

"More Than a Healing"

Mark 5:21-34

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Introduction:

This morning, I would like for us to study a passage of Scripture from the life of Christ that will hopefully encourage us to remember how Jesus treated the lost. And the passage that we are about to study comes in the form of a rather overlooked passage which is almost a parentheses (almost an interruption) to a rather famous miracle that Jesus performed somewhere along the western coast of the Sea of Galilee. Our Scripture for this morning is found in **Mark 5**. We remember how Jesus was teaching in the region of Galilee, and then He crossed over to the other side. It was on this trip that the storm came up and Jesus calmed the wind and the waves. Upon reaching the other side of the Sea of Galilee, He healed the demon possessed man (known by the name of "Legion"), and following that they crossed back over. So Jesus arrives back in what is basically His home province, and as soon as He steps out of the boat, He is approached by a very important man. All of this brings us to **Mark 5:21-24**. The Bible says...

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. ²² One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet ²³ and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." ²⁴ And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.

And so we have the picture now of the crowd almost being in a hurry. Jairus was an official of the synagogue—he was one of the rulers, one of the men in charge of overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Jewish place of worship and study. And we find that this very important man's only daughter is at the point of death. We know that she was his only daughter based on one of the parallel accounts, in **Luke 8:42**. She was only twelve years old, and due to some kind of terrible illness she was right there at the point of death. We also find here in Mark's account that there is a huge crowd, and there were so many people in the crowd that they were actually **"pressing in"** on Jesus and the disciples as they walked along. Luke tells us that the crowds were **"pressing against Him."** And so we have the picture of a huge crowd all traveling together. And the idea is that they all need to get to Jairus' daughter before she passes away. Jesus needs to get there in a hurry.

But along the way, as they are making their way very quickly to the little girl who is terribly ill, something happens. What could possibly be more important than reaching the only daughter of a very important man, a little girl who is right there at the point of death? If you will, please look with me as we answer that question, starting in **verse 25**. ****PPT**** This is what the Bible says in **Mark 5:25-34**...

²⁵ A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, ²⁶ and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— ²⁷ after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. ³⁰ Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" ³¹ And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " ³² And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. ³³ But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

If we were to keep on reading, we would find that as Jesus is still speaking to this woman, a messenger comes up and interrupts Jesus with a message for Jairus, that his only daughter has now died. Apparently the delay was too great, and the little girl passed away.

A few moments ago, I referred to our passage for this morning almost as a parentheses. I am afraid I have treated it this way in the past, so this morning I would like to correct this mistake by looking at it very carefully. Even though the account is very short, and even though Jesus does not stop and teach a parable or anything, I find it very interesting that this woman's story is found in all three of the parallel gospel accounts. Apparently, therefore, this event had a huge impact on the gospel writers, and again I believe it is because of what it teaches us about how Jesus treated people who were lost, and I'd like to focus in on that this morning...

I. As we look at what happened here, I would like for us to notice, first of all, that this woman was in A DESPERATE SITUATION. **PPT******

To begin with, we as men will never truly understand what this woman went through. We don't even understand what our own wives go through! The women of the congregation have a better idea than we do, but regardless of what we either do or do not personally understand, we live in a world that is almost completely disconnected from the culture of that time.

For someone living in Galilee in the First Century, this particular condition would have had some very serious implications. As I understand it, the Greek word translated here as "**hemorrhage**," is the same word used in the Greek translation of **Leviticus 15** that was being used at the time of Christ. If we turn over to **Leviticus 15** (starting in **verse 19**), we find the ruling under the Law of Moses, and if we skim down through the chapter, we find that any woman in such a situation (even as a result of her normal monthly cycle) was to be considered ceremonially unclean and was not to be touched for seven days. Today we might say that she was not to be bothered. Some students of the Bible have speculated that this was for the woman's benefit, that she was to be given a break. The Law of Moses went on to explain, however, that anyone who touched the woman was also to be considered unclean. Beyond this, anything the woman touched was unclean, and anyone who touched what she touched was unclean. If someone touched her chair or her bed, they were to wash their clothes, take a bath, and be unclean until evening.

