

A touch of Jesus. A sermon preached on March 12, 2017 at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder

Lessons; LAMENTATIONS 3:19-24
MARK 5:21-34

Not a story this morning of God's choosing of the 12, but a healing.

A healing of a nameless woman while Jesus and the disciples are already en route and hurrying to heal the daughter of a synagogue leader.

We know his name – Jairius.

We only know the daughter's name as 'little girl' (vs.42)

Sandra read in part what scholars have termed – a Markan sandwich' – two stories intertwined to communicate one message

Note the woman with the issue of blood.

How long has she suffered? -12 years

How old is Jairius' ailing daughter? 12 years

In both stories, a touch of Jesus is involved.

A cloak in the first

An actual touch by Jesus in the second.

Both women – the not so young and the young are healed completely of what ails them.

So why this story in this Lenten series?

Upon first consideration, it seems more appropriate as a story in a series on the healing miracles of Jesus.

That is a true and valid observation.

Yet, so many of the healing stories remind us with crystal clarity of the winsome and attractive nature of Jesus.

Why were people first drawn to Jesus and why did they follow him often through very tough times and upset?

Why do people follow Jesus and his ways today?

Last week,

We looked at the calling of the first disciple – Andrew.

We saw that Andrew was searching for something Jesus' reply is simple invitation '**come and see**'

That remains today Jesus question to each of us *what are YOU looking for?*

The woman in the story is looking for healing, to be made well.

I don't know about your experience in faith development, but I never knew about the third of Jesus' triad of ministry – healing.

I knew about his preaching,

About his teaching,

But healing – can't ever remember hearing a sermon on one of the healing stories of Jesus.

Maybe I was away when it was preached or was zoned out on that particular Sunday

We never spoke about the healing stories in Sunday school

And I do not ever remember the healing stories of Jesus being given much more than a simple acknowledgement at minister school.

And when they were mentioned, the connection between then and now was never made.

It took both a personal healing regarding memories and a firsthand witness of Christ's healing power to convince me beyond any doubt that God's power to heal is still very much near and close.

At another time and place, I may tell those 'light in the darkness\ stories, but this morning,

Permit me to outline the scriptural and experiential personal convictions I have about Jesus' healing stories and God's power to heal today.

First, I believe these are stories about and for us today.

Why? We all know what it is to be sick and unwell. We all know about pain and discomfort – either we have experienced both or are experiencing it ourselves,

Or we see it on the faces of our loved ones

Further, many of us know all too well what long term ails do to our confidence,

Mental energy,

Physical strength and emotions

We know endurance as much more than a dictionary word

Second, *the healing stories raise some not easy to deal with cries, laments, fist shaking anger and whys*
 For when we read these stories,
 Enter into them

How many of us see faces of people for whom we prayed, but who did not get well
 These were people of great faith we say
 Many, many prayers were prayed, unceasingly.
 Where was God's power to heal in this situation
 Herb?

You will probably not initially appreciate my short, but anything but simplistic answer.

Some years ago we were privileged to attend a series of lectures and talks given by the late John Wimber – founder of the Vineyard Church movement and a recognized and respected teacher on the healing miracles of Jesus and the signs and wonders of the Bible.

One of the things John Wimber said in the course of his lectures was, *“our task as Christians is to pray – God is the One who heals.”*

Wimber went on to say that the secular world often equates healing with the complete absence of physical pain

Healing in scripture involves peace with God, with others and within oneself.

Ever notice how perfectly healthy people can be absolutely miserable and constantly discontented with everything and everyone around them?

On the other hand, some people who are in chronic pain or live with life threatening illnesses can exclude a peace, calmness, and appreciation for all things.

Ultimate healing concluded Wimber in one of his lectures is not a complete return to the way we were before we or our friends and loved ones got sick.

Ultimate healing is resurrection with Jesus.

It is what St. John in the Revelation described as

God himself will be with them;^[a]

‘he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”Rev. 21:3-4

Make no mistake – this is a very hard truth to swallow and accept.

It is made harder by our world’s emphasis on youth and living longer and longer and longer.

Yet one has to read the healing stories of scripture,

Pray for healing today with that truth – the end play – ultimate healing is resurrection with Jesus – ever in view

Truly then our task as Christians is to pray – God is the One who heals.

And heal he will – one way or another.

For,

²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,^[a]
 his mercies never come to an end;
²³they are new every morning;
 great is your faithfulness.
²⁴“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul,
 “therefore I will hope in him.” (Lam 3:22-24)

No matter what, we are in God’s hands, and frankly there is no better place to be.

To the story in Mark.

What does the encounter between Jesus and this desperate for help woman tell us,
 Not only about being a follower of Jesus,
 But about the One who still invites us to follow him
To come and see!

