

Title: Unreal or Unwilling? (pt.1)
Text: Matthew 9.18-26
Theme: The personal power of Jesus
Series: Matthew #54
Prop Stmt: There is nothing too difficult for Jesus.

Read Text:

Surveys have demonstrated that 48% of people who buy cars are loyal to a particular brand. That really does not surprise many of us. Some of you were raised in a brand loyal home. If you were a Chrysler family, and you had a friend come over in a Chevy, he may not have been allowed to pull into the driveway and if he drove a Toyota, he probably wasn't allowed to pull into the neighborhood.

But, let's say that you are very brand loyal and you grew up arguing about why your particular brand was better than all of the others. And let's say that you are a true believer. You not only had the car, you had the posters, the shirts, the hats, the club membership, but you worked for the company. What do you do if year after year after year Consumers Report demonstrably proves that other cars are superior? What do you if year after year J.D. Power or other surveys show that other companies are clearly better? That's humbling isn't it? Well, maybe not, right? It's only humbling if you are willing to consider that it is possible or possibly true. Do you believe what you believe about a car (motorcycle, other brands?) because it is actually true, or because you want it to be true? But that's just stuff. What about life?

What if your entire belief system is revealed to be flawed? What if what you believe about yourself, where you came from, where you are going, who you really are, what your family has believed, etc is revealed to be wrong? If you really examine life and discover that everything that you have believed has been exposed as fraudulent, then you are in a serious predicament. This is why people often take a long time to convert from Islam to Christianity because they have so many things to sort through. It is so hard to admit that what you have believed is not true, but an unexamined life is a pathetic life.

Do you believe what you believe because it brings you comfort, because it is convenient, because it is how you were raised, or because it is actually true? If it is true, then it can stand on its own, even in the face of challenges and skeptics. If what you believe is really true, then you do not need to fear any examining of the faith. Truth, after all is true. It simply is. It is not true because we make it true. It is not true because we want it to be true. It is true independent of us.

The account that we are looking at this morning is an amazing story of the power of Christ that is set fully on display through personal attention, care and true empathy. But, Matthew did not record this account just so we would know how powerful and merciful Christ is. He recorded this in the context of the Pharisees whose opinion about Christ is being formed and is about to be hardened. They witness an undeniable demonstration of the authority of Christ. They are left with a choice as to what they are going to do with it.

They can either acknowledge that they have been wrong about Christ, and embrace Him for who he claims to be, or they can dig in their heels and in spite of the overwhelming evidence, refuse to believe the obvious. They refuse to accept the truth that is so clear because they were unwilling to examine their own lives.

While Jesus is explaining to the disciples of John the Baptist (and to the Pharisees) why his disciples were not fasting, a ruler came to Christ and knelt before him. Matthew uses this phrase “knelt” most often with an act of worship. We find out from Mark and Luke that this ruler was a ruler in a synagogue. (synagogue pic) While the Temple was the place where the sacrifices were offered, the Synagogues were the places where local Jewish life centered. These were the places where the people from the local area would gather in order to worship together and to hear the Scriptures read and explained. One of the rulers of the synagogue (who was also a community ruler) came and knelt before Jesus. Most of the synagogue rulers were Pharisees. So, it is likely that this man was a Pharisee who was doing something that most of the other Pharisees were not willing to do. This man expressed worship and faith in Christ. In fact, he makes an incredibly bold statement: *“My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”* Can you imagine someone saying that to you?

Some of you know the expectations of your team. You are the last leg in the relay race and you have to win. You are the one who is going to get the ball with 2 seconds left and you have to hit the shot. You are up with two outs in the bottom of the ninth and you have to get a hit. Or, you are the soldier who has to stand his ground so that the rest of your platoon is safe, or the doctor who has to save this life. In those situations, you have a chance. You may actually run faster than the other guy, (if he trips and falls down). You may actually hit that last shot. And, if you are a doctor, you may actually be able to save that person’s life. But this is not saving a life from dying, this man is telling Jesus, I know that if you will put your hand on her, that even though she is dead, she will rise again. That is bold! That is also impossible, unless you have authority over death and you don’t have authority over death unless you are God! The man is desperate. The situation is urgent. But, there is another “behold”. There is another crisis. There is someone else who is desperate. This is not a young girl, but an older woman. The little girl had a dad who was her advocate; this woman had no one. These two stories are woven together in one account.

Matthew has a reason for this: 1) They happened this way and 2) They are related thematically.

1. **Read and Observe:**

A. **Both involve very serious, larger than life kind of situations.**

This man’s daughter has just died. This is more than a factual account in a story. This family has just been devastated by tragedy. Nothing is mentioned about the mom. Did his wife die giving birth to her? Are there other siblings? Was she his only child? We do not have those details, but we know this much. This man (Jairus) had a story. His life and

family were connected to others. What had just happened was generational. To others, it is an account, but to Jairus, it was all consuming. At the same time, this woman, who is unnamed has suffered under this physical condition for so long that her entire life has been owned by it. There is so much of life that she simply cannot enjoy due to her condition. Notice also ...

