

A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER IN LUKE 8:40

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Abstract. The nature of human existence makes it fundamentally necessary for people to live a healthy life. The need to restore people to full health has been paramount to man since creation. Man has always needed to suppress and reduce in intensity such things as enemies, sickness and diseases, which cause pains and damages to humanity.

The healing could partly mean restoring what is broken between one human being and another, between human beings and the universe as a whole. Healing by Jesus aimed at restoring man to both physical and spiritual health. Man is a being, possessing body, mind and spirit, all inextricably connected; each part affecting the whole and the whole being greater than the part. There is also an interconnectedness between human beings and their environment. This interconnectedness acts as a force on the functioning of each individual as a person. Disease or ill-health often arises as a result of a state of imbalance either from within or from the environment. Jesus did not just heal physically without ensuring that those who were healed physically were also restored spiritually to health. Most of the healing miracles led to the confession of faith in Jesus, either before or after the healing.

This study investigated, therefore, the healing of Jairus' daughter in Luke 8:40 – 42, 49-56 in a Nigerian context, with a view to ascertaining the degree of compliance to Jesus' command. This study adopted hermeneutical and exegetical methods to analyse the text in order to bring out the essential meaning of healing in the Bible in relation to practice in Nigerian society and descriptive methods of the survey were employed. The results of the interview were then analysed. The study concluded that healing is a fundamental aspect of liturgy and practice, which helps in bringing people to salvation. The study then recommended that the authority of the Church should ensure strict compliance with the principles and techniques of healing adopted by Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

Keywords: θεραπεία (therapeia), healing, healing miracle, salvation, repentance, sickness

1. INTRODUCTION

Health is the birth right of everyone; the concept of 'health for all' was developed by the International Conference on Primary health Care held at Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, which was adopted by World Health Organisation. Health for all is a level of health that enables every inhabitant of the world, without distinctions of the country, religion, race or economic status, to live a socially and economically productive life. Holistic health comprises of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. Disease, on the other hand, is 'some deviation from normal functioning,' which has desirable consequences because it produces personal discomfort or adversely affects individual's health status¹. Rao (2009) opined that a healthy person must be free of all physical (objectively verifiable diseases), social (poverty) and psychological disabilities. Similarly, a person who is free from, disease, illness and sickness should not only be in a state of equilibrium but must also not be known to be suffering from any ailment that brings about personal discomfort. While the concept of health is rich and encompassing, it is still problematic because of the difficulty in reaching a consensus on who enjoys "a complete state of health"².

Furthermore, Rengstorf (2013) described the restoration of health makes man whole or well whether physically, mentally, or spiritually. The Bible indicates that God's highest will for man is for him to be in good health, even as his soul prospers (III John 2). Healing is a prominent topic in the Bible. Sickness is cured by the supernatural intervention of God with or without the use of earthly means, and some of the healings performed by Jesus were characterized by faith.

The vital connection between faith and healing is unmistakable. On the relationship between faith and healing, they operate in close connection with each other, noting that faith being the background and energizing force for healing. Obviously, where faith is present, there is an atmosphere conducive to healing, and vital connection between faith and healing because faith makes possible the healing

of even the most desperate situation. Healing requires faith for its operation. In the New Testament Jesus alone is the healer, and only by faith in Him and in His name can healing be done³.

Health is good and universally desired. It is a necessary condition for obtaining goods of life, indeed, in most western cultures; health has become a virtual and cultural obsession, resulting in steadily growing demands on health care systems and in burgeoning industries in wellness and alternative medicine. Importantly, health and healing are central to the message of salvation throughout the Old and New Testaments, and particularly in the ministry of Jesus. The terms health may be used in various ways, which include healthy body, healthy minds and spirits. Similarly, one can only talk about physical, mental, spiritual, and social health when health is related to salvation for Christians, although it is not likely to be defined that way by a clinician or public institution like the World Health Organization.

Alana (2008) expatiated that in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, faith was a dominant factor. Normally, faith on the part of the patient was a prerequisite to healing. In ordinary usage, it is applied to be non-medical treatment of disease often spoken of as healing by faith. This usage is based on a fragmented view of the human person in which the doctor looks after the body and the Church looks after the soul. Healing includes the whole person and all means of healing, whether medical or non-medical, physical or spiritual. Healing, whether provided through creation or providence, produces limited powers of self-healing and placed healing agents in our environments⁴.

2. THE TEXT (LUKE 8:40 – 42, 49-56)

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. 41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about

twelve years of age, and she was dying. As he went, the people pressed round him 49 While was still speaking, a man from ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore," 50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well" 51 And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and the mother of the child. 52 And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." 53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child arise" 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. 56 And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened. (RSV).

