

“Healing Touches”
Mark 5:21-43

These past couple of weeks my message has made particular use of commonly-used expressions. (Heck, most EVERY week I will mention at least ONE colloquialism!) But it occurred to me this week that over the course of time, some expressions change with the times, making them NOT as attractive. For one, do you remember when we used the word ‘tweet’ we were talking about a BIRD? Or when to be ‘young and gay’ had NOTHING to do with one’s sexual orientation? And in more recent developments... say over the last year or so... I would hazard to say that virtually no one boasts over playing their ‘trump card.’ Or at least not without a quick caveat...

And in reading the passages for today, with the actions of the woman in the crowd, and Jesus with the daughter of the synagogue leader, there was a very popular advertisement back in the 80’s that came to mind. One of the most successful ad campaigns in history, by the phone company AT&T. Remember? **“Reach out and touch someone.”** With all of the epidemic problems we are having these days with inappropriate actions towards women and children, I don’t think that you will see this one making a nostalgic comeback any time soon..

Not that this ad had anything to do with a physical ‘touch’. But rather, the importance of touching another person’s life *emotionally*. How making that effort to reach out to another... perhaps with something as simple as a phone call... could ‘touch’ the life of a loved one in profound ways. How we can make relationships stronger, and more healthy, through intentional communication.

Both of today’s experiences... this ‘story within a story’... involved **physical** healing. The manner in which Jesus brought hope out of despair... wholeness out of brokenness... life out of death. But FOR ME, these stories aren’t just about the miracles of Jesus. But also, about the faith of his followers... about **spiritual** wholeness. ‘Disciples’ whose dedication was not measured in their ‘length of service’, but rather, in their ‘depth of devotion.’ Believers whom we’d never seen before, and would never see again... but whose faith was just as real as those

who we've watched follow Jesus for years. And just as those first disciples perhaps learned something from an established church leader and parent... as well as a long-suffering, humble yet bold woman out on the street... so too may we. Do we 'wait on the Lord' to come to us? Or do we take seriously our 'response-ability?' How important is it for faithful ones to take the INITIATIVE to 'reach out' for the **'Healing Touches'** of our Lord?

Our story begins... like so many others... with a BOAT. Jesus loved boats, eh? Us South LA types GOTTA love that! ☺ Anyway, as happened a lot, as he got out of the boat, a **"great crowd gathered around him."** And there, right at the seashore, with this great 'cloud of witnesses' surrounding him, we read that **"one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came... fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly" ... "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."**(Mk 5:22-23)

Now, what we wouldn't necessarily know about this man Jairus is that being **'one of the leaders of the synagogue'** meant that he was likely a very prosperous, respected man, who would use much of his own considerable resources to care for the place of worship. This would have been a man highly regarded both for his status in the community and in the church. NOT the type of leader one would expect to be 'falling at the feet' of another man, 'begging him repeatedly' for help! One could imagine this broken man, distraught over the life-threatening illness of his daughter, weeping at Jesus' feet, pulling on his robe, imploring this miracle-working 'man of mystery' to come and lay hands on his little girl, so that she might not die, but live. And obviously Jesus is touched by this humble outpouring of emotional plea. In response to the man's request, we read simply, **"So he (Jesus) went with him."**

But, to borrow from the title of a popular musical back in the 60's, 'a funny thing happened on the way to the **healing.**' As Jesus and Jairus began walking to his house... surrounded by a large crowd that pressed in on them... yet another person in need of healing approached Jesus. A woman who **"had been suffering from hemorrhages** (most likely, menstrual bleeding) **for twelve years."** (Mk. 5:25) 12 YEARS! While that type of suffering is hard for any of us to imagine, the description of her condition that follows is one we could all appreciate: **"She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather, grew worse."** (Mk 5:26) I think that most ALL of us could

think of someone who has 'endured much under many physicians,' 'spending all they had,' and were 'no better,' but instead, 'grew worse.' Perhaps even in our OWN FAMILY!

And so, this long-suffering woman, in desperation approached Jesus.

From all that she had heard of his miraculous power, she was convinced that if she would but simply TOUCH his robe, she would be healed. That being said, she also knew how forbidden it was for her, with the 'unclean' stigma of her condition, to even touch one who was 'clean.' She would have been an 'outcast' in that culture just as someone who had a disease such as leprosy would have been. She would have been prohibited from marriage, or kept from even being granted entry into the synagogue. But in Jesus she saw her only hope of being saved from her **suffering** and **isolation**.

So, she came up with a plan: 'I'll sneak up behind him, hidden by the crowd surrounding him, touch his robe, and by God's power through Him, I will be healed!' And it all goes according to the plan... right up the point where Jesus cries out, "**Who touched my clothes?**" and turns to confront her. Knowing that she's been 'busted,' the woman falls down before him, fearful, trembling, and admits to having dared to touch him... emotionally spilling her guts as to just why she did so. Simply because she believed...

After his subsequent 'benediction' to her... 'good words' quite unexpected ... "**Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed....**" (Mark 5:34), Jesus then continues on the way to his next act of healing. Even though Jairus' daughter's situation was more dire... to the point of death... the result was similar. Both involved a person's faith in God's ability to heal resulted in Jesus' beckoning a young woman to arise, and be restored to health. Even when those around Jesus ridiculed him! His words to that church leader in the midst of his greatest despair also applied to the fearful woman in the crowd. "**Do not fear, only believe.**" (Mark 5:36) And for their belief, each hurting one was rewarded with LIFE!

There is much to be learned from Jairus and the 'woman with the issue of blood'... both in our relationships with one another, and with our God. In our interpersonal relationships, we can be reminded of how important it is to **make that effort to reach out** to another; how even a simple **conversation** can 'touch' the **life** of a person in **profound ways**. That we make

relationships **stronger**, and more **healthy**, through **intentional communication**. To put it simply: 'Don't BALK... just TALK!'

These two seemingly 'minor' Biblical characters, in some ways, put to shame those 'major' 'faithful' Disciples... you know, those guys who cowered in fear in the midst of a storm with their 'Teacher' right beside them in the boat! This man and woman reminds us that dedication to God is not so much the 'tenure' of our faith, but its 'tenor' ... Not the time, the length of association, but the character, the depth of our faith. Our 'status' with God is NOT about our 'position' with the church, but our 'position' with Christ. A relationship that should START in the kneeling 'position.'

As we considered in the past two weeks, we should always look beyond a person's exterior. A very successful person... even a church leader... can carry with them great burdens and pain. Just as those who would be considered 'unclean' in the eyes of the culture can yet be a beloved, faithful child of God. Remembering that ***"man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart"***... So too should WE! To always be looking for the need for a 'healing touch.'

As different as they were, not only did their 'faith' lead them both to healing, but lead them to SEEK the SOURCE of healing. In believing, they not only conquered their fear of approaching death, but their fear of approaching the throne of grace and LIFE. May we too remember how important it is, No matter our **position** in life, to HUMBLE ourselves before God. **And Jesus WILL respond.** By walking with us. By reassuring us to **not fear**, but **only believe**. Sometimes our trust in God might seem ridiculous to others. But do not let a **critical** spirit in OTHERS hamper the work of the **Holy Spirit** in US!

And finally, as I did at the close of last week's message, I leave with you these words of encouragement from a song... one that speaks to how we are called to approach our God with boldness, and yet, humility: *"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord...*

and He will lift you up, higher and higher, And He will lift you up!"

My friends, just as today's faithful ones did, as we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, let us rest assured that He will indeed 'lift us up, higher and higher'... by the power of God's 'healing touch' ... AMEN.