I think we start to see, then, that this woman's condition had some serious implications. Under the Law of Moses, she was not allowed to touch anyone for twelve years. Under the Law of Moses, no one could touch her for twelve years. Under the Law of Moses, no one could touch anything she owned for twelve years.

We find some indication of this woman's desperation in **Mark 5:26**, as Mark tells us that this woman, "**...had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spend all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse.**" Very interesting! When I discovered the parallel accounts of this passage, I sent an e-mail to a good Christian friend who is now an obstetrician/gynecologist, and I pointed out to her that Luke's account is a little different. We know that Luke was a medical doctor, and it is interesting to read what Luke says here. In **Luke 8:43**, Luke refers to this woman by saying that she, "**...had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone.**" A very interesting difference in these two accounts! Mark tells us that the doctors took all of her money and made her worse, and Luke (the doctor) simply tells us that she had an illness that could not be cured! Nevertheless, we find that she is not only sick, but she is now poor as well.

Mark's statement about doctors is significant, because when we examine various documents outside the Bible, we find some of those treatments that this woman probably tried. The Talmud, the written record of the Jewish oral traditions, gives a number of rather unusual cures for a woman in this particular situation. For example, one supposed cure involved carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in the summer and a cotton bag in the winter. Another cure involved carrying around a kernel of barley corn that was found in the dung of a white female donkey. What would we say today if our doctor suggested that as a cure today—that we should go find a white donkey and dig around in the dung until we found a kernel of corn and then carry that around with us as a cure? Well, after twelve years, we might try just about anything. Another remedy of the day involved eating grasshopper eggs, carrying around the tooth of a fox, carrying around the fingernail of a person who had been hanged. Some remedies involved the cutting and burning of the infected area. Other cures involved crushing certain herbs in wine. One so-called cure involved putting the woman at a crossroads out in the country and

sneaking up behind her and scaring her. And so when Mark tells us that she, **"...endured much at the hands of many physicians,"** we start to understand that statement a little better when we consider what some doctors were doing at the time. Socially, this woman would have been an outcast. If she was married, she would have been unable to touch her husband. If she had children, she would have been unable to touch her children. Physically, this woman would have been terribly uncomfortable to say the least—probably low in iron, among other things. Economically, this woman's life was also a disaster—all of her money had been taken by the doctors. We could go on and on about how horrible her life would have been, but above all of these external things, we also need to at least consider her spiritual life. According to the Law of Moses, this woman would have been prevented from coming anywhere near the temple. It would have been a sin to shake her hand or give her a hug. She cannot bring her sacrifices to the priest. We can only imagine her emotional and psychological condition. Twelve years of not going to school—no worship with God's people, no Bible camp in the summer, no potluck dinners, no touching anyone for any reason. Twelve years with basically nothing to do. Twelve years is a long time.

It seems that we can find this kind of desperation all around us even today—sometimes as the result of illness or maybe emotional despair. Things go wrong; we get carried away, family relationships suffer over time. There are many things that can put us in the same category that this woman was in. And so we find, first of all, then, that (like many people today) this woman was in a desperate situation.

II. As we keep on reading, though, we also find a tiny glimmer of hope, because as she hears about Jesus, she becomes a woman of great DETERMINATION. **PPT******

In **verse 27**, we find that her attitude changes, **"...after hearing about Jesus."** Jesus was a common name in those days, but one commentator points out that the word **"Jesus"** in **verse 27** is literally preceded by the word **"the."** And so the woman hears about **"the Jesus."** She hears about the one and only Jesus who could do anything about her situation.

