

# Signs & Wonders 4 | Desperate Faith

Welcome to Mercy Church! Next week we are beginning a 6 part sermon series called “My Problem with God.” We are going to be answering some of the difficulties people have with the Christian message. “Why does God matter?” “Can we trust the bible?” “Why would a good God allow suffering?” And the like. This is going to be a great series to invite unbelieving friends to as we seek to show the Christian faith to be the reasonable and attractive message that it is.

One exciting thing happens right in the middle of the series: We are celebrating our 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday! It’s been incredible to see what God has done over these past two years...and we want to celebrate turning two by really turning it up for two Sundays. We planted to be a church for the people of Charlotte, So, on September 10<sup>th</sup> and on the 17<sup>th</sup> we are going to be celebrating our birthday in style...holding ONE worship gathering at 10:30am...at the Knight Theater smack in the middle of uptown! (Show Slide)

We will have Mercy Kids up and running. We could certainly use your help those two weeks. All of our inviter stuff is coming next week.

We will be in the middle of the PERFECT series to invite people to and listen we want to pack out the Knight

Theater for those two weeks. But its going to mean each of us inviting friends to be there. Mercy is going uptown. Gonna be “lit city” / rockin / awesome / groovy. Pick your adjective for “best thing of the year” from your generation and apply it to those two weeks.

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Ok. Now to this week. We are wrapping up our series called signs & wonders with a big finish. If you are new with us we’ve been in the gospel of Mark watching different scenes where the raw power of Jesus is on display. And the purpose for Mark doing that is to declare that the King of the world has arrived. Mark’s goal is to convince you Jesus is your King. And if he is...then your whole life has to shift to him being in charge. And Mark knows that’s a big claim that’s going to need a lot of power behind the one making it.

I’ve been so encouraged by how you have responded to this series. How you’ve leaned into the power of God. I’m so excited for those of you who have given your life to Christ and for others who have made a decision to return to him. For those of you who are beginning to find freedom from sin and healing from suffering. We aren’t done yet though. I believe we’ve saved the best for last. Today we are going to see Jesus’ power over the greatest enemy the human race has ever known. And we are going to see the clearest moment yet where Mark is sending a message through his story to you and I saying “what are you going to do about Jesus?”

[22] One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, (This guy would have been a well known guy, a big deal in the city.) came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet

[23] and begged him earnestly, “My little daughter is dying. Come and lay your hands on her so that she can get well and live.” [24] So Jesus went with him...

What you have to make sure you notice is Jairus’ approach to Jesus. Grown men didn’t beg nor did they fall down at other men’s feet – both actions were shameful and far beneath a man of Jairus’ stature. So why did he do it?

His little daughter is dying. Luke recalls this same situation and tells us it’s his only daughter. About 12 years old. And bottom line ya’ll when your little girl is dying...you get **desperate**. And you sacrifice your pride and anything else if it will save her. **Desperation acts like a sledgehammer to the walls pride builds in your life**. The next thing that happens is that we unexpectedly press pause on Jairus’ situation. Look:

...and a large crowd was following and pressing against him. [25] Now a woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years...

That means she’s had an unceasing menstrual flow for 12 years. Think about what this means. She has this problem because Something is wrong with her body. It’s a chronic condition that means she’s sick, she’s in pain, she can’t have kids...and on top of all of that...in her day she is considered “unclean.” Which means no one could touch her and she wasn’t allowed around people. Think about that. No one to literally lean on as she hurts, no hug from a friend...for 12 years.

[26] had endured much under many doctors. She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse.

She’d tried everything. She went to all the specialists and they couldn’t help her. She’d spent her life savings and got NOTHING! In fact...she was worse off now than when she started seeking help.

I asked Courtney how she’d feel if she had what this woman had because a woman’s perspective is especially helpful here. She said hopeless, exhausted, and weary deep in my soul. Chronic pain has this way of making you cynical towards hope. After all you’ve tried everything and it hasn’t worked. So your mantra becomes “I don’t want to get my hopes up.” But watch what happens...

