

“I Need Somebody”
August 2, 2026

Matthew 9:18-26

About a week ago, I pulled into the parking lot outside the Hartford Baking Company down on Sullivan Avenue. I was meeting Hannah and Micaela for breakfast, and I found a parking spot about fifty yards away from the front entrance to the bakery.

I got out of my car and locked the door before I started to walk. But I had only taken two or three steps when a woman I’ve never seen before drove up to me in her car. She proceeded to lean out her window and call out a question. “I want to hear your opinion,” she said.

As I’ve mentioned in previous sermons, over the years I’ve gotten used to being approached by all kinds of people in the Stop and Shop parking lot across the intersection from the church. Many of whom I know. And a few of whom seem to know who I am even though we may not have formally met or I haven’t seen them in years.

In any case, I haven’t spent nearly as much time in the Hartford Baking Company parking lot. And to be honest, I wasn’t sure the woman was talking to me. So I stopped in my tracks and looked around for a moment until I realized there was no one else in the vicinity.

I can’t tell you the make or the model of the car the woman was driving, but it wasn’t a big car. It definitely was not an SUV or a minivan. It was your basic compact car. And the woman had one or two small kids in the car with her.

“How many tires do you think I can fit in my car?” she asked in a voice loud enough for me to hear over her car engine. Now there have been a few times in my life when I wished otherwise, but I don’t happen to know a whole lot about tires. If this woman looked at me as though I was qualified to offer her any wisdom on the subject at hand, she was mistaken.

But the fact that she stopped her car in the middle of the parking lot meant she clearly expected me to respond to her in some way. And I didn’t want to be rude and keep on walking. So I thought about it for a split second and then blurted out with as much misguided confidence as I could muster, “I’m pretty sure you can fit a couple of tires in your car.”

Well, I don’t know whether the woman didn’t trust my answer or she didn’t like my answer. Because she barely hesitated before replying to me, “I really need to fit four tires in here. What do you think?”

Whereupon I shrugged my shoulders a little bit and smiled at her. “I think that might be a little tight.” Given the amount of free space I could see available in her car,

I'm convinced it was an honest assessment on my part. Even though I didn't really, actually know what I was talking about....

Nevertheless, the woman seemed relatively unfazed by my skepticism. And she pulled away from me slowly, offering these friendly, parting words. "I'm just gonna go for it anyway..." I'm telling you I could probably write a whole book about conversations I've had in parking lots...

If you're wondering what the moral of this story is, I have it narrowed down to two possibilities. The first possibility is that when a stranger pulls up to you in a parking lot and asks you a random question about tires, it could be a weird sign from the universe that it's time to go on vacation. Which I am taking into account today.

The second possibility is that this woman was genuinely looking for help in the form of an opinion...regardless of whether my opinion was competent or not. For the purposes of this sermon, I'm going with this second possibility. Knowing we all need help sometimes...

We all need a little help. Those words might sound cliché, but I don't mean to trivialize them this morning. I actually believe one of the primary reasons you and I come to church every Sunday is because you and I need help. From time to time, we need help from other people in the congregation. But all the time, you and I need help from God.

For example, I need help from God in the form of someone to hear and answer my prayers. And sometimes to teach me how to pray or for whom I should be praying. I need help in the form of people who will offer me forgiveness and mercy. I need help to remember that there is a bigger and better and brighter story being authored on the world's behalf behind the scenes, especially for God's people seeking justice and peace.

Ironically, when it comes to help, the secular world wants me to believe that all I have to do is go to the library or the internet or the bookstore and I can find all the self-help books and manuals I could possibly ask for. But I'm not overly interested in self-help. I'm looking for the kind of help referenced in last week's Psalm 121. "My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." And it's the kind of help Jesus offered to people in the Gospels over and over again...

This morning's Scripture lesson from the Gospel of Matthew consists of two stories that blend together. In the first story, Jesus agreed to accompany the local synagogue leader to his home in order to bring his daughter back to life. In the second story, Jesus was touched on his cloak by a woman in need of her own healing.

What I want to highlight in both stories, however, was Jesus' response to the synagogue leader and the woman in need. The moment the synagogue leader came to Jesus and asked for help raising his daughter from the dead, Jesus responded. Immediately. Jesus didn't ask any questions about why the daughter died. He didn't try

to assign any blame for the daughter's death. He heard the synagogue leader's plea for help and he set off to do what needed to be done.

Along the way, the woman who had been afflicted by a constant flow of blood reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' cloak. And as soon as Jesus noticed the woman at his feet, he addressed her. He didn't question her intentions. He didn't judge her for her boldness or condemn her for being so forward. Instead, Jesus called the woman a specific name.

"Daughter." As in, "daughter, your faith has made you well." Not the kind of name you would typically use if you were talking to someone you didn't know. Prior to this encounter, the woman would have been a stranger, totally anonymous, in Jesus' life. Yet Jesus chose to call the woman by an endearing term that indicated how much he cared about her.

We all need help. But how many times have you needed help from somebody and they came up with all kinds of questions and excuses and reasons why they couldn't help you right away? Or they decided they couldn't help you at all.

And how many times have you needed help from somebody and they called you all kinds of names. Including some that weren't nice. Like annoying. Or weak. Or inconvenient. Or come back later or go ask someone else. Has anybody, besides your own parents maybe, referred to you as "daughter" when you needed their help?

That's the thing about Jesus. We come to church to hear the stories time and again. Stories about how Jesus reached out to people like you and me when we needed help. Not hesitating. Calling us by name. Showing us how much he cares. Jesus offers the assistance we need on time to make it through our days...

We all need some help. We need someone to hear our prayers and give us guidance. We need someone to comfort us in our grief and sadness. We need someone to grant us mercy when we fall short. We need someone to refresh us with a piece of bread and a cup of juice and the assurance of a love that has no condition and never ends.

There's a classic hit song from the 1960's that some of you will recognize. It wasn't technically a song about God or Jesus. But it might be a song that says it best. Help, I need somebody. Help, not just anybody. Help, you know I need someone...help! Amen.