

## Matthew 9D

- Time to return to Matthew's description of Jesus' miracles in the Galilee
  - In Chapter 9, we're moving into the final grouping of miracles that Jesus performs
    - This group of miracles shows Jesus' power to restore
    - The specific miracles themselves are similar to others in the first and second groups (*e.g.*, healing, demon possession)
  - But the final three miracles constitute a distinct group, because of two characteristics that all three miracles share
    - First, all three involve a form of bondage from which Jesus sets the person free
    - Secondly, in all three cases, Jesus makes faith a prerequisite to receive His healing
    - Prior to this moment in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus never made faith in Him a requirement to receive healing
  - So stepping back for a moment, as we look across the three groups of miracles in Chapters 8 & 9, we see a clear message
    - Jesus is the One Who heals, Jesus is the One with all power and authority, and Jesus is the One Who restores all things
    - In short, Jesus is the Messiah Who came in fulfillment of the covenants
    - And just to make sure we get the point, Matthew bookends his miracles with two "Messianic miracles"
    - We studied the first at the beginning of Chapter 8, and we find the second at the end of this chapter
- So tonight, we begin our examination of that third group
  - And as we do, we need to remember that Matthew chose to group certain miracles together to make his point about Jesus
    - And to create these groupings, Matthew stitched together events taken from different moments in time

- So the events in Chapters 8 and 9 took place in generally the same period of Jesus' ministry
    - But they do not flow in a perfect chronological order
  - By comparing Matthew's gospel to the other three, we can see how his narrative jumps back and forth in time
    - We will see that clearly during our story of the final group of miracles
    - In fact, this detail becomes all-important to interpreting the events in the final group
- Let's begin with the first of these miracles...which Matthew records as a miracle within a miracle
  - Reviewing the scene again...
    - Jesus and His disciples were in conflict with the Pharisees over the rules of the Mishnah
    - Jesus and His disciples were in trouble for eating with so-called sinners and failing to observe the Pharisees' twice-weekly fast
  - Neither of these concerns are based on Scripture; they are found only in the rabbinical rules written in the Mishnah
    - Therefore, Jesus wasn't sinning
    - Rather, His behavior was a concern for the Pharisees because it violated the Mishnah, which they regarded as equal to Scripture
    - And out of that moment, a desperate father arrives to ask for Jesus' help

**Matt. 9:18** While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

- Matthew tells us that a ruler comes to Jesus
  - In the context of a Jewish author writing to a Jewish audience, the word "ruler" has a specific meaning
    - Jews called those who ran the local synagogue a "ruler"

- So this man is the local synagogue official for the synagogue in Capernaum
- We get confirmation of this conclusion from Mark's Gospel, who tells us that this man was named Jairus and was a synagogue official
  - In Jesus' day, the role of teacher and synagogue official were separate
  - Scribes and rabbis taught the people, while the synagogue ruler was the administrative leader of the body
- The synagogue official was personally responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of all religious activity in the synagogue
  - Barclay writes this about the position of a synagogue ruler

He was elected from among the elders. He was not a teaching or a preaching official; he had 'the care of the external order in public worship, and the supervision of the concerns of the synagogue in general.' He appointed those who were to read and to pray in the service, and invited those who were to preach. It was his duty to see that nothing unfitting took place within the synagogue; and the care of the synagogue buildings were in his oversight. The whole practical administration of the synagogue was in his hands.

- So this man's job was to enforce proper worship practices in the synagogue
  - Which makes his behavior before Jesus all the more remarkable
- The man kneels before Jesus
  - Kneeling is an act of worship, not merely a show of respect for authority
    - The Jews of Jesus' day were very sensitive to anything that seemed like blasphemy or idolatry
    - For example, Jews would not handle Roman coins because they were stamped with the image of Caesar, who claimed to be a god
    - For the same reason, Jews wouldn't kneel before another person in authority, not even before a prophet or the King of Israel
    - Because that posture was reserved for worshipping God

[Psa. 95:6](#) Come, let us worship and bow down,  
Let us **kneel** before the LORD our Maker.