[27] Having heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothing. [28] For she said, “If I just touch his clothes, I’ll be made well.”

She heard about Jesus. Heard he had been healing people. That he had power. The only reason she went is because she heard others talking about it. Quick Question: Do the people around you know what God has done in your life? When their life falls apart do they know where to go because they “heard about Jesus” from you? And if not, why not? Christian...share your story! Make Jesus the hero of it and tell them about the one who had the power to save you from your sin!

Anyways, having heard it, she acted. Now remember: She wasn’t allowed to touch anyone! This crowd is

pressing around him...but she should not be in it. Because she's going to make people unclean. Which means...she will be banished. Already looked down on and now staining others? You have to understand she's risking everything. Why? **She's desperate. And desperation acts like a sledgehammer to the walls pride builds in your life.**

Catch this: She doesn't care about what the crowd thinks about her! I know plenty of people that don't get too close to Jesus because they are worried about what the crowd will think.<sup>1</sup> Not this woman. She's going to him. She doesn't care about what people in the office will say about her. Or maybe for you "My parents will think I've joined a cult or something." She says...forget the crowd! Do you hear that!? Forget the crowd!

She moves in and grabs hold of his clothing. Tired. Hoping. Desperate. If I can just touch his clothing...That's a belief that he radiates power. Healing power.

**[29] Instantly her flow of blood ceased, and she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction.**

She grabbed onto healing power...and she was healed. 12 years of suffering & trying to find cures. But when she touched Jesus...at that very instant. Not gradually, but instantly...she was healed.

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<sup>1</sup> Great application thought from J.D. Greear in his sermon on this passage titled "Jesus, Interrupted." Preached Sept 4, 2016.

**[30] At once Jesus realized in himself that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"**

Ok this verse messes with me. Because at first read I find myself asking...Does Jesus not control his power? Can people sneak up on God and snatch some healing? like God's power is a fresh baked cookie left on a low counter-top to cool while Courtney goes into the other room and then you can just blame one of your siblings? And Does he not know who touched him?

Of course he is in control and of course he knows who touched him. This question isn't for his benefit, its for her benefit. Like when that cookie goes missing and we walk in the other room and 4 kids are looking at us one of whom has chocolate all over her face. And I say "who ate the cookie?" We know the answer...the question is giving her the opportunity to confess.

Jesus is calling her to make her faith public. See she was hoping Jesus would give her a quick fix to her problem & then she'd slip back into the crowd. But Jesus has so much more for her. When you come to Jesus you will get more than you ask for, but it will also cost you more than you thought it would. Discipleship isn't about getting the miracles of Jesus, its about knowing the person of Jesus. He's making her go public. He wants her to own what God has done for her.

Btw this is why baptism is so important. You were never meant to keep your love for Jesus private. You can't touch Jesus, experience the power of God that saves you

from your sin, and run back into the crowd. Your story of what he's done for you...he wants you to declare it. To own it publicly. And that starts with baptism. Some of you need to step out of the crowd. We baptize regularly here & you just need to talk to one of us after service today - Take the step. Trust Jesus.

[31] His disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing against you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"

Poor guys. They are like us. Unaware of what Jesus is really doing. They are trying though. I used to mock these guys like "not the sharpest crayon in the box." But the more I walk with Jesus the more I realize he's doing so much more in a moment than I can see. They are like Dude really? That's like saying who touched the guy at the bottom of the pile who recovered the fumble? EVERYBODY touched you.

[32] But he was looking around to see who had done this. [33] The woman, with fear and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

Look at her. Quivering...and just like Jairus she falls down before him. She's at his mercy. The mob rushing to Jairus' house has stopped. It's gone silent & still. What is Jesus going to say and do in response to her?

[34] "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction."

Lean in here church. Lean in to what has happened. This is huge for understanding WHY Mark is telling us this story. My old pastor taught me this very important truth from this passage years ago.<sup>2</sup> In this moment we see Jesus reverse the natural order.

