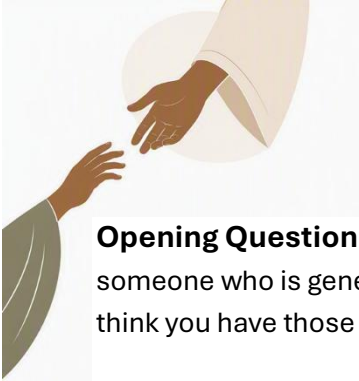




Week Five: Encountering Jesus in our NEED

Luke 8: 40-56

Opening Question: Today we are going to talk about the ways Jesus meets us when we need help. Are you someone who is generally good at asking for help when you need it, or do you tend to go at it alone? Why do you think you have those patterns?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Last week we talked about encountering Jesus in our gratitude. What do you remember from the story of the woman who poured love at Jesus' feet? How is gratitude related to recognizing and admitting our own brokenness?

Today's Passage: Today we have a story of Jesus meeting two very different people in need. One is a prestigious religious leader who begs Jesus to save his dying daughter. The other is an isolated woman who seeks her healing from the shadows. The father is trying to save what has been his joy for 12 years. The woman is trying to end what has been her burden for 12 years. Behind both of these stories are a few important contextual realities. First, in 1st century Jewish culture, **women (and especially girls) were treated as 2nd class citizens** with very few rights and very little regard. It is important to notice how Jesus interacts with women throughout the book of Luke, but especially in these stories today. Second, these stories take place in a Jewish world, where there were **strict laws called purity codes** that were meant to protect public safety in a world before systemized hygiene. While created for the public good, these laws were often taken to the extreme by religious leaders. Under these codes, anyone bleeding was considered "unclean" and would have been forced to live outside their community for as long as the blood was present. To avoid being unclean themselves, Jewish men often avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at women in public. Being near a corpse-and certainly touching someone who had died- was also considered an act of defilement. But in our story today, as Jesus is drawn into these two stories of deep need, we watch him defy expectations as he not only enacts healing, but draws close to the very people that society would tell him were unfit or unworthy of his healing touch.

CONTENT

Read Luke 8: 40-56 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. Spend some time looking at the 3 main characters in this story in need- Jairus, the bleeding woman, the dying daughter.
 - a. How are they similar? Different?
 - b. In what personal ways does Jesus interact with each of them?
 - c. How does Jesus interact with their needs?
2. Contrast Jesus pace, words, tone with the scenes around him. How are the crowds described? How does Jesus speak, move, interact in the middle of this? What does this tell you about Jesus?
3. How does knowing about the purity codes help you understand the story of the bleeding woman more fully? Her fear, her resistance to come forward?
 - a. Related to these codes and the woman's decade long isolation, why might it have been important not just for the woman, but for the crowds, to hear what Jesus says to her? What does his healing and announcement now do for this woman in relation to them?
4. What does Jesus call the bleeding woman in vs 48? What does he call the young girl in vs 54? Why are these names so important? What do they teach us about how Jesus sees us in our moments of need?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- Many of us struggle to feel like God is interested in us when we have needs. Our needs around healing, loneliness, jobs, dating, mental health challenges can feel like they are either too insignificant or too messy for the God of the Universe. Do you ever struggle with this? How does this story- and especially the words, actions, heart of Jesus in this story- push against these assumptions?
- In this story, Jesus readily touches what is considered unclean, extends mercy to those considered unimportant, restores life where it looks like death is in charge. How do these stories illustrate something bigger about the gospel story and what happens on the cross?
- John Mark Comer writes in "Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" that "hurry is the enemy of love." Talk about this quote. In what ways does hurry affect our ability to love others and intersect with their needs? Why is Jesus' unhurried pace important in this story? Why might an unhurried God be a comfort in the middle of our needs?
- Jairus boldly throws himself at the feet of Jesus pleading for help. The woman who is bleeding hides out in the shadows and seeks help quietly from the sidelines. How would you describe the way you approach God in times of need?

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

God of miracles and mercy- We admit that sometimes we wish we were people without needs. We wish that all of life was shiny and perfect and polished. That we were shiny and perfect and polished. But today we are reminded that you are a God who knows our needs, who draws close to our needs, who is not ashamed of us in our need. Thank you that in the moments of our deepest need, the first words you say to us are "daughter, son, child..." Those words remind us that we are yours. And they meet the deepest need we all have- to be fully known and fully loved. And so teach us, out of that love, to not only open our needs to you, but to be people who move at the pace of love, so that in your image, we might reach out our hands to the needs of those around us. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our unhurried Savior. Amen