

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Optimism, Pessimism, and Indifference

Luke 8:40-56

August 25, 2013

Today I'm going to be speaking to you from Luke chapter 8, and I'm going to be speaking about

- Optimists
- Pessimists
- The Indifferent

INTRODUCTION

You and I—we are one of these role models. We're either optimists, pessimists, or we're part of the crowd of indifferent people. So, I ask you today, “Which one are you?” Are you the optimist that always sees things positively? Are you the pessimist that always sees the negative, or are you part of the indifferent crowd, the crowd that doesn't care? That is the crowd that sways with popular opinion, the crowd that is full of skeptics.

Before I read in Luke chapter 8, let me set the stage here. Jesus had been very busy. He'd been healing people. He had been driving out demons. He'd been calling his disciples. He had been teaching. Jesus's ministry right now was in full swing. Jesus had told parables. He went around teaching things that were shocking to some people and just setting other people free with his teaching. He went from village to village with the kingdom of God. Now, Jesus had become very popular. People were very interested in the miracles. Jesus was healing, and Jesus was teaching.

So, they started following him wherever he went. The crowds got so intense at times that the scripture talks about how Jesus himself felt choked by the number of people that would crowd around him. One day he told the disciples, “Let's get in a boat. Let's go to the other side of the lake.” When they were on this boat, the disciples came up on a squall, a terrible storm, and Jesus calmed the storm. While they were on the other side of the lake, Jesus healed the demon-possessed man. The people on that side of the lake were so afraid of Jesus's power that they asked him

to leave. Jesus and His disciples sailed back to where they started, and the crowd was still there. They were waiting on Jesus. For whatever reason, the crowd was still there. Here, we pick up in chapter 8 verse 40.

SCRIPTURE Luke 8:40-56

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years,^[a] but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." ⁴⁷ Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." ⁴⁹ While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore." ⁵⁰ Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." ⁵¹ When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. ⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." ⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

1-OPTIMISTS

EXPLANATION

Here we have Jarius, the father, the optimist. Look at the sequence of events. Jarius was in the crowd, which means he had left his dying daughter. Now what kind of father would leave a dying daughter? It would be a father who believed that

somebody out there could help and that his name was Jesus. “If only I can get to Jesus, Jesus can heal her before she dies,” Jarius thought.

Who was this man Jarius? There's not much about Jarius in the Bible except for this story. He was a ruler of the Jews, and he was one of one of a very few Jewish religious leaders who believed in Jesus. In fact, one of the other gospels said none of them believed; so, Jarius must have been the first or one of the first religious leaders who believed in Jesus. Jarius risked his reputation as a ruler of the synagogue by seeking out Jesus, but he was desperate, and his reputation didn't matter to him. What was more important was getting help for his daughter.

As Jesus decides to go help Jarius and go to Jarius's home, he's interrupted, and we have this beautiful story of Jesus healing a woman with a bleeding problem. Jesus stopped to heal this woman with a non-fatal condition, and he delayed getting to the girl who was dying. One commentator said that for Jarius it must have been like the frustration we feel when we're trying to get somewhere but we're stuck in a traffic jam.

ILLUSTRATION

I like Jarius's optimism even though it came out of desperation. Let me ask you a question. Don't you like being around optimists? Don't you like being around people that are full of joy, full of hope? I do. Pek Gunn was my grandpa's first cousin. He was the poet laureate of Tennessee about thirty years ago. Peck wrote a poem called *The Optimist*.

The Optimist

I passed a sand lot yesterday,
Some kids were playing ball,
I strolled along the third baseline,
Within the fielder's call.
“Say, What's the score?” I asked the chap,
He yelled to beat the stuffin'
“There's no one out, the bases full,
And they're Forty-Two to Nuthin'!”

You're gettin' beat, aren't you my lad?"
And then in no time flat,
He answered: "No Sir, not as yet!
Our side ain't been to bat!"

A true optimist is not stifled by criticism and negative people. I have a friend who works in sales, and he tells me that only one in 30 people that he talks to are interested in what he has to sell. Most people would give up after about the third rejection, but he's happy because he knows there are still 27 more people to ask.

Optimists are people who realize that things don't have to be perfect in order for things to work. Look at Jarius. In verse 49 someone told Jarius the bad news. The scripture said that while Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother the teacher anymore." Yet, he took Jesus to his home anyway.

Optimists realize that it doesn't all have to be perfect in order to work. I'm a master at driving old cars. If a car doesn't get 300 thousand miles on it, I consider it a lemon. So, three hundred and fifty-five thousand is the record for one of my cars right now. I had an old Buick that I was driving just a few years ago, one of those 300 thousand mile-plus cars. It was old, but it looked okay, and an older gentleman I know was trying to be encouraging to me. He said, "Hey your car looks pretty good from a distance, and yeah, so do you."