3. THE HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER (LUKE 8:40 – 42, 49-56)

The three synoptic gave account of this story. While Mark and Luke mentioned the name of the ruler, Jairus, Matthew did not mention the name. There is some degree of doubt concerning the reading adopted in the Greek text. It is observed that some manuscripts omitted the name in Mark, such as *D*, *ff² Byz*. It is possible that the omission in those manuscripts is a harmonization to Matthew or on the other hand, the inclusion of the name in the Greek text could be a harmonization to Luke⁵. The non-text reading is probably the secondary (Wieland 2002, 65). In some manuscripts, Byzantine 157, in Mark, there is a striking addition to the text – *καὶ θελωῖνα ἐλθων*; this is probably a literary addition intended to complete the otherwise somewhat faulty Greek sentence in the Greek text which reads *ἵνα ἐλθων ἐπιθῇ τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῇ ἵνα σωθῇ καὶ ζήσῃ*, without introduction of any kind⁶. The other explanation would be the omission of that sign of courtesy (*καὶ θελω*) in the Greek text, is possibly a genuine lost reading, excluded in a very early age from the Greek text (Wieland 2005, 37). This is probable because of the

impression that a demand upon the Lord, couched in such imperious language was out of place⁷. Jairus came to Jesus as a concerned father who is of high social standing in the Jewish community to intercede on behalf of his little daughter who was close to death “(...) my little daughter is at the point of death...” Jairus is an excellent example of the responsibility of dominant males to protect and care for the women of their household, in this case a daughter, in the public realm outside the home (Tolbart 1992, 80).

Jesus could have chosen to say a word and declare the child healed from a distance, instead he chose to walk with Jairus and gave him hope – “Do not fear, only believe.” Jesus readiness to travel with a synagogue ruler, Jairus to his house to heal a little girl is a proof of the value he placed on life. And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, John, and James. He permitted the only three of his disciples - as a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle. The presence of the three disciples at the scene of the miracle indicate that it is partly for their instruction that Jesus performed the miracles (Luke 8:51)⁸. They were given this privilege perhaps in preparation for their leadership role and their commissioning to perform similar acts (Witherington 1990, 99). Luke records that the crowd at Jairus’ house were weeping and wailing greatly at the loss of the little girl, hence when Christ said, “why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping they laughed him (κατεγέλων – to deride, ridicule). It is usual in Yoruba land to also find mourners when such an occurrence happens, that is the death of a young person such people come around to empathize with the parent and share their grief⁹. Their scornful laughter shows the absurdity of the view that the girl was only unconscious; they knew death well (Sabin 2005). However, Jesus said “she sleeps” (καθεύδει) In Luke, this verb is used literally to mean literal sleep as in the other passages (Luke 8: 52)¹⁰. It is possible however that Jesus used the word theologically to mean her death is only a sleep. It connotes that death is not the final and irrevocable condition it appears to be, but a sleep from which there

is an awakening – at the call of Jesus. Jesus is saying that the girl had not succumbed to death in any final sense (Carson 1994, 35-40).

Cole (2012) posited that Jesus treats the mother as equally worthy with the father - “but he puts them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him (the three disciples)” (verse 51)¹¹. The Jewish culture just like Yoruba culture would have left out the mother at such a critical times as this, possibly because they would not want her to wear them with much weeping and so disturb them or because she has nothing to do there (orookunrinni – it is men’s matter / impliedly it is a serious matter). Thus the raising up of this girl anticipates the resurrection of Jesus as written in Luke 24:6 ἡγερθη – “He has risen”. Cole (2009) observed that theme is implied in Christ’s first observation to the mourners: “the child is not dead but sleeping” (Luke 8:52). This statement refers to the new view of death that he would bring by his resurrection. Having brought the child back to life and seen her walk about, Jesus told her parent to give her something to eat. Physical care is an important aspect of spiritual concerns; the little girl needed food for strength¹².

