

Great Questions of Jesus series

Week 5 – Mark 5:24-34

“Who touched me?”

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to the book of Mark, chapter 5.

Jesus is coming off an incredible experience of casting a legion of demons out of a wild man living in caves, into a herd of pig nearby, resulting in the herd running off of a cliff and into the sea where they all died. Then Jesus gets back into the boat with his disciples and sails back across the sea.

Upon arriving there is a crowd of people excitedly waiting for him. Among those awaiting his arrival are two **heartbroken and desperate individuals**.

1. **The first is the ruler of the local synagogue**. But more importantly, he’s not there in that capacity this day. He’s there as a heartbroken and desperate father of a little 12 year old girl who’s dying quickly. We don’t know if he necessarily believes that Jesus is the long awaiting Messiah – but he’s heard the reports that Jesus has miraculous healing powers and that’s all a desperate father needs to know at this point. Desperate times call for desperate measures. And when your daughter is dying, you’ll do most anything to get her help. So, he pleads with Jesus to come heal her and Jesus agrees and begins to head to his house.
2. Apparently, within just a few minutes, we encounter our **second heartbroken and desperate person**. Let me read her interaction with Jesus from Mark 5:24-36.

Read Mark 5:24-36.

This woman is suffering on many levels.

1. **She is suffering physically** from a blood disorder.
2. **She is suffering financially**. She’s spent her entire life savings on trying to fix her blood condition. She’d gone to many doctors over the past 12 years and yet instead of getting better she had actually gotten worse. That would certainly put you into a desperate condition.
3. **She was also suffering socially**. Her blood disorder caused her to be a social outcast and religiously impure. According to Leviticus 14 any chair, bed, or person she touched also became ceremonially unclean. She wouldn’t have likely been able to attend family get-togethers. Over the past 12 years her friendship base likely drifted away and she became quite isolated. In fact she wasn’t even supposed to be in the crowd that day. By law, she was required to verbally warn people of her presence by drying, “Unclean, unclean, unclean.” And by touching Jesus, she would have made Jesus unclean.
4. **She was likely suffering religiously as well**. Because of her uncleanness she wouldn’t have been allowed to go to the temple or synagogue to worship God and would have been considered cursed by God.

With that as a backdrop she gets word that Jesus is in town and she’s heard the amazing stories that he’s able to heal people of all sorts of diseases. And so, with a heavy heart, a huge burden of shame upon her back and a powerful sense of desperation she tries to blend into the crowd that day with the hopes that merely touching the hem of Jesus garment, she might receive healing. She’s really got nothing to lose by trying.

Let me stop for a minute and talk about suffering in general. Becoming a Christian does not make suffering go away. In fact, I’ve heard some Christians say that it seems like suffering intensified once they became a Christian. Sometimes our suffering is simply the result of us living in a sinful fallen world, where disease is a part of life. That will all change once creation is restored to God’s original intent but until then, it’s part of life.

Other times suffering is used by God as a tool to refine us and deepen our faith and dependency upon Him. This woman in our account this morning had come to the end of her resources and options for healing and in

desperation reached out to touch the hem of Jesus' garment in the hopes of being healed. And in this situation it worked and in this world today, sometimes God still chooses to reach out and heal. But in other situations, He doesn't. And in those situations your response is key. You can either choose to become angry, turn your back on God and perhaps even blame Him for your situation. Or you can choose to trust in Him that He has your best interest in mind and that He is walking with you through your challenge and allow Him to draw you deeper in your walk with Him.

James, the brother of Jesus, writes these words concerning suffering in a Christian's life:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4 (NIV))

That phrase, "*Consider it pure joy*" means that you go into suffering with the attitude of trusting in God to deepen your faith through your suffering.

I read this week an illustration about how a golf ball can teach us an important principle concerning trials in our lives. They all have dimples in the surface. The first golf balls in Scotland were smooth. It would seem that a smooth surface would make the golf ball fly farther and straighter. But these old golfers discovered when the smooth golf balls got scratched and roughed up, they actually flew further because of an aerodynamic principle. The old golfers would cut grooves and shallow holes in their golf balls. Eventually golf balls were manufactured with dimples instead of smooth surfaces. A golf ball is a parable of our lives. God knows that if our lives are perfectly smooth that we wouldn't go as far. He knows that a few rough edges and rough experiences will actually take us further in life

Back to our text:

This desperate heartbroken bleeding woman sneaks through the crowd until she's within reach of Jesus and she reaches out and touches the hem of his garment and instantly she feels inside of her that the bleeding has stopped - stopped for the first time in the past 12 years.

Let me talk briefly about this woman's act of reaching out and touching the hem of Jesus' garment. Most likely this is referring to the tassels on the bottom of Jesus' outer garment. Originally, God commanded all Israelites to have tassels hanging down from the corners of their garments (**Numbers 15:37-41**). The tassels were to remind Jews of the importance of obeying God's commands and remaining fully committed to following God. This outer garment was referred to as the tallit. Eventually it evolved into a prayer shawl. Traditionally, the tassels on the four corners of the tallit were tied into 613 knots - which represented the commands of God. In the commandments God gave to the Israelites there were 365 prohibitions ("you shall not...") and 248 affirmations ("You shall do...") totaling 613 laws.