APPLICATION

As optimists and Christians of joy, we really need to look for potential in everything. We need to look for possibilities. Sometimes people believe that if a door shuts that's God speaking. It may be, but there may be times when we need to tear the door down and go anyway. Be like Jarius. Be determined. Find the master. Bring the master into your life. Risk your reputation. Don't care what other people think. Bring this person, Jesus, into your family, into your life.

I was thinking this morning on the drive here, there's really no reason for any of us to not be optimists. We're Americans. What a blessing it is for our forefathers to have paid the cost and the price for us to have the freedoms that we have today. We are a blessed people, and we are we are Tennesseans. It can't get any better than

that. We have country ham. We have biscuits. We have Cracker Barrel; that started right here in Tennessee. I mean, can life get much better? On top of all of that, we have Jesus. We have a triple blessing. We're Americans. We're Tennesseans. We have Jesus. Can life get much better? Yet, there are people who have the triple blessing, the quadruple blessing, and they constantly mope, pessimists who think that the world's going to end tomorrow.

2-PESSIMISTS

EXPLANATION

Let's look at the pessimist in verse 49. There's no name for this man. I'm calling him "the man from first 49." The man from verse 49 said, "She's dead. Leave the teacher alone." He announced the bad news; he wasn't soft about it. "Jarius, she's dead. Leave the teacher alone." This scripture tells us that the man in verse 49 did not know the power of this teacher. He did not know that death to Jesus was nothing more than sleeping. He did not know that the master himself would conquer death soon. He did not know what was about to happen. Now the father, Jarius, excited because he had found Jesus and because Jesus was coming to his home, now had cold water thrown on his face because of the bearer of bad news.

ILLUSTRATION

There are people who have PhDs in flaw-finding. I've seen many good ideas about to be birthed that were aborted by pessimists. If there's a flaw, they'll find it. There are people who think the worst thing is going to happen in every situation.

Taking kids to the beach is dangerous. Going somewhere on New Year's Eve is dangerous. Camping out is not a good idea. You know, you could fall off your front porch and die. The pessimist pouts when plans aren't changed to meet his fancy. The pessimist is blinded by his negative attitude, and he doesn't even have the ability to admit that he was wrong when nothing goes wrong.

I know a man who talked about dying for thirty years. People miss out on the joy of living for thinking "Woe is me." A few years ago, I visited a lady in the hospital who was sick. She said she was near death. She had a woe-is-me attitude although she didn't really have a fatal illness. Seven years later, she's still alive.

The pessimist is the one at every family reunion that says, “This might be our last time together.” Why not rejoice and say, “Hey, we hope to see everybody again!” A woman bought a car and said, “This is the last car I will ever own.” Seven years later, she's still saying that.

Some of you have been to Mount Rushmore, and you've seen the four presidents' heads, an incredible sculpture. The sculptor of Mount Rushmore is a man named Gutzon Borglum. He said, “The I can'ts are the unknowns of the world.” Think about that. Think about the challenge that he had, to create the world's largest sculpture and make it look like someone, not only someone but make it look like four people. “The I can'ts are the unknowns of the world,” the pessimists, the one who never takes a challenge, the one who gloats in bearing bad news. That person doesn't leave much of a legacy behind.

Are you an I can't person? When someone says it can't be done, that's all the more reason to try to make it happen. I would rather fail trying to make something happen than to never try.

APPLICATION

The man in verse 49 saw death as final. He didn't believe, but Jesus arrived on the scene. Look what he said to Jarius in verse 50. He said, “Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.” Imagine the conversation between the man from verse 49 and the father.

It's hard to overcome negative news sometimes. When I was growing up in in the 70s, the world to me seemed negative—OPEC, inflation, Vietnam, threats about nuclear war, the spread of communism, and there was so much preaching about the end times. Honestly, I didn't try hard in school because I thought it didn't matter. I thought the world would end tomorrow, that there was no need to work hard. I thought I'd never make it past high school; I'd never graduate; I'd never be married; I'd never have children, but I want my kids to have a more positive view of the world around them. Sure, there's a lot of bad things going on in this world, but there's a lot of good things going on in the world. Today's world is all the more reason for people of faith to stand up and say, “We believe that there's a Savior that's here for this world.”

Don't be the man from verse 49. The man from verse 49 didn't realize Jesus just wasn't any ordinary visitor. People will let us down, but Jesus will never let you down.

3-THE INDIFFERENT

EXPLANATION

The next people are the indifferent, the skeptics, the opinionated, the do-nothings. Look in verse 52. Notice all the people were wailing and mourning, but when Jesus said, “She's not dead but asleep,” they laughed at him.