The woman is unclean. Jesus is not just a man in the eyes of the crowd, but a holy man. For the unclean woman to touch the holy man would defile the holy man. It would make him unclean. Again it would make any person unclean but doubly offensive for what it does to him.

Like when you have a cold. If I get around you when you have a cold, you don't catch my wellness. I catch your cold. You don't drop your sick kids in mercy kids so that they will catch the wellness of other kids. DON'T be that parent please. No, they all catch your kid's sickness.

Nor can you pass your sickness along like a hot potato. When we say "you gave me your cold." That doesn't mean it left you. It means it is still with you and spread to me. That's what they believed about the "unclean." That unclean person would defile the clean person if she touched him.

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<sup>2</sup> HUGE credit to my friend and mentor J.D. Greear for teaching me this idea years ago. It has done wonders for my own sense of acceptance in Christ. His teaching on this passage can be found in his sermon "Jesus Interrupted" cited earlier in this manuscript.

The shocking thing here in this story is that when the unclean person touches the clean person...the unclean person is made healthy and clean!

Alarm bells should be going off for us as spectators! Mark is foreshadowing what Jesus is going to do on the cross. See all of us are in this woman's position. We carry the stain of our sin with us. When we come to him, when we reach out and grab hold of him...he takes our sin onto himself and gives us his holiness. We become clean and Jesus carries our sin. This is why Isaiah says the Messiah would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows...that he would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Jesus took our sin (our defilement) and sends us away forgiven and clean so that we could have fellowship with God. The woman went home healed and Jesus went to the cross. This is you and me. The POWER of God and the Love of God are at their heights at the cross. And they are poured out to set you free from your sin. To heal you & restore you to God.

[35] While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?"

Can you imagine Jairus' anxiety throughout this pit stop? Jesus was being rushed to save a little girl who was at death's door and he stops to help a woman with a chronic ailment? If Jesus is really a healer, this is more than insensitive. This is malpractice! Treating the chronic illness ahead of the dying girl? No way. What are you doing Jesus? HURRY UP!! HURRY UP!

And then the worst news any parent could ever possibly get. Ever. Comes. Your daughter is dead. And they say "why bother the teacher anymore?" IT'S TOO LATE! HE COULD HAVE HEALED HER! BUT NOW? NOW WHAT CAN HE DO JAIRUS? IT'S TOO LATE MAN. LET'S GO.

We don't even get Jairus' words. Maybe because there are no words he can pull together. But right before that moment where desperation gives way to grief...right before it. Jesus locks in with him. EYE TO EYE...

[36] When Jesus overheard what was said, he told the synagogue leader, "Don't be afraid. Only believe."

I know it sounds cliché but you need this truth today: It's never too late for Jesus. Ever. Right now where you want to lose hope...right now trust me. Your mind is reeling in a thousand different directions...stop it all and lock in right here Jairus. Trust me. Some of you need to see Jesus looking over Jairus' shoulder at you. And saying trust my timing. 'remember how when I calmed the storm I showed you that my grace is compatible with going through storms even though you may not think so? Well now I'm telling you my grace is compatible with what seem to you to be insensitive outlandish delays."

Jesus is not saying "I will not be hurried even though I love you." He's saying "I will not be hurried *because* I love you. I know what I'm doing. I don't think anybody in here likes that truth when they first hear it. Nobody in the middle of pain or panic wants to hear about "God's timing." I don't. But what you are seeing here is that he's connecting his timing to his love for Jairus. And Jesus is

saying if you try to impose your understanding of schedule and timing on me, you will struggle to feel loved by me as you should.”<sup>3</sup>

[37] He did not let anyone accompany him except Peter, James, and John, James’s brother. [38] They came to the leader’s house, and he saw a commotion — people weeping and wailing loudly. [39] He went in and said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.” [40] They laughed at him...

Sounds insensitive doesn’t it? They are weeping because their little girl is dead. Their laugh isn’t humorous, it’s the bitter scorn of a grieving family. But Jesus isn’t being insensitive, he’s seeing the situation in a way they cannot.