We know from **Romans 10:17** that, **"...faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."** Somehow this woman had heard about Jesus. Somehow she heard the word of Christ, and from that moment her faith started to grow. There was a spark of hope that started to get stronger. Based on whatever she had heard, she started developing the idea in her mind that this Jesus could do something to help her personally. After twelve years of spending every penny she had on doctors who only made it worse, this woman was ready to see the Great Physician. She wanted to see the great prophet from Nazareth who had given sight to the blind, who had walked on the water, who had calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. She wanted to see the good teacher who fed the thousands with only five loaves and two fish. She wanted to see the man of God who restored hearing to those who were deaf and caused the mute to speak. Luke's conclusion was that she could not be healed by anyone (and she was probably feeling that way herself), and yet those

reports from Jesus kept on coming in! She kept mulling it over in her mind, "Maybe there is hope for *me!*"

And so she formulates a plan—she will go up to the Lord and she will touch His clothing. What about the Law of Moses, though—wouldn't the Lord then be unclean? As she thought about that, I wonder if she also thought about the lepers. The same law applied to leprosy, and Jesus had touched the lepers—Jesus had healed people of leprosy. Perhaps she had heard the Lord say, "***Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.***" And so her faith continued to grow—it grew to the point where she got out there in the street. There are hundreds of people all crammed together, and just at the right moment, this woman comes up behind the Lord and touches the edge of His garment.

In **verse 28**, Mark gives an explanation. He says that she did this, "***For she thought, 'If I just touch His garments, I will get well.'***" Apparently, the idea from the original language is that this is something she kept on saying to herself. Over and over again, "***If I can just touch His garments, if I can just touch His garments, if I can just touch His garments...***"

Why was the garment so significant? In those days, a Jewish man would basically wear two garments. On the inside would be something almost like a man's t-shirt, except it would go down past the knees. It was called a tunic, and apparently a Jewish man would wear this around the house or out in the fields, but he would almost never wear it out in public. But then on top of the tunic, a man would normally wear an outer garment. The cloak was long, it was a rectangle, it was often made of wool, and it would normally be fastened with a belt. The Bible tells us that the woman reached out and touched the cloak. Why would she do that?

According to **Numbers 15:38-39**, Jewish men were to make tassels on the corners of their clothing. There was to be a blue cord on each tassel as a reminder of God's Law. So each man would have these tassels on the corners of his outer garment. From what I have read, the Hebrew word for "corner" is also the word for "wing." Why the vocabulary lesson? Just a few moments ago, brother Walt read us the last six verses of the Old Testament, and in the last words ever spoken to the Jews in the Old Testament, God said, "***But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.***" When a Jewish person would read that verse, they would automatically have the picture in their minds that the Messiah would come, "with healing in His tassels." And so the woman here in **Mark 5** may not know everything about Jesus, but she is starting to get an idea, and she knows that no matter what happens she at least needs to touch the edge (or the corners) of the Lord's outer garment. She is determined to touch that garment.

In many ways, this is one of the most risky moves that we find anywhere in the New Testament. There is so much on the line here. After twelve years of bleeding, to reach out and touch the Lord would have taken a tremendous amount of courage. If someone in the crowd had realized who she was, she would have been publicly

humiliated and could have perhaps been punished for making a very popular Jewish teacher unclean for the rest of the day, not to mention the hundreds of people she bumped into along the way. She was a very determined woman.

III. With that in mind, we come near the end, and we find that this woman is DELIVERED from her condition. **PPT******

In **verse 29** we are told that, "**Immediately** [upon touching the Lord's garment] **the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.**" At that very moment, however, the woman would have been both happy and terrified at the same time, because in **verse 30** we are told that, "**Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My garments?'**" We can only imagine what was going through this woman's mind. Obviously, she was terrified. Mark tells us that she was "**fearing and trembling.**" Perhaps she thought that the Lord was angry—angry that she had stolen the gift without permission, angry that he had been touched by a woman who was unclean in the eyes of God. Perhaps she thought that the Lord would take it back.