In Jesus' day, we know that the wealthy Jews, the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees took great pride in having fancier tassels on their garments than everyone else. It was a sign of their importance and authority. Jesus addressed this practice in one of his teachings (**Matthew 23:1-5**).

What's particularly helpful for our purposes today is that it was believed that when the Messiah would come, that there would be healing power in the tassels on his robe. This belief was based out of Malachi 4:2 *"But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.* (Malachi 4:2) The Hebrew word for "wings" is elsewhere used to describe the tassels on the garment.

And we know that the woman in our story isn't the only one who experienced healing through touching the tassels on Jesus' garment (see **Mark 6:53-56**)

Later on, the full garment with the tassels on it turned into a prayer shawl with tassels on it. These are frequent today and are often given to Jewish boys at their **bar mitzvah** (the ceremony where they transition from a boy into a man).

After the woman touches the tassels on Jesus' garment and is instantly healed she no doubt is hoping and planning on just returning back to her home a healed woman. But Jesus stops and calls her out. He asks the question that is our key question today, "**Who touched me?**"

Put yourself in this woman's sandals. Because of your uncleanness you weren't supposed to be in this crowd to start with. But your brokenness and 12 years of frustration and building desperation compelled you to do the only thing you could think of – reach out and touch the healing fringes of his garment. You knew very well that touching his garment would make him unclean but at this stage in her sickness she probably didn't care. And yet now Jesus is calling her out. It says, in fear she came forward. Why did Jesus do this? Did he want to embarrass her? Also remember, Jesus isn't just on a casual walk through the countryside here. He's on a mission to hopefully heal a 12 year old girl who's on the edge of death – and in fact if you read on a little further, right after Jesus addresses this woman he receives news that the 12 year old girl has died.

Why did Jesus ask this question? Did Jesus not know who touched him – I believe he already knew. So, his question isn't simply for information purposes. It's for the purpose of providing deeper healing for this woman. Let me explain.

"If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." (vs. 28) – sozo

Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. (vs. 29) iatai

Jesus said to her, *"Daughter, your faith has healed you....."* (vs. 34) sozo

Iatai = being healed physically of some ailment.

Sozo = Being fully healed: body, soul, mind and spirit.

She had hoped that her life could return back to what it once was 12 years ago. Where her future looked bright and she was filled with hope and optimism. But then she began bleeding and for the past 12 years her life has been on a downward out of control spiral. She has no more money and until Jesus came along, no prospects for ever being healed physically. When she reached out and touched Jesus she could immediately tell that her body had been healed. And she was excited about that. She would go back home and begin the difficult process of rebuilding her life. Trying to re-establish connections with friends and family that had long ago abandoned her. Try to rebuild her own image of herself. Try to believe once again that she could be a woman of worth and value. Maybe even begin to see God differently, because she'd been told that God must be angry at you for something you've done in the past and caused this suffering to come upon you. She'd come to Jesus hoping for complete healing but was ready to leave settling for her body being restored.

So, Jesus calls her out of the crowd and it says that she came forward and fell at his feet trembling with fear. She was fully anticipating that while she had been healed physically there was going to be a high cost of public scolding and more shame as a result of her daring move. And yet she didn't receive shame and ridicule or rebuke. Instead she received love and acceptance and grace and tenderness. Jesus gives this woman the opportunity to leave with the fullness of healing she had always hoped for.

Jesus begins by calling her "Daughter". Not unclean woman. Not that woman that has taken away my power without asking. Not that woman who has held all of us up while a 12 year old child is laying struggling to stay alive. But "Daughter". Daughter is a word that speaks of tenderness, mercy and grace. She was not just some woman. To Jesus, the Son of God, she was a daughter. She was His Precious Daughter. One that would receive the best that God could give her. One that God would take the time to stop what He was doing to meet her needs.

And notice that Jesus attributes her healing to her faith. Can you imagine what that did to bolster her faith. It would have been easy over the past 12 years to question God or to even become angry at God and lash out at Him. No doubt there had to have been many times she felt worthless and forgotten by God. So Jesus intentionally took the time to reconnect her with the God who had always loved her and had not forgotten her. At that moment she saw the true face of God in Jesus. A God who wasn't too busy saving a dying 12 year girl to also reach out to one of His Daughters who had been struggling for as long as that little girl had been alive.

Perhaps many of us have been or are right now like this woman who Jesus calls His Daughter. How many of us are willing to live with our current condition even though it's less than ideal rather than reaching out and embracing Jesus. How many of us are content with believing in Jesus and offering up "nice polite" prayers to God to heal my body or fix my marriage, but are not willing to reach and grab ahold of Jesus and receive all that He wants to give us. So, often we want to tell God what to do rather than sit and share our frustrations with Him and then hold on and listen and observe what He wants to do in and through us.

I want to close with a prayer from Ken Gire from one of his many wonderful books. This quote is taken from his book "Intimate Moments with the Savior".