- So this man's posture before Jesus indicates he is worshipping Jesus, which in turn, tells us that the ruler truly believed Jesus was worthy of worship
  - And given his position in the synagogue, his act of kneeling before Jesus demonstrates supreme faith
    - Such a display of reverence before a human being would have been cause for a charge of blasphemy by the Pharisees
    - Though the man was probably not charged, he could have been sentenced to death for what he did
  - Yet the ruler seemed to understand that if he hoped to see Jesus heal his daughter, he couldn't hold back his worship
    - He had to be willing to put everything on the line to worship Jesus
    - His reputation, his occupation, his acceptance in the community, even his own life
    - He acted in faith toward Jesus because he was desperate to see his daughter restored
- Matthew records the man saying his daughter has died, but Luke and Mark record his words as she is "dying"
  - In all the Gospels, the girl is dead by the time Jesus makes His way to the house
    - So the man left his house before his daughter died, seeking Jesus to heal her
    - And therefore, Matthew apparently chose to condense his account to focus his readers' attention on the miracle itself
  - So Jairus makes his appeal of Jesus in a demonstration of faith, and Jesus responds by agreeing to follow the man back to his house
    - But as they go, another situation develops – this is our miracle within a miracle

[Matt. 9:19](#) And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.

[Matt. 9:20](#) And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment,

[Matt. 9:21](#) for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well."

[Matt. 9:22](#) Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

- Matthew's telling of Jairus' miracle is interrupted by the account of this woman
  - Interestingly, Mark and Luke also record these two miracles intertwined
  - Which suggests that all three writers recognized that the two scenes were related to one another in some way
- And as they go, they are followed by a crowd clamoring to get to Jesus, seeking for healing or whatever else they've come for
  - Matthew says nothing about the crowd in his account
    - But Mark and Luke tell us that the crowd that followed Jesus was very dense
    - Luke describes the crowd using a Greek word meaning "to choke out", meaning the crowds felt suffocating
    - It was like trying to move through a dense crowd at a concert or at the entrance of a football game
  - You can imagine the crowd is noisy and is shoving and pushing
    - So Jairus is cutting a path through the people, with Jesus following behind him, being jostled by the crowd
    - Meanwhile, His disciples surround Him, probably trying in vain to protect Jesus
- Then, from somewhere behind Jesus, up comes this woman, fighting her way through the crowd, determined to get to Him
  - All three Gospels say she had been hemorrhaging for 12 years
    - Though we don't know for sure how she was bleeding
    - But most likely, it refers to her menstrual cycle running unabated for 144 months

- By the way, Luke also mentions that Jairus' daughter was 12 years old when she died
- That curious similarity further suggests there's a linkage between these two accounts
- In the Law, Leviticus 15 gave strict rules for how Jewish society was to deal with individuals experiencing a fluid discharge from the body
  - First and foremost, as long as a person was in this condition, she was considered ritually unclean
  - And while a person is unclean, everything the person touched was unclean
  - And anyone who touched her or her bedsheets or garments would become unclean
- The effect of being ritually unclean in Israel was to be set apart from the community for a period of time
  - Usually, that time period was relatively short...usually a day, or in some cases, a week
  - It was enough time to make the spiritual point God wanted made, but not long enough to cause severe distress
  - After an appointed time, the Law permitted the person to be restored into the community through a ritual of sacrifice
- But this woman's bleeding was continuous for 12 months
  - So for 12 years, she hasn't experienced normal life
    - Beyond the obvious discomfort and embarrassment, she's been forced to live in a constant state of separation
    - She's likely become estranged from her family and friends over the years
    - And in fact, it seems she moved away, living a lie by concealing her situation so she can still mix with Jewish society
  - So as the woman approaches Jesus, she doesn't announce herself, coming up to Him secretly, probably for two reasons
    - First, she knew rabbis generally wouldn't touch her or even speak with an unclean woman