In this day and time, people were more acquainted with death on a regular basis than we are. When people get sick today, we take medicine. Most people recover. Death happens outside of the home; often it happens in hospitals or in hospice care. But in Biblical times, people were all too familiar with death and dying. When someone died, they knew that the person had died. Why would the mourners all of a sudden start laughing? They were professional mourners, which were common in that day. People were hired to be professional mourners. So, when Jesus said, “She's just sleeping,” they just laughed him to scorn. These were the indifferent. They didn't have any faith in Jesus, and they did nothing to help. They offered no encouragement. Their motto was, “Don't just do something; stand there.”

The indifferent are the ones who gather in great crowds composed of other indifferent or skeptical people or do-nothings. As believers, people of faith, they could be a great force, but as indifferent, they are forces of nothing. To them, death was the end, but you know what? Sometimes the majority is wrong, because this was not any other ordinary visitor.

ILLUSTRATION

I wonder how the world would be different if someone had bought Adolf Hitler's artwork instead of criticizing him. I wonder how the world might be different if people of faith from England had reached out to Charles Darwin. I wonder how the world might be different if people had reached out to a young man who later called himself David Koresh, the leader of the cult in Texas? Did you know as a young

man he had a personal struggle, and he went to a church one day and asked to speak to a pastor? He openly told this pastor of his personal struggle; the pastor read him a scripture and sent him on his way. In other words, he didn't help him. I just wonder how the world may have been different, especially for those women and children and men who perished in Waco, Texas, because of a man who went crazy and was a victim of indifference.

At my former church, it was deacon election time. I went by the library, and I heard two boys talking. Now in that church, they let all church members vote on deacons. If you were a member, you got to vote. So, these children were looking at the deacon ballot. One boy said, "Hey, vote for him because he gives us candy." I mentioned that to the chairman of the deacons because I was concerned at the lack of spiritual depth that was going into the boys' scheme to elect the Candyman. The chairman of the deacons said to me, "You know what? Maybe that man has the gift of giving, and he's just being who he is by giving candy to the kids." There was another man who was campaigning for deacon, and he ignored the children. Guess who got elected as deacon? Candyman!

I love seeing people who refuse to be part of the indifferent majority. I think of a lady named Elaine Phillips. My daughter is named after her. I was associate pastor of Elaine's church during my seminary years. She was in her 80s, and she kept asking me when we were going to have a youth lock-in at her house. I really thought she was joking. Finally, we did it. Seventeen teenagers and I went to her home for an all-night lock-in. We watched a movie late at night. We went to play mini golf. Then we went to Denny's around midnight for ice cream. Then, at 2:00 a.m., she wanted to play tennis at the city tennis courts. She knew the location of the light switch at the tennis courts. She flipped on the lights, and the police came. When they saw a woman in her 80s in her tennis outfit, they left us alone. At five o'clock in the morning, she decided to keep everyone awake by playing ragtime piano. At 5:30, she wanted to know who wanted pancakes. She never said, "I'm too old for that."

When I think of a person who refuses to be part of the indifferent majority, I think of Mr. Duffer, a quiet man who I knew when I was a boy. I knew him as The Chewing Gum Man. He must have bought Juicy Fruit by the truckload. He handed it to kids on Sunday in a secret type of way. You would catch Mr. Duffer's eyes, and he would just act like he didn't see you. Then he would catch your eye again

and slip you a piece of Juicy Fruit. He paid attention to the little kids, and today there are a lot of people in their 40s and 50s that think of their childhood home church as a happy place because Mr. Duffer was kind to them.

In the middle of a crowd of laughing people, Jesus took this 12-year-old girl by the hand and said, “My child, get up,” and then he told the parents to get her something to eat. He did that to prove that this just wasn't just a ghost. This was a human person. The scripture says her spirit came back to her, and she was hungry, and she needed something to eat.

APPLICATION

As believers, let's not be guilty of pessimism and indifference. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who was imprisoned and killed by the Nazis in World War II, said, “True followers of Jesus have an irresistible love for the lowly, the sick, for those who are in misery, for those who are demeaned and abased, for those who are suffering injustice and are rejected, and for everyone in pain and anxiety. They seek out those who have fallen into sin...No need is too great; no sin is too dreadful for mercy to reach out.” May I add that there is no room for the indifferent majority to point a finger.

CONCLUSION

So, here we have Jarius, the optimist. May we all be like him. May we do whatever it takes to get people to Jesus. We have the man from verse 49. Don't be him. We looked at the indifferent crowd. Don't be them.

Here's my question to you today. What legacy are you leaving behind? It's up to you. It's a choice. I believe today that Jesus still heals. I believe he can heal the same way that he healed Jarius's daughter. Jesus is still Lord over death. Nothing has changed. The scripture tells us that Jesus promises an abundant life on earth and an eternal life in heaven for all who believe. Today, if you've never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can repent of your sins. You can you can know this man that healed Jarius's daughter. He is not just a historical figure that you read about but a man who wants to save you right now.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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