

The Healer's Touch

June 27, 2021

Mark 5: 21-43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ 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." ²⁴ So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing

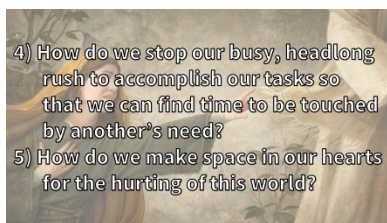
what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping."⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat.



Good morning! Today's passage from Mark focuses on Jesus' example of patient grace and loving healing as he gathers up those who are calling out for resurrection

and for acceptance. As we share in this time together, I invite you to frame these two stories of healing and wholeness and redemption within your own story as well as within the lives of those you encounter on a regular basis. In that spirit, I share these questions to ponder during this time as we delve into Mark 5, verses 21 through 43. First, who is interrupting us with their needs and their cries? Second, who has been left on the margins due to things beyond their control and is reaching for a way into the community of faith? Third, how do we make space for such as these?

- 1) Who is interrupting us with their needs and their cries?
- 2) Who has been left on the margins due to things beyond their control and is reaching for a way into the community of faith?
- 3) How do we make space for such as these?



Fourth, how do we choose to stop our busy, headlong rush to accomplish our tasks so that we can find time to be touched by another's need? And lastly, fifth, how do we make space in our hearts for the hurting of this

world? These questions were all questions that Jesus wrestled with. Today we are invited to wrestle with them as well. As we walk with Jesus and these two women today, let us begin with a word of prayer...

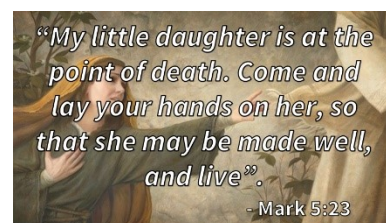


As we prepare to enter today's Gospel story, let us review where Jesus is coming from. In the first twenty verses of Mark 5, Jesus and the disciples leave behind

the business of preaching and healing as they cross the lake into Gentile territory. As they come ashore, they meet a man named Legion – a man possessed by many demons. A legion was a Roman military unit consisting of between 5,000 and 6,000 soldiers. There were many demons possessing this man. There is no one else around, except for a few hired hands off in the distance tending the pigs. Legion recognizes Jesus as the Son of God and Jesus heals him by sending the demons into the 2,000 pigs that are nearby. Once possessed, the pigs rush into the lake and drown. Soon a crowd gathers that begs Jesus to leave – they are afraid of his power and want nothing to do with him. As we continue this morning, please turn with me to Mark 5. There are Bibles under the chairs, or you can use your own Bible or open a Bible app on your phone.

As we begin with today's passage, we see Jesus and the disciples crossing back over the lake, now entering again into Jewish territory. As soon as they land, a large crowd gathers around Jesus. Location, location, location, right?

In verse 22 Jairus, a leader in the synagogue, comes and falls at Jesus' feet. Jairus is a man who is well-respected as one of the leaders of the faith community. As a worship leader he represents the Jewish people in the local community. All of the locals would know and respect Jairus. We also know that Jairus has encountered Jesus before. Jesus healed a man in the synagogue and Jairus has probably heard of or maybe even seen other miracles that Jesus has offered. Jairus begs Jesus repeatedly, saying, *"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"*.



What would it take for a respected Jewish leader to come to this itinerant rabbi to beg for the healing of his daughter? Falling at Jesus' feet, Jairus casts aside all dignity. He is desperate. Jesus is his last resort. He so loves his daughter that he is willing to come and fall at Jesus' feet, begging in public for Jesus to save his daughter. Dignity has nothing to do with this scene, doesn't it? He is humbling begging the only one who can save his daughter to come and do so. His little daughter is all that is on his mind. Would you or I be any different?

At the last, Jairus expresses great faith in Jesus. They know that she is at the point of death. They have tried everything else that they can. Jairus begs for the healer's touch to fall upon his little girl.

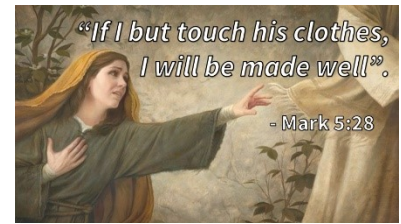


"Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live".

Jesus chooses to have compassion and to go with this man. Despite the friction and conflicts and tension common in Jesus' relationship and interactions with the religious leaders, Jesus goes with the man. As he goes, a large crowd presses in on him as he walks along the road. But as we come to verse 25, there is a shift in the story. Mark does this several times in his gospel – tucking a story within a story.