- Secondly, and more likely, she was afraid of making her situation known to the crowd
- Given how tightly everyone was packed around Jesus, they would never have allowed her to rub shoulders with them
- So she knew the only chance she had to get to Jesus was to keep her secret to herself
- The other Gospels also tell us that this woman had searched for cures from every doctor she could find
  - But those doctors only made things worse for her
  - Mark said she spent all her money and had endured a lot of abuse at their hands
- But then she heard that the Messiah was at hand healing everyone
  - And in that moment, she remembers something she was taught from Scripture as a young girl growing up in the synagogue
    - And based on what she remembered, she knew immediately what she needed to do to be healed
    - So she gathers her courage, blends into the crowds, making her way to get close enough to touch Jesus
  - And in particular, she needs to touch the hem of Jesus' clothing
    - Notice in v.21, Matthew said she knew if she touched Jesus' hem, she would be healed
    - That sounds like superstition to us, so what's going on here?
- To understand the scene properly, we need to spend a little time understanding an obscure prophecy of the Old Testament – one that she had placed her faith in
  - Beginning with the clothing typically worn by a rabbi
    - Typically, men wore two garments: a light under tunic, almost like underwear, and an outer tunic or robe
    - Then over the robe, a man wore a long shawl called a *tallit*, sometimes called a prayer shawl today

- The *tallit* was rectangular and was draped over the shoulders and extended down almost to the length of the robe
- Off the four corners of the *tallit* hem, called wings, hung tassels of knotted thread call *tsitsityot*
  - The Lord instructed Israel to make these tassels in the Law

[Num. 15:37](#) The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying,

[Num. 15:38](#) “Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue.

[Num. 15:39](#) “It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,

[Num. 15:40](#) so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

- Traditionally, these cords were knotted five times to represent the 5 books of the Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
  - Interwoven in the cord was as single blue thread to remind the nation of Israel that they were a kingdom of priests
- Over time, these tassels became a very important symbol in Jewish society
  - They came to represent the person’s reputation and authority
    - Ancient clay tablets have been found with the impression of a man’s tassels used as his signature on a document
    - A man could divorce a woman by cutting off the hem of her *tallit*
    - In fact, to remove the hem of a Jewish man’s garment was an act of humiliation
  - You may remember the moment in 1 Sam 24, when Saul is pursuing David in the wilderness and the two meet in a cave at En Gedi
    - Saul is indisposed in a cave, and David sneaks up from behind to quietly cut off the hem of Saul’s garment
    - David wasn’t merely showing Saul he got close enough to strike the king

- He was also humiliating Saul by removing the hem of his garment, an act David later repented of
- Naturally, any symbol of importance and power attracted great interest among the Pharisees
  - Ordinary Jews typically wore their *tallit* only on special occasions,
  - But the Pharisees had taken to wearing them regularly, to attract more attention to themselves
  - And when that practice stopped gaining attention, the Pharisees invented a new tradition
- Some enterprising Pharisee had the idea to increase the length of his tassels ever so slightly beyond the customary length, so as to stand out
  - When his fellow Pharisees noticed his exaggerated self-importance, a competition soon developed for who had the longest tassel
  - Later in this Gospel, Jesus mocks the Pharisees for their false piety

**Matt. 23:5** “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

- So now, back to the woman in our story, she thought to herself that she only needed to touch one of Jesus’ tassels hanging from the corner of his *tallit*
  - She believed that Jesus’ authority and power could be accessed through the hem of his garment
    - Which at first sounds crazy to us, but in light of Jewish tradition and teaching, it was a natural thing to assume
    - But her confidence goes deeper than mere tradition
  - She believed touching Jesus in this way would result in healing, because of her faith in a Messianic prophecy found in Malachi

**Mal. 4:2** “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

- The prophet says those who fear the name of the Lord will see Him bring healing for His people