B. Both have nowhere else to turn.

You can call a doctor while your child is alive, but who do you call when your child is dead? Where do you go when every doctor has done his best but simply cannot do any more?

I recently heard the story of a man who was developing a magnetic device that causes the cells in bones to rejuvenate at an extraordinary rate. This had great promise for people with bone cancer. The device never received FDA approval, because the man, who was developing it, died in a plane crash. Now his wife, who knew some of his research, is trying to carry it on in his absence, but we really need him. There are people who are in need of this treatment, and could quite possibly be helped by it, but he is gone. We also see that

C. Both are public.

This is not surprising. While most of us do not care to share our deepest needs in a public manner, the combination of (1) and (2) caused both of them to be so driven that they were willing to do something publicly in order to get the help that they had to have.

D. Both involve women. (girl and grown woman)

Once again, the gospel writers do not care about the fact that their culture tended to dismiss women as a whole. Women are featured prominently in the Bible because they are prominent in the heart of God.

E. Both involved twelve years.

This girl was born in the same year that this woman's condition took over her life. Twelve years later they would both find themselves on the receiving end of life from the giver of life. It is not coincidental.

F. Both involve touching.

A few weeks ago I pointed out how many times in this section that Matthew tells us about Jesus touching people. His touch was more than a warm gesture. His touch was the means by which healing, and life was transferred from him to them. In the case of the woman, she was the one who touched him, at least the fringe of his clothes. But even then, Jesus knew that she had touched him. In the case of the girl, Christ "took her by the

hand and the girl arose.” He is not contaminated, or made impure. He imparts wholeness and life.

G. Both are bold statements of belief in the face of enormous disappointment.

We also observe these powerful statements of faith, even though the loss and the suffering is deep and profound. These bold statements of faith “come and lay your hand on her and she will live” and “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well” are made by two people who have already suffered “enough.” Wouldn’t they, shouldn’t they be protected from further disappointment? These bold statements are in great contrast to something else.

H. Both go against the conventional thinking.

The leaders are not sanctioning Jesus. The Pharisees do not approve. If you identify yourself with Jesus, you run the risk of being labeled and being cut-off. Clearly Jairus does not care. Why not? The risk of being cut off is nothing compared to the loss of his daughter. And what about the woman? She is already cut-off. There really is no such thing as further ostracizing for her. The point is not lost on us. Those who acknowledge their need and run to Christ can expect to be cut off from the “establishment.”

Things have not changed, have they? When will you associate yourself with Christ in such a way that you are willing to accept the condemnation of others as a result? When you finally realize how desperate you are without Him.

I. Both are extremely personal.

a. Parental love

The idea of being a dad who cannot rescue his girl is overwhelming to me. This man’s despair is so raw. Here is a man who cannot save his girl. We are not shocked to bury our grandparents and parents. There is something tragically out of order when we bury our children. In this we see, we feel the love of a parent. In the next we see, we feel the loneliness of not belonging.

b. Personal estrangement

She did not fit in. She was different. Every day was a cruel reminder to her. She was:

- i. Physically flawed
- ii. Personally sick
- iii. Socially outcast
- iv. Financially spent
- v. Conclusion: physically, emotionally, socially, financially, psychologically completely spent.

J. Both are rescued, immediately!

The woman is healed “instantly”. And the girl is raised to life in a moment.

That is a lot to see, but there is more that we need to consider. Let’s look under the surface now.

2. Observe and Consider

A. This account is related to Christ’s words about new wine and old wineskins.

“*While he was saying these things to them...*” Jesus had just told the crowd that the bridegroom was standing in their presence. The One that they were waiting on was here. The Old Covenant (old wineskins) was not the end. It was not the goal. If you really understood the Old Testament, then you would understand that it was pointing to the Savior who would come. And guess what? He is here! Do you see the evidence of that? Abraham and Moses were pretty amazing but they did not do stuff like this!

Do you know where this is headed? Look at vs. 32-34. Think of what these men missed. They had the opportunity to learn from the very Son of God. They lived during a time when God took on human flesh and lived among them and taught them. They could have listened and learned and believed. Instead, they determined that they were going to find fault with him and in so doing they destroyed themselves. What a waste!! We miss so much when we presume that we already know everything there is to know.

B. These miracles are not as significant as His casting out of demons.

These two miracles (healing and resurrection) are incredible. But this section climaxes with the account of Jesus casting a demon out of a man. In our text Jesus is demonstrating power over the effects of sin. As we see when he deals with demons, he is much closer to dealing with the very heart of evil itself. His authority over demons is even more compelling evidence of his identity, which needs to be understood in light of the next point.

