

Luke 8:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

Analysis

For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him. The phrase "one only daughter" (thygatēr monogenēs, θυγάτηρ μονογενής) uses the same term monogenēs applied to Jesus as God's "only begotten" Son (John 3:16). This beloved, precious, irreplaceable child—approximately twelve years old (hōs etōn dōdeka, ὡς ἐτῶν δώδεκα)—was dying. The imperfect verb apethnēskēn (ἀπέθνησκεν, "was dying") indicates she was in the process of death, at death's threshold, moments from final breath.

The detail "twelve years" creates a deliberate parallel with the hemorrhaging woman (v. 43) who suffered twelve years with her affliction. As Jairus' daughter entered womanhood, the unnamed woman endured social death through ritual uncleanness. Both cases demonstrate Jesus' power over chronic suffering and acute crisis, over slow death and imminent death. The number twelve may also evoke Israel's twelve tribes, suggesting Jesus comes to heal God's covenant people.

"But as he went the people thronged him" (en de tō hupagein auton sunepnigon auton hoi ochloi, ἐν δὲ τῷ ὑπάγειν αὐτὸν συνέπνιγον αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι) introduces tension. The verb sunepnigon (συνέπνιγον, "thronged/pressed/choked") appears in the parable of the sower (v. 14) where thorns "choke" growing seed. The pressing crowd creates urgency—every moment delayed brings Jairus' daughter closer to death. Yet Jesus will pause for the hemorrhaging woman, testing Jairus' faith and revealing that no interruption, no delay, exceeds Christ's sovereign control.

Historical Context

In Jewish culture, daughters were cherished though sons held higher social value as heirs and lineage carriers. An "only daughter" would be especially precious, representing the family's future through marriage alliances and grandchildren. At twelve years old, she was approaching marriageable age (Jewish girls typically married between twelve and fourteen). Her death would devastate not only her parents emotionally but also eliminate prospects for family expansion and social connections through marriage.

The detail that crowds "thronged" Jesus illustrates His immense popularity in Galilee at this ministry stage. Multitudes followed Him everywhere, making private movement virtually impossible. For Jairus, every second counted—his daughter was actively dying. The crowd's press would seem an intolerable delay. Yet Jesus' subsequent pause to address the hemorrhaging woman (vv. 43-48) would test Jairus beyond human endurance, requiring faith that Jesus' timing is perfect even when it seems disastrous.

This narrative's structure—one healing interrupting another—demonstrates Luke's literary artistry and theological depth. The intertwining stories reveal Jesus' compassion for both prominent men and marginalized women, His power over both chronic conditions and acute crises, and His sovereign control over timing despite apparent urgency.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the description of the daughter as 'only' and 'twelve years old' deepen our understanding of Jairus' desperation and faith?

2. What does Jesus' willingness to pause for the hemorrhaging woman while Jairus' daughter is dying teach about His priorities and sovereign timing?
3. How should we respond when God's timing in answering our desperate prayers seems dangerously slow?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	θυγάτηρ	μονογενὴς	ἥν	αὐτόν	ώς	ἐτῶν	
For	daughter	one only	he had	he	about	years of age	
G3754	G2364	G3439	G2258	G846	G5613	G2094	
δώδεκα	καὶ	αὐτόν	ἀπέθνησκεν	Ἐν	δὲ	τῷ	ὑπάγειν
twelve	and	he	lay a dying	as	But	G3588	went
G1427	G2532	G846	G599	G1722	G1161		G5217
αὐτόν	οἱ	ὄχλοι	συνέπιγον	αὐτόν			
he	G3588	the people	thronged	he			
G846		G3793	G4846	G846			

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:12 (Parallel theme): Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

Luke 8:45 (Parallel theme): And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?