To follow Jesus *will require up front close and personal faith in who Jesus is and in His promises*
 All the story tells us is that this woman had **heard about Jesus.**

However, she had strength of conviction and determination as well as a faith in Jesus’ power to heal.

She was convinced that **‘if I but touch his clothes, I will be made well**

Her desperation, sprinkled liberally with determination moved her to take the action she took.

Consider her plight as described by Mark,

Look at the bulletin cover – the straining to touch Jesus' cloak.

She has been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years – 12 years!!!

She is by no doubt probably anemic and weak.

Further, no medical practitioner has been able to help her.

This is an age of no governmental health care – so she has had to pay out

Mark so accurately describes her plight

²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. (Mark 5:26)

If this were not enough, owing to her particular ails, she is considered by Jewish law to be ritually unclean.

Therefore,

Her faith leaders, her faith community – mired in the observation of rules often to the non-recognition of our humanity want nothing to do with her.

Wracked by physical illness

Weak,

Alone,

No one wanting to touch her or be around her because she is 'unclean' – it is a wonder that she does not slink away like some sick animal to die in private.

I wonder how many times before this encounter with Jesus she thought that slinking away would be best for everyone – including herself!

That is what she does not do – WHY?

Certainly a key reason is FAITH

I have always found the definition of faith in the letter to the Hebrews to be both basic and profound.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebs. 11:1)

The woman was convinced Jesus would make her Well (assurance)

If she but touched his clothes – got near to him. She did not know the direction the healing would take,

But she knew she would be healed (conviction).

That is having faith in the Risen Lord to which we are continually invited.

Faith – not in some abstract idea, but in the person of Jesus Christ.

Note too his woman's *humility*

Jesus' question **who touched me?** Elicits a response – she comes forward **in fear and trembling, falls down before Jesus and tells him the whole truth.**

One of those special private times in the encounters Jesus has with people – where all is told, all is listened to and all is heard by Jesus.

All WE hear is Jesus' high praise for her action
 "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and
 be healed of your disease." (vs. 34)

The woman is under no misconception nor illusion.
 Her healing is of God

It is something that she must acknowledge in
 humility for she knows that no human treatment or
 hand is responsible

Good perspective to maintain as we pray healing
 prayers for others.

Never stop giving thanks to God,
 Acknowledging him to be the Great Healer.

I cannot help but believe, though there is no
 scriptural evidence here to support it that this
 woman's story was told again and again,

By the woman herself and by others present and
 close to her that day

I wonder how many others they invited to come
 and see this Jesus.

As to the Lord himself, about what does this
 encounter remind us?

*Above all, it is clear reminder that the Lord we
 ourselves are invited to come and see,*

To follow and to encourage others to do likewise is a God of great and inclusive compassion for all.

No one in need is more important than anyone else in need

Jesus makes time and listens to all.

Remember this healing of the woman with the hemorrhages for 12 years takes place en route to effect another healing – the curing of synagogue leader Jairus' daughter.

Imagine the scene!

As soon as Jesus gets out of the boat, the crowds surround him (vs. 21) – clamoring, jostling, pushing and shoving. The road dust rising from the shuffling feet.

Welcomed or not, by this point in Jesus' ministry, the crowds Jesus will have always – until near the end of his natural life.

Crowds are physically and emotionally draining to move through as they press on Jesus. This crowd is already on a mission – get to Jairus' house,
Heal his daughter,
Somewhere along the way, the incident Mark describes happens.

Jesus stops – who touched me
I wonder what were the facial expressions of the disciples.

We know at least one of the disciples speaks out

Touched you? Master, look around you – who hasn't touched you

Who is not pressing to touch you?

If you are going to keep doing this stuff of healing, we are going to need a hire a security detail

Judas – can we afford this.

Well if not professionals – how about local thugs?

Just keep moving Jesus – stop asking fool questions in this crowd about who touched me.

Yet, stop Jesus does.

He makes time to seek out and listen to the one whom is only described as a woman who had **been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years (vs.25)**

It is Jesus' compassion for all and any,

His willingness to listen to all and any

His commendation to all and any,--even in the midst of busyness, work of healing, preaching, and teaching that I personally find so attractive, winsome about following the person of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' eyes

There are no little, unimportant or forgotten people.

He makes and has time for everyone.

Each of us truly is precious in the Lord's sight.

I believe each of us needs the healing touch of Jesus

It may be healing from physical pain,

A lingering illness,

A frustrating problem,
A corrosive habit
A strained or broken relationship,
Some bad memory or old hurt that continues to
linger with haunting fierceness
A stressor that threatens to spin our lives out of
control
Or a worry or cluster of worries that will just not go
away and is beginning to overwhelm life in the
present.

 This story from Mark 5 invites us to pray in
God's name,
If we have not already done so, for God's healing
touch
AND to find ways,
To pray for ways for others to experience the
healing power of God in Christ. AMEN