**DO YOU BELIEVE I AM ABLE TO DO THIS? (According to Your Faith Let It Be Done to You!)**

 September 30, 2018

Matthew 9:18-34

Key Verse: 9:28, “When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ they replied.”

Do you value faith in Jesus as the most precious treasure in your life? You may or may not, but God does. God wants you to value faith in Jesus as the most precious treasure that you should seek because faith is the only way by which you can be saved, healed, and grow in right relationship with God. Today’s passage looks like just four stories of healing. But in fact, Matthew focuses on the faith of those who were healed rather than healing itself and how Jesus helped them to grow in faith. It also makes us think about a very relevant issue, how is it that some have faith and are healed and others have faith and are not? Sometimes we wonder, “Do I have enough faith? Do I have the right kind of faith? How can I have faith that brings healing?” Since today’s passage focuses on faith as supremely important thing, let’s learn more about faith, especially faith in front of challenging issues or seemingly impossible things, and the dynamics between faith and healing, and God’s ultimate plan in our life of faith.

**First, God is always working to help us grow in faith (18-26)**

Today’s passage begins with a story that while Jesus was explaining about the new life of following him, a man came to Jesus. He was a synagogue leader. He knelt before Jesus and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” In Mark and Luke’s gospel, actually when he came to Jesus, his daughter had not died yet but was dying. There is more detail in Mark and Luke’s gospel. But Matthew gives us a very simplified version of the account compared to Mark and Luke. This is to simply draw out the point: this father believed Jesus could actually raise the dead! It may be easy to say that Jesus raises the dead because he is the Son of God. But when actual death happens to your beloved one, can you believe that Jesus can raise the dead? As human beings under the curse of sin, we cannot overcome the power of death by our own effort or will. Death is the medical condition that we cannot get a second opinion about. Yet this father believed Jesus could actually raise his dead daughter. Surely this father saw beyond the reality of the situation; something that no one else could see. It was a miracle of faith that could only come when he fixed his eyes on Jesus. Jesus was pleased by such faith and got up without a word and went with him, and so did his disciples (19).

Look at verses 20-21. Just then, when Jesus was heading for the father’s house, there was another person who came to Jesus. Verses 20-21 say, “Just then, a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, ‘If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.’” This woman had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. Here, her bleeding means a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her normal monthly period. As we all know blood is the essential part of our life. If anyone loses his or her blood 20 percent, they will have shock and at the loss of 40 %, they will die. So, this woman had been subject to bleeding for 12 years means that she had barely survived with minimum health most likely with very pale face. She must have had frequent dizziness, tiredness, headache, constant fear, and depression. Besides, according to the law (Leviticus 15:25-27) her bleeding was considered as an unclean disease. She was not permitted to enter the temple. If she touched anyone or anything, they became unclean, too. So, she had to be very anxiously conscious about touching and being touched. We can imagine how her life was miserable and desperate to get healed at any cost. In fact, according to Mark’s gospel, she had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spend all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. In Luke’s gospel (Luke 8:43), Luke added, “No one could heal her.” But how wonderful it is to know that when we have reached the end of all human hope, we can find a true hope through faith in Jesus. Someone says, “The end of all human hope is the beginning of hope in God.” When she lost all her human hope, she found a true hope in Jesus.

Especially she had a very unique faith in Jesus. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Here let’s think about her faith. Where did she get such a specific inspiration and belief? In today’s passage, the synagogue leader and this woman; both of them had a clear assurance before they came to Jesus. Was it their own idea? Is faith just making up anything that I wish and by claiming it and believing strongly enough, I can have whatever I ask?

The so called “name it and claim it,” and “prosperity gospel” teaches that if you believe, you can get whatever you want: just name what you want and claim it by faith and God will be forced to give it to you. Such heretical teaching is obviously non-biblical faith.

As we deal with the issue of faith, we should learn what is the right faith that God wants us to have. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Here “what we hope for and what we do not see” are all about “God’s word of promise. God is invisible but he gave his words of promise when he called all the ancestors of faith. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Noah, Moses, David, and all the prophets; all of them received God’s specific words of promise and they believed that what God said to them would come true, although they did not see it. So, they pleased God by their faith and their faith were commended by God. In John 15:7, Jesus also said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” In 1 John 5:14, Jesus’ disciple John also said, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” So, faith is not naming and claiming a blessing according to our wish or will but struggling to find God’s word of promise and his will very personally in our specific situation and absolutely trusting what God said. Therefore, the essential prerequisite of faith is that we must hear words of God first to receive the word that he gives us personally (until “*Logos*” becomes “*Rhema*”) (e.g. Matt 4:4, Romans 10:17)

Even though the passage does not describe how the synagogue leader and the bleeding woman came to have faith in Jesus, it must have been clear that they had heard about Jesus, his teaching and healing ministry and they came to believe Jesus’ healing based on what they heard about Jesus; what Jesus had done or what Jesus had said.