And so at this point she could have very quietly slipped away. She was at a critical point ("What do I do: Do I run, or do I stay?"), and the Bible tells us that she threw herself down at the feet of Jesus and told Him the *whole story*. After twelve long years, we can only imagine everything that came pouring out—the broken relationships, the many doctors, the financial troubles—it all spilled out. For many people, this could have been so embarrassing—to tell a strange man about such a personal problem. And yet as she lies there at the Lord's feet, we find that Jesus addresses her with the utmost respect, and the Lord says, "**Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.**"

As far as I can tell, this is the only place in the entire Bible where Jesus ever addresses anyone as "**daughter.**" For those of you here this morning who have daughters, you know what the Lord was saying! We know the love that we have for our daughters. We want the best for them. We want to protect them. And above everything, we want them to be in a right relationship with God. This woman was now the Lord's daughter. What an honor that must have been!

If you will, please remember with me that the people in this crowd were in a hurry. They were on their way to heal the daughter of a very important man. But here we find that Jesus had his own "**daughter**" to take care of. We remember the story that Jesus told about the shepherd who left the 99 sheep to go rescue the one sheep that was lost. And so we find here that even when Jesus was on a mission, He gladly took a detour. The Lord was gladly interrupted.

Thankfully, the Lord is still looking out for hurting people. The Lord is looking for those who are desperate. This story very easily could have ended with the healing. The woman could have just left, but Jesus was not done with her yet. And so when the Lord turned around and said, "**Who touched My garments,**" He was not angry

at all, but He simply wanted to make personal contact with this desperate woman. He wanted her to know that the healing power was not in the garment itself. The garment was not like the ashes of the ostrich egg carried around in a linen bag in the summer. He wanted her to know that the healing came personally from God.

Did you notice that Jesus could somehow feel the power leaving His body as this woman was healed? As far as I know, this is the only place where we are told that healing took some kind of physical toll on the Lord. A very strange verse. But whatever it means, we know that Jesus took the time to pay special attention to this woman, one-on-one. We remember what Jesus said earlier in **Matthew 7:7-8**, ***"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."***

Conclusion & Invitation:

We started this morning's lesson by looking for a reminder of how Jesus treated the lost. We have been reminded, and now as we close I'd like for us to think one more time about the timing of what happened here. They were in such a hurry to get to Jairus' daughter who was right there at the point of death. The crowd stopped and Jesus heard the woman's whole story (there is no telling how long this took), and as He is speaking with this woman, Jairus gets word that his daughter is dead. So here is a woman who has been sick for twelve years—this was not an emergency, it was definitely something that could have waited. But Jesus spent time with the woman, and it is quite possible that the girl died because of the delay. And yet we know from reading ahead that Jesus ends up raising the girl from the dead—a far more amazing miracle than any healing that might have happened if Jesus had not been delayed by listening to the bleeding woman. To me, it is just so interesting how it all fits together! What appears to be a random interruption actually results in more glory being given to God in the long run.

There is another little "coincidence" here that I would like to ask God about when I get to heaven, and that is: What is the significance of twelve years? The period of twelve years is referred to twice here! I don't know. But think back with me here: Twelve years back in the past there was woman who started bleeding for no real reason and never stopped, and at the same time there was a religious leader whose wife gave birth to a daughter. For twelve years, the bleeding woman was miserable. For twelve years, Jairus enjoyed watching his little girl grow up. For twelve years there was no real connection between these two families, until it all came together through Jesus Christ.

The main point is that Jesus did not treat the woman as an interruption, but he treated the woman as a child of God whose story was worthy of being included in three gospel accounts. We learn this morning that every life matters to God.

Every person in this room matters to God. God sent His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We respond to the sacrifice with obedient faith. We put our trust in Jesus, we

turn away from sin, and we allow ourselves to be immersed in water so that our sins can be forgiven. If you have any questions, we would love to study the Scriptures with you at any time. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org