...but he put them all outside. He took the child’s father, mother, and those who were with him, and entered the place where the child was. [41] Then he took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum” (which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, get up”). [42] Immediately the girl got up and began to walk. (She was twelve years old.) At this they were utterly astounded.

Little girl – best translated “sweetheart.” It’s not a triumphant shout of a warrior. It’s like a parent sitting on the side of the bed and waking a child up from a nap. Jesus isn’t just powerful, he’s tender & caring. He holds

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<sup>3</sup> Keller, Tim. *Jesus The King*. 68

her hand and at just that touch he wakes her up from death. “The power here is overwhelming. Jesus is facing the most feared, devastating enemy the human race has ever known – and he treats it like waking up a little girl from a nap.”<sup>4</sup>

And of course, she gets up. Starts walking around.

And they were utterly astounded – This is what happens when you experience the power of God. Our emotions and language never seem so feeble, so inept, as they do when we encounter the power of God in the person of Jesus.

Let me show you what we are supposed to take away from these two stories. Both stories are telling us the gospel story from different angles. See these stories are not primarily about how you can get access to the miracles of Jesus like these two people did. The purpose of these miracles is to show you that God’s love for you is so great that even though you are a sinner he WANTS to rescue you from the penalty of your sin. And that God’s power is so great he CAN rescue you. The stories point you to the cross! That’s why Mark includes them. They are gospel re-enactments. Here’s what we see from the woman with the chronic illness:

#### **Jesus heals us from the affliction of our sin**

Again our affliction isn’t primarily physical, its spiritual. Our affliction is our sin. We are all like this woman because we are all sinners in need of rescue.

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<sup>4</sup> Greear “Jesus, Interrupted.”

**We are defiled & outcast:** Our sin has stained us, left us cast out from the presence of God but unlike this woman our spiritual affliction is our fault. We sinned and it separates us from God. And we feel it. We feel like imposters around our peers. If they only knew. We carry the guilt of the things we've done wrong. We are guilty broken sinners. Whether you want to own that or not. And...like this woman we have turned to everything to fix our brokenness. Blaise Pascal in his famous book '*Penses*' published in 1670 said that there is a void sin creates at the center of every person and we try to fill it with every kind of created thing. It is our hopeless quest.

**We are hopeless:** Think about it. Think about the things we turn to. Education, technology, romance, escapes, morality....

Education hasn't fixed our sin problem. We haven't PhD'd our way out of sinning.

Technological advancements haven't fixed our sin problems. I had a friend growing up who used to say man, the world is getting better and better and by the time we are adults its going to be blissful & peaceful to live in. Our kids are going to be practically in a utopia! Well it turns out they are growing up in a world where Nazi's aren't characters from history books they represent a current, present day evil. Education and Technology aren't the answer.

**Romance doesn't fix our problem** – We believe a relationship will make us secure..."you complete me..." Problem is..no you don't. Tom Cruise lied to me. Divorce

is normative, & our hookup culture is creating depressed broken people at an alarming rate.

**Escape doesn't work** – Had a good friend who went back and forth between the bottle and pills for years because it numbed pain. It was his escape. Yet it lost its effect because even while bingeing he'd think: I know my life is waiting on me. Some of you escape to Netflix. You sit beside your spouse ignoring your problems instead of facing them and turning off that stupid rectangle. Some of you escape into food and you eat your feelings.

**Morality doesn't fix our problem** – People think if I am a nice person, if I do more good things and clean myself up. Maybe if I even get a little religious...that will fix this problem I have. I'll feel better about myself because I'll be a more charitable, wholesome person. NO! You wont. You will become a self-righteous person! Because you think your new morality will make you superior to those who do not control themselves & behave as you do. That's the worst kind of sinner of all!!