- The prophet refers to the Messiah as the “sun of righteousness”
- The Hebrew word for sun (*shemesh*) means “the sun in the sky”; while the Hebrew word, *ben* means “a male offspring” or “son”
  - The fact that those words sound alike in English is just a happy coincidence
  - If you read this same verse translated into any other language, you wouldn’t find that to be the case
- Nevertheless, the context of the verse tells us Malachi was speaking about the Messiah, the Son of God
  - The rising of the sun in the sky is being used symbolically to represent the glorious arrival of the Messiah
  - And the dawning of the Kingdom of God
- And what this woman remembered most about Malachi 4, was the prophet’s promise that when the Messiah came, He would have healing in His “wings”
  - Remember, “wings” is the name given to the four corners of the *tallit* where the tassels on a man’s garment were attached
    - In fact, the word translated “corner” back in Numbers 15:38, is *kanaph*, which literally means “wing”
    - So like all Jews, this woman grew up hearing that their Messiah would possess power to heal in His wings, or corners of his shawl
  - So when she hears the Messiah is in the Galilee, in faith, she seeks Him out
    - Believing, as she says in v.21, that “if I touch his garment, I will get well”
    - And she does get well, instantly, as Matthew records in v.22
    - More than a physical healing, she was being restored to her community, returned to a useful life among friends and family
    - For 12 years she was unclean, now she is clean
- Matthew records in v.22, that Jesus turned and declared she was healed, but the other Gospels tell us that the woman was healed as she touched the garment

- Mark says she could sense her body had been healed immediately and the flow of blood ceasing
  - Furthermore, Mark and Luke add that Jesus sensed power had gone out from Him at that moment, which is why He stopped
  - So Jesus wasn't consciously involved in healing the woman...*He learned about it after it happened*
- In fact, Jesus didn't even know who had been healed at first
  - The other Gospels record a humorous moment, as Jesus turns around and asks who touched Him
  - The disciples are understandably confused by Jesus' question, because literally everyone was touching Him

**Mark 5:31** And his disciples said to him, You see the people round you on every side, and you say, Who was touching me?

- But Jesus goes on to explain that He felt power leaving Him, so He wants to find that particular person
- That begs a question...who do we credit with the woman's healing?
  - Did Jesus heal her? Not overtly
    - He was surprised Himself, and He says it was her faith that made her well
    - Now obviously, the woman didn't heal herself, so the power to heal her came from God
    - But if Jesus wasn't the Actor, then another member of the Godhead must have been acting
  - Remember, when the Second Person of the Godhead took the form of man, He took on certain limitations made necessary by that form
    - Jesus was no less God in terms of identity, but He voluntarily chose to empty Himself, becoming lower than angels for a time
    - During His time on earth, Jesus depended on the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His miraculous works
    - So, we conclude that the Holy Spirit did the healing work through Jesus in response to the faith of the woman

- So does that mean we credit the strength of the woman's faith for her healing?
  - Someone once said that it isn't the strength of our faith that brings us salvation, but having faith in a strong Savior
  - So the power to heal her was God's alone...but she received that power because she acted out of faith in the promises of God
  - Specifically, she believed the Bible's teaching about the Messiah, and she placed her faith in Jesus as that Messiah
- Finally, the other Gospels record that Jesus calls on the woman to confess to Him in the crowd

**Mark 5:30** Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"

- Jesus demands to know who touched Him
- Which is interesting, because Jesus could have kept walking, the healing was already complete
- Nevertheless, He calls for a public confession and, after a delay, the woman finally steps forward to confesses her deceit

**Mark 5:32** And He looked around to see the woman who had done this.

**Mark 5:33** But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

- So what are we learning from this moment between Jesus and the woman?
  - First, the woman's healing forms a picture of salvation
    - She is unclean, excluded from the commonwealth of God's people, until she comes to Jesus in faith
    - Her faith in the promises found in God's Word draws her to Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she receives power
    - This happens on the basis of faith alone, even before she sees Jesus face to face