Oderinde (2007) opined that through the technique of intercalation, Luke presents the simultaneous unfolding of these two narrative events. Moreover, the interruption of the one story of healing by the other heightens the drama of the first. The little girl is dying; does she need immediate attention? In fact, during the time lapse necessitated by Jesus’ encounter with the sick woman the condition of Jairus’ daughter complexly deteriorates¹³. Consequently, Coogan (1998) noted that in the eye of everyone except Jesus, by the time they have reached her home the possibility of successful intervention has already passed. The thematic and linguistic parallels enumerated above suggest that the appearance of these episodes in this form is not only for the dramatic effect; these textual connections also urge that these accounts be interpreted together. Taken together, they document the sort of faith for which Jesus has been looking. Moreover, the completion of the one incident prepare for the finale of the other. After the abundance of

healing power available in the case of the woman with a haemorrhage, might one not anticipate Jesus ability to raise a dead girl to life?¹⁴

Oderinde (2009) posited that expectation of this nature is even more firmly grounded in the earlier segment of the Lukan narrative. This is because Luke's account of the raising of this man's daughter has severe points of contact with the account of the raising of the widow's son in Luke 7:11-17. For example, at the most basic level both are stories of resuscitation, both involve an only child (7:12; 8:42) who is therefore all the more valued, both contain echoes of the analogous Elijah- account (1 kings 17:8-24), and Jesus' word, "Do not weep," are replicated (Luke 7:13;8:52). As such, both are understood as evidence of Jesus' messiahship and the extension of good news to the poor (7:22)¹⁵. A further element characteristic of this narrative unit is the presence of the crowds who are as ubiquitous as there is ambiguous. When they first appear they are portrayed positively, awaiting Jesus return and welcoming his arrival (verse 40). However, Dodd (2012) reiterated that they are described in a way reminiscent of the thorns of the story of the sower, as unwanted foliage growing up alongside sprouting seedlings that will eventually choke the desired vegetation. In the final scene (verses 51-54) unspecified bystanders laugh at Jesus, disbelieving his claims regarding the child, failing to recognize his authority to make such statements (and make his words effective)¹⁶. The crowds are not portrayed as particularly malicious, or are they presented as persons of faith, as person whose faith is manifest in the harvest of perception and obedience. Against this backdrop, the woman with the haemorrhage is revealed as person with the faith that survives the test, and with faith that has human wholeness as its consequence. Similarly, even in the face of those who mock Jesus' claims, Jairus and his wife are able to put aside their fear and to embrace faith in Jesus' capacity to bring restoration.

According to Robbins (2004), Luke returns to the episode with which he had opened this narrative unit, with the initial clause, "while he was still speaking," serving as the seam at the intersection

of these two stories of healing. Because of the heightened drama of the encounter between Jesus and the haemorrhage woman, Jesus' original destination must be brought again into the foreground¹⁷. This is accomplished by the introduction of the messenger from the house of the ruler of the synagogue. In the opening of this scene, Baxter (2014) opined that Jairus' daughter has been described as "dying": the delay caused by the exchange with the woman en route to Jairus' house prevents Jesus from arriving in time to heal the daughter. Her situation is beyond hope. "Teacher," the title, by which Jesus is known to the messenger, is generally a term of respect used by those outside the circle of Jesus' disciples. In this co-text, combined with instruction that Jesus' true identity and redemptive power characterized his ministry, Jesus' response to the message encapsulates the whole of the larger section constituting chapter 8 of the Gospel. Fear must give way to a faith that encompasses a proper recognition of Jesus' identity and concomitant trust in his ability to provide salvation¹⁸.

In verses 51-56, even the disciples of Jesus have been slow to perceive who he is, but they were not the first to have questions. John the Baptist had wondered whether Jesus was the Messiah and in support of this identification. Jesus performs miracles in keeping with the Isaianic vision of eschatological salvation, brings good news to the poor, and raises the dead. By these means, Berkhof (1994) agreed that people will gain insight into the nature of Jesus' person and work (7:18-22). With the disciples as primary witnesses, Jesus has been about the same activities since Luke 8:22, culminating in this episode in which he will raise a young girl from the dead. This explains why he takes only the child's parents and representatives of the twelve with into the room – in order to assist their perception of him, in preparation for Jesus' question in 9:20, "who do you say that I am?"¹⁹

Robbins (2014) posited that Luke's narration is potentially confusing at this juncture. If Jesus takes only these five persons into the house with him, to whom does Jesus address his words, "Do not weep"? Who is weeping and wailing? Who laughs? This

confusion is resolved when it is realised that the narrator has again reorganised his account for dramatic effect, ordering the events outside of chronological time so as to focus separately on two distinct discourses²⁰. Dodd (2016) focused on concentration of Jesus' response to the crowds gathered to mourn the passing of the daughter of Jairus and his wife. As he has promised in the sermon on the plain, those who weep will have cause for laughing (6:21). In the present case, however, laughter is not grounded in the celebration of salvation Jesus had anticipated; instead, it is the laughter of who mock Jesus words. In interpreting the girl's condition as "sleep" rather than "death" he has made an authoritative claim they are unwilling to accept. Of course, in an important sense, the crowds speak the truth; the girl's death has already been reported to Jairus (and thus Luke's audience), and is known by all who have gathered. Capitalising on the word play available to him in the use of term "sleep" as a euphemism for "death," Jesus asserts that her condition is more temporary than the crowds might think. Rejecting his declaration, they also refuse to recognize him as one who might exercise the divine power of giving life²¹.