Look at verse 22. Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment. Jesus did not say, “God has healed you” though this was certainly true, but “*your* ***faith*** *has healed you*.” Why? Why did Jesus focus on her faith rather than God’s healing itself? The answer is it was because only faith creates relationship and makes her grow in relationship with Jesus. Physical healing is one thing that we can receive from Jesus. But physical healing is not everything. Relationship with Jesus is everything. It lasts forever while physical healing is temporal. How can we start and develop relationship with Jesus? It is only through our faith. It is only by our faith that we receive not only physical healing but also healing of our soul, spirit, and emotion in right relationship with Jesus. That is why Jesus is crediting her faith highly and encouraging her faith to help her continue to live by faith alone.

Here, let’s think more about her condition. She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. It was her act of faith, but in her heart, actually besides her faith, other feelings must have been mixed up in her mind and emotion. She might have thought that she would be punished or rebuked because she did what she was not supposed to do. Definitely although her initial faith was clear, at the same time it was weak and fragile together with other feelings. All she wanted was just taking Jesus’ healing stealthily and run away. She just wanted to leave this public place as soon as possible without being noticed by anyone even by Jesus. But Jesus immediately knew his power of healing was released from him and Jesus turned and saw her and he declared what she had never imagined but what she had needed to hear most, “Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you.” Jesus called her “daughter”. It was a most healing word. For the first time, she felt accepted, loved, treasured, and protected. Especially, by saying this, Jesus was announcing publicly, “Now you are clean, you are healed, you are forgiven, you are accepted. So, you don’t have to suffer from guilt, shame, fear, and sense of being rejected any more.” Initially her faith might be small and fragile like a tender shoot or mustard seed mixed up with other thoughts or emotions. But by public announcement, Jesus made her be proud of her faith and made her know how her faith is most precious, most blessed, and life-transforming; far greater than all other things. In this way, Jesus helped her to grow in her faith continually. This was best love.

For 12 years, she had suffered from her unclean disease. She had spent all she had. She was like a bruised reed and a smoldering wick. She had lost all human hope. But now by faith she met Jesus and she received her healthy body back and most importantly forgiveness of sins; salvation of her soul, and healing of her broken emotion. Now she who was a most lonely and broken woman came to have most unforgettable love relationship with Jesus; the best gift from God. Now even all her past pain also became meaningful because it caused her to come to Jesus.

Here, let me tell you another issue. Sometimes people wonder why some have faith and are healed, but others have faith and are not. The answer is that God sometimes doesn’t answer to our prayer of faith or delay because he has better plan for us. For example, Apostle Paul had a chronic disease in his body. When he earnestly prayed God for healing, God answered, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2Co12:7-9) Joni Eareckson Tada was an active athletic teenager. But at the age of 17, she broke her neck in a diving accident and she became paralyzed from the shoulders down. She desperately prayed for healing but God had another plan for her. God has been using her with her disability as a powerful messenger of God to demonstrate that man’s abundant life is not in physical condition but in our spiritual condition. So here is the dynamics between faith and healing. Faith brings physical healing not always but healing of our soul and spirit always. Physical healing is one thing and temporal but spiritual healing; in another word; having relationship with Jesus by faith is everything and it lasts forever. This is God’s ultimate plan for our life of faith. Eventually God will give us perfect body as well as perfect soul and spirit in heaven. But while living on earth, sometimes God allows us to suffer from physical illness not answering our prayer. It is because God has better plan through it.

Let’s look at verses 23-26. Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes. He said, “Go away, The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region. In Jesus’ messianic ministry, this was the first time that Jesus raised a dead girl. In human history, there has been no one except Jesus who viewed death as sleeping. Jesus views our death as sleeping because he himself is the resurrection and life as our Creator. To Jesus’ eyes, our physical death is not the end of our life. It is just like sweet sleeping. We will wake up later. In John 11:25-26, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believe in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

**Second, “Do you believe that I am able to do this? (27-34)**

Verse 27 says, “As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!” This is the first time in Matthew’s gospel that someone called Jesus “Son of David.” To the Jews, “Son of David” is a messianic title. Isaiah 35:5-6 prophesized, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.” Probably these two blind men heard this passage and knew when the messiah come, what he would do.” This is really remarkable faith just as much as the synagogue leader or the bleeding woman. Yet Jesus did not stop to help them on the road; rather verse 28 says he waited till he had gone indoors. Healing them on the road would just create a great sensation and make them feel like superstars. Jesus wanted them to focus on faith not just healing. So he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And their sight was restored. Here, Jesus’ question, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” is central word to this passage. In today’s passage, 4 different people believed that Jesus was able; able to raise a dead girl, able to heal her chronic bleeding, and able to open their blind eyes. They all received their request by believing that Jesus was able. In verses 32-34, Jesus also drove out demon from a mute man. These 4 examples of healing are pointing out who Jesus is. Jesus is the promised Messiah who can heal anyone and restore their life from miserable and sorrowful life to happy, joyful, and glorious life. Jesus is also asking each of us with same question no matter what challenges or problems you have. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” How would you answer?

As we have started new Fall semester, we may have many challenges, study load will be challenges in many students. Some have loneliness or anxiety. Some may have financial issue or health issue. Some may have painful family issue. However, no matter what challenges we have, Jesus is everything to everyone. Jesus is able to help you to overcome any sufferings or challenges and grow as God’s beautiful children when you believe that he is able. May God bless you to stick to unshakable faith in Jesus no matter what challenges you have! Amen.