woman to leave the community. He certainly had to police that boundary.
 - c. What might Jesus be wanting the synagogue official to see about this situation? That he is no more 'clean' than the hemorrhaging woman. That he needs faith just like she needed faith. That Jesus heals us through our faith in him.

- d. APPLICATION: Jesus heals and saves other people to remind us that we are no better (or worse) than them. We are all in need of Jesus.
6. The healing of the dead girl
 - a. Why do you think Jesus has the crowd and musicians leave the house? They are mismatched. They didn't believe, so they didn't get to see the miracle itself. They would see the effects, of course, when they saw the girl later.
 - b. Why does Jesus touch the dead girl? He keeps touching unclean things! To demonstrate his power over the uncleanness. To show that he reverses the order of things; because he is super-clean, he can make unclean things clean. To foreshadow the Cross, when he touches sin and absorbs it so that we are clean.
 - c. Notice how we are invited to interpret the outside story by the inside story. The bleeding woman – whose life was leaking out of her – is the 'inside story' of the dead girl.
 7. Finally, what connections do you see between v.14 – 17 and v.18 – 26?
 - a. Jesus set aside, for the time being, fasting or grieving when he was physically present. It just wasn't the time for that.
 - b. Jesus implies that he is providing a new garment, and Matthew calls attention to his garment in v.21. His garment represents his authority to heal and give new life.
 - c. STATE: Jesus is healing to symbolically show that he is putting 'new life' into people's bodies. In this case, he is restoring an 'old life' into the 'old body' of people, which is itself amazing. But even more amazing will be how he will pour 'new life' from the 'new body' of his resurrected body into us and eventually make us physically new, along with being spiritually new.