The other discourse is cantered on the girl and her parents with the three disciples invited only as witnesses. Benz (1994) expatiated that Jesus crosses the boundary between life and death, between purity and impurity, by taking the girl by her hand and commanding her to arise. The effect is immediate. He directed them to give her something to eat both to provide material evidence of her resuscitation and to signify her restoration to kinship, symbolized in the sharing of the food. They, in turn, respond with "astonishment" a typical reaction to the wonderful activities of God²². The growth of the crowds gathered to hear Jesus (8:4) has not been accompany by maturation in the general perception of Jesus; indeed, the crowd seem actually to have served as a potential impediment to the communication of good news in these two episodes. Hence, Best (2007) pointed out the way Jesus direct the child's parents to be silent regarding her restoration to life. A mission of proclamation

and healing is in the kingdom project (9:1-2); what is not needed at present, though is an increase in the number of persons attracted to Jesus on the basis of miraculous events of this nature²³.

4. A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON 'THE HEALING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

The story of the healing of Jairus daughter in the gospel of Luke 8:40-42 is very relevant to contemporary Nigerian society. Today charismatic healers in Nigeria are making fantastic claims. Programmes on television are usually introduced for years with the same pictures of fantastic claims to the miraculous. Many of them have travelled all over Nigeria and even overseas to seek for magical occultic powers for miracles. Abogunrin (2008) opined that What many displayed on television is nothing but pure magic performed in the name of Jesus. Most of the charismatic healers rarely venture to come out of their church buildings or their radio and television studios. If indeed their claims are genuine why do we seldom hear of the exercise of such gifts in the hospital hall, blind centres, handicapped people, home where people with organic diseases are kept and people suffering from AIDS virus in hospitals? If they genuinely possess the gift why is it that none of them is ever moved or led by God to such places to heal like it happened with Apostle Babalola of CAC in 1930? When hospitals were emptied in search divine healing. Of course, the fact that there are fake healers means that there are genuine ones also who are being used by God today. The gifts of Holy Spirit, including the gift of healing are as valid today as they were in the days of Jesus and of the Apostles and this will remain so until the Lord returns at the consummation of all things²⁴.

In the light of this observation, Omowole (2013) posited that it is proper for Nigeria Christians to minister healing today in line with Jesus techniques and the biblical principles, more so because spiritual and earthly blessings are the concern of Nigerians. However, there is need for warning against being uncritical and

against credulity. An act must be proven and seen by all to be supernatural act of God before you conclude that a miracle has happened. Do not use the idea of miracle, real or unreal, to win cheap popularity for yourself or your congregation. Sermon and teaching should be based on the gospel healing stories, but one must not be narrow minded in our use of the stories. These stories must be used to teach Christian concept and not just that God would give physical healing. These stories must be used to teach the dogmas that the will of God or His perfect will for man is to be in good health whether medically or otherwise²⁵.

5. CONCLUSION

The concept of healing is one of the most fundamental issues in the Gospel. The huge success of Jesus healing miracles in Gospel could be traced to Luke's conception of the person of Jesus Christ as the most significant factor. The way in which Jesus is shown to have conducted his healing miracles and the various interpretation implies a Christology that Jesus is the messiah. In this Christology, the evangelist believes that Jesus is the divine Son of God concealed in human form whose power and authority is manifested in his teachings and healing miracles.

This healing force comes from His divine being. It is empowered and reinforced by the Spirit of God for onward transmission to the sick by a command of words. As the sick person releases his faith to touch the divine seat of the healing power in the being of Jesus, a current of divine health flows in a spiritual manner from Jesus to the being of the sick person. The immediate result is miracle. Thus, the healing power of Jesus is in the nature of His divine person, the action of God and the Holy Spirit in Him. Though healing miracle has been abused and there are a lot of false claims of healing which are not verifiable in the church today, many people who could have sought healing in the hospitals and get healed have lost their lives in the course of seeking healing miracles. However, this does not in

any way discredit the fact that healing miracles are still a reality in the contemporary church. Also when the understanding of Jesus as the healer is well appropriated in the Church, it will reduce the tendency for Pastors to arrogate power to themselves. It will promote the right attitude to healing miracles and develop the faith of the Church members in Christ alone.

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