- And her healing comes accompanied by a public confession, which results in her being reconciled to the family of God
- Likewise, Scripture teaches us that a person comes to faith based on hearing the Good News contained in the Word of God
  - We come to Jesus to have our sins washed away, to be made clean, by His blood
  - By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are born again, cleansed and made new, though we have never seen Jesus face to face
  - But having come to Him in faith, we then confess Him publicly
  - And we are reconciled to God by our faith
- So the woman's experience is a departure from previous miracles, in that faith in Jesus takes center stage in her healing
  - That hasn't been a requirement up to this point, and the reason for that change becomes apparent in the events of Chapter 12
  - Which tells us these miracles involving faith happened after the events of Chapter 12
  - So we'll wait until then to understand the connection
- Meanwhile, what's the connection between the ruler and this woman?
  - The two stories are intertwined for some reason
  - And both involve a display of faith before a healing
  - And both include the curious detail of a "12" in the story
  - We need to wait until next week to get the full answer, but we have part of our answer today
- The Lord is using the woman's faith to prepare the father for his own test of faith
  - First, we know Jesus was setting off to heal the daughter, but because of his delay dealing with the woman, the girl dies before Jesus arrives
    - Which means when the father returns, he will face a dilemma
    - Will he still have faith in Jesus to heal her after she has died?

- Or will he give up hope and tell Jesus not to bother now...it's too late
- We often pray for healing – but we tend to give up praying when the person has died
- Which is why the Lord arranged the earlier moment with the woman
  - The woman's healing becomes an opportunity for the father to learn a lesson of how faith works
  - That woman acted in complete confidence in the power of God's promises found in the Word
  - And she had her life restored to her merely on the basis of her faith
  - No other circumstances could explain it...she didn't even speak a word to Jesus, and He didn't even know she was there
  - The power of Jesus went out to heal, simply to fulfill the Word of God
- Furthermore, notice how the Lord constructed the moment to strengthen the father's faith
  - The Lord ensured that the woman's healing would emphasize faith on the father's part
    - The woman's condition was not visible...no one could see that she was bleeding, so no one could prove she was healed
    - The father had to believe the woman's testimony, and if he did, his own faith in God could be strengthened
    - So when they arrive home to hear the girl has died, the father can draw on this lesson to strengthen his own faith against doubts and fear
  - And in that moment, I also wonder if the man's mind went back to that same passage in Malachi that had inspired the woman's faith
    - Because just three verses later in that same chapter of Scripture, the prophet promises something else

**Mal. 4:5** "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

[Mal. 4:6](#) "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

- Now, we know Malachi was not specifically referring to the daughter's situation – nevertheless, I wonder if the father saw a connection in his case
  - Perhaps the father considered if God is willing to use a prophet to restore children to their fathers, will His Messiah not do the same and more?
    - All we can know for sure is, after this father arrived home to find his daughter dead, he remained confident Jesus could heal her
    - So from the woman, we learn the importance of faith to receiving the promises of God
    - And from the man, we see that God loves us so much, He works ahead of us preparing our hearts to have the faith required
  - The situation of both the woman and the ruler demonstrate something I've found to be true in my own life as a believer
    - That living-out your faith comes down to two essential behaviors
    - First, like the woman, we must live in complete trust that God is at work, keeping the promises found in His Word
    - The how and when of God's promises are simply a matter of time and place
    - But eventually, everything will come to pass, and so we live in expectation of these things...living with eyes for eternity
  - Secondly, like the father, we strive to pay attention to every faith lesson the Lord shows us in the by-and-by of everyday life
    - We recognize that a sovereign God is constantly at work around us, bringing circumstances to pass in specific ways so we will grow in faith
    - We connect the dots...from what we read in the Bible, to what we see happening in our life, to what we know is coming in the future
  - We understand that every trial and life disappointment is appointed by God

- A sick daughter is an opportunity to become more dependent on the Lord
  - A delay in getting help is an opportunity to learn a faith lesson or develop patience
  - An impossible situation is the opportunity to display great confidence in the Lord
  - Life's tragedies are only tragic if we fail to learn the lessons God intended
- Reflect on this during the week...consider whether your life reflects this kind of faith?
    - Like the woman, do you act boldly based on what you know in God's Word?
    - And like the man, do you receive the faith lessons God brings you in everyday circumstances to grow your faith?