C. These miracles point to a greater miracle: healing from sin and the resurrection of Christ.

In the moment, there had to be euphoria by the family and friends of Jairus. The woman who was healed would be relieved, maybe ecstatic? But, if they all sat down to think about what had just happened what should their conclusions be? Think about it. What kind of a person can heal an impossible physical condition simply by being touched? What kind of a person can raise someone from the dead simply by taking her by the hand and telling her to rise up? It means that they had just encountered someone very unusual. But, they would have to think deeper, wouldn’t they? “It just so happened” that Jesus was close by when Jairus’ daughter became ill and died. “It just so happened” that Jesus was

in the same area that the woman was and it just so happened that he got up to go with Jairus which created an opening in the crowd and an opportunity for this woman to touch Christ. Obviously, these “it just so happened” did not just happen. There is nothing random about this, just as there is nothing random about anything that Christ did. These events pointed to his ultimate purpose on earth. The death of this girl and the physical condition of this woman were two situations that God not only used, but he obviously ordained so that Christ would be magnified. Are you tracking with me?

This means that God used the death of this girl and trauma of the family, as well as the twelve years of misery of the woman as a means to put the glory of Jesus on display. Are you okay with that? Do you consider the glory of Jesus to be a treasure of such inestimable worth that you would consider the display of his glory to be worth the distress and grief that you endure?

D. The individuals believe; the crowds are skeptical.

The synagogue ruler identified himself with the “sick people” who needed a physician (v.12). The woman also was willing to admit the true nature of her condition. The crowds (Pharisees, even the mourners – culturally and even professional hires for drama and affect) did not really take Christ seriously. It is rare that the crowds believe and keep on believing. It is easy to get caught up in the euphoria of the moment, but most belief in Christ comes in the face of the crowds, or in opposition to the crowds, not because of them. This is what we are called to. This is what we call people to understand and accept when we talk with them about Christ and encourage them to trust him.

E. This account adds even more reasons to believe the authority of Christ.

Here are two more situations where people dared to risk it all and trust in Christ and He came through for them. But again, healing people was not his goal. Helping people understand who he is and accept that and accept him as Savior is the goal.

F. This account gives even more evidence that the kingdom of God has invaded the kingdoms of man.

Around this time John the Baptist is arrested and is in prison where he will stay until he is executed. Before he dies he sends some of his disciples (chapter 11) to Christ to ask him if Christ really is the Messiah (like John had thought) or is there another. Jesus points to this event and others as evidence that he is fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies so that John would know. The Kingdom has come because this really is the King. Do you know what this account means?

It means that there is a God. It means that Jesus is God. It means that we were really made by him. It means that heaven is real. It means that there really is life beyond death. It means that we were made. We were designed. There is meaning. There is something bigger than us and Someone greater than us that we get to live for.

3. Consider and Apply

These miracles were some of the things that Jesus did in order to demonstrate that he was the Savior for the world. Healing people and raising others from the dead was not his primary and ultimate mission. He did it from time to time, but not always. And when he did it, it was for a greater purpose. He wanted us to know that He really is God. He really is the One that was promised to the world and He came. He came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He came to live a perfect life in our place so that he could die as a sacrifice for our sins. His perfect life qualified him as the perfect sacrifice that could be offered up on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin in full and to be the recipient of the wrath of God against our sin. These miracles pointed to his unique qualification as the One and only Savior. So...

A. Why would you not believe in Christ?

You may say, "How do I know that this is true?" That is a fair question, if you are willing to investigate it. Have you ever researched the history of Matthew's gospel? Are you aware of the overwhelming manuscript and historical information that supports the legitimacy of this? Do you realize that this was written by a man who was an eyewitness to many of these things? If you are unwilling to believe, it is not because of the lack of evidence. It is not unclear. It is not unreal. But, like the Pharisees, you may simply be unwilling. And that, my friend, is dangerous. So, let me push you a bit further. What do you have to believe in and hold on to that is better than Christ?

B. Why would you not follow Christ?

That is the question that Matthew answered. That is the question that Matthew and the rest of the disciples ask others (chapter 10). It is question that all followers of Christ ask others. Why would you not follow Christ? What do you have to follow that is better? What do you follow that is more powerful? What do you follow that is more consistent? What do you have to follow that will really love you more?

C. Why would you not treasure Christ?

Are you willing to consider the fame of Christ (v.26) to be worth the grief that you experience, if the sorrow of your life results in the salvation of others? Why are some people known for joy in the midst of suffering, while others are known for bitterness?

D. Why would you not tell others about Christ?

There is no One like him.

Are you willing to examine your life? What are you afraid you will find? Flaws? Insecurities, inconsistencies, failures? They are there. Own them, so that you can run to Christ.