That's what so many people think when they come to church! They'll get religion and religion will help them! It won't! In fact, like this woman experienced with the doctors, religion will only make you worse off! In your moral superiority your pride will blind you to the fact you are a wretched sinner who cannot do enough good to outweigh the bad in your life. You'll be deaf to verses like [6] All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind. Isaiah 64.6

In fact, with all of these “cures”, especially with Morality, like this woman what you just saw is that we wind up worse off than we were when we went to them. And MAAAYBE...maybe by the grace of God you have been down enough dead end trails that you are now desperate.

This is why her story is here. To show us how to finally be cured. Like this woman you are going to have to push through the crowd and grab hold of Jesus. You can't hide in the crowd and hope that just being close to Jesus will work.

Plenty of people touched Jesus...This woman was the only one who got his power. Because she reached out in desperate faith and grabbed him. Her faith wasn't perfect. Right she was going for a power grab...get it? That's great news! You don't need to have perfect theologically pristine faith...you need DESPERATE faith.

The point is: you need to reach out and really grab him. Confess your sin, confess you have no hope without him. And RIGHT THERE...that's where his power is unleashed into your life. Which means he will forgive you...he will cleanse you...he will heal you. I'm praying some of you today will stop being casual with Jesus. Step out in boldness.

When you look at Jairus' story we see the gospel from a different angle. His story tells us:

**Jesus rescues us from a death we cannot stop**

We see ourselves in Jairus don't we. And we should

because we must see Jesus is calling us to have desperate faith. And when we do, Jesus says...now that you are here...now that you've thrown yourself fully onto me, you have to trust me. Trust that I love you. We need to see him saying “Don't fear, just believe.” When fear wants to swallow you whole, instead fix your eyes on me. But listen, we are also his daughter.

Jesus has faced our greatest enemy, death, and he defeated it! That's the kind of power we are talking about. The bible talks about the consequences of our sin in terms of a debt. We sinned, we incurred a debt for that sin...and that debt is death. Eternal separation from God. We talked about this a few weeks ago if you remember when we finished up 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15 says that by Jesus getting up out of the grave...he won victory over death! Right? 1 Cor 15.55 “oh death where is your victory OH death where is your sting!?!? The sting of death is sin.”

And Jesus has taken the sting out. So we don't fear death anymore. Our greatest enemy...its lost its stinger. So now facing our greatest enemy...when Christ holding our hand...is like waking up from a nap.

We've got four kids. There is nothing more frightening for our kids, especially when young, nothing more frightening than losing their parents hand in a crowd. Or if we are walking in the dark...nothing scarier. Because now they are all alone without the power of mom or dad to get them out. “but that is nothing compared with Jesus's own loss. He lost his father's hand on the cross. He went into



the tomb so that we can be raised out of it. Let him take you by the hand, let him do what he wants to do. He loves you completely. He knows what he's doing. Soon it will be time to wake up."<sup>5</sup>

The one thing both of these stories are telling you:

### **Jesus responds to desperate faith**

Are you desperate for him today? Here's what I see: I see too many people get desperate for Jesus only when they really have to. Mark is telling you to wake up. If you are not urgently and completely dependent on Jesus, today, you are living in a false reality. Your pride of self-reliance is blinding you to how desperately you need Jesus. Eph 6 says everyday we are to put on the Armor of God. Why? Because life is a battle for your soul and that is not overspeak. A biblically faithful description of TODAY is that there is an evil one called satan trying to destroy you using pride, romance, distractions, & morality. You are at war with a power much stronger than you. And when you understand that...you will get urgent and you will get desperate for God to carry you. Because that evil power trembles at the power of Jesus.

All four stories there is one thing in common: The fear of the power of Jesus. When Jesus heals the lame man the people fear his power. When Jesus calms the storm, the disciples are terrified of his power. The demons possessing the outcast man are terrified at the sight of Jesus. And when he takes care of them, the people are

so scared they run him out of town. The woman in this story is trembling having experienced his power. Jairus falls down at the feet of Jesus.

WHEN YOU SEE JESUS FOR WHO HE IS, His power will terrify you! And his love will bring you to rest. And then he will reach down and take your hand and walk with you through your darkest days and through death itself.

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<sup>5</sup> Keller, *Jesus the King*. 78