Within that crowd that was following Jesus to Jairus' house was a woman who has been suffering from a bleeding condition for twelve years. Did you hear that – twelve years?! The woman has been having something akin to her period for twelve years. In verse 26 we learn that over this time she has seen many physicians and is now in poverty. She is not any better but has grown worse as the condition persists. It is important to fully understand what this condition means for this unnamed woman. First, the emotional and social costs. She is despised and shamed by all the other women. The woman is barren – no children are possible with her condition. Second, the physical costs. Due to her constant bleeding, she is always tired, always weak. Third, the spiritual costs. Blood is sacred, holy in the Jewish faith. During their periods, all women are ceremonially unclean. They cannot enter the temple or synagogues to pray or to worship or to offer sacrifices or to be in community. For twelve years this woman has lived as an outsider, as a permanent outcast. Can you imagine what that would be like? Twelve years.

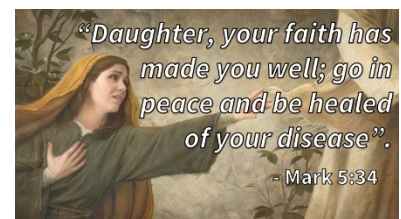
Well, having suffered, having spent everything she had, having only gotten worse, having heard of this Jesus, she makes a decision. In verse 28 we hear her thoughts and sense her faith. Here she says, *"If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well"*. If I but touch his clothes. That's her in this picture, reaching out to touch the healer. In this artist's rendition, it is just the woman and Jesus. That seems appropriate for this story. In comparison to Jairus, what led this woman to this point, to this crossroads of faith? Unlike Jairus, she had no dignity to lose. She had nothing to lose. In fact, she was from the exact opposite end of the social spectrum. A permanent outcast, there was no dignity. Jairus was a man of power, of respect, of standing, of authority. The woman had none of these things. Yet they find themselves at the exact same place – Jesus is their last resort.



The woman works her way through the crowd and comes up behind Jesus. She reaches out and touches the fringes of his cloak. In verse 29 we read that when she touched Jesus, her bleeding stopped IMMEDIATELY and that she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately – that word is important. Twelve long years, gone in an instant. No more being despised or shamed, no more being barren and weak all the time. No longer labeled “unclean” she could re-enter society; she could worship in the temple or synagogue. She was no longer an outcast, an outsider. Immediately she is healed. This is not the slow but steady work of medicine or treatment. This is the healer’s touch. The woman’s healing comes from within – from her faith in the power of Jesus Christ.

And suddenly all movement stops. Jesus is no longer headed to Jairus' house. Jesus turns and asks, *"Who touched my clothes"?* The disciples all but laugh – Jesus you are in a huge crowd, everyone is pressing in on you, everyone is touching you. It seems a ludicrous question. How could he ask such a thing?! Jesus pauses, looking all around to see who it was that touched his clothes, that connected with him in this most powerful way. Imagine for a moment what was going through Jairus' head. *"My little daughter is at the point of death"*. Jesus, can we just get on with it? Jesus, can't we just get to my house? My little daughter is on death's doorstep. A desperate Jairus watches this scene unfold as a suddenly disoriented Jesus pauses, staring into the crowd.

The woman, knowing what happened and why Jesus suddenly stopped, came forward in fear and trembling. Remember, she has never seen or met Jesus. She is an outcast. She has just heard rumors, whispers among the other outcasts, tidbits picked up as she exists on the fringes of society. Will this Jesus be angry with her? Will he recoil at the thought of an unclean woman touching him? She does not know that this Jesus touches lepers and prostitutes, that this Jesus loves tax collectors and other sinners, that this Jesus came not for the righteous but for those in need. In verse 33 we read, *"But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth"*. Humbly she falls at Jesus' feet. She is awed by the power of the healer's touch. The woman realizes the miracle that she has experienced. Jesus says to her, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease"*. Jesus calls her "daughter" – a term of endearment, of love.



Jesus confirms her healing and releases her from being unclean and outcast. He restores her to wholeness, to community.



As Jesus is finishing these words of affirmation and assurance, people from Jairus' house arrive. When it was almost time to continue on with Jesus, Jairus' worst fears become reality. They tell him that his daughter is dead, to not bother the teacher any further. Were they afraid of what Jesus might do? Jesus overhears this news and speaks to Jairus, saying, *"Do not fear, only believe"*. Jesus encourages Jairus to have the faith that the woman had. To hope on Jesus is not to hope in vain.

At this point, Jesus leaves all behind except Jairus and the inner three – Peter, James and John. The crowd and disciples that Jesus leaves behind has just witnessed the miraculous healing of the woman. Perhaps that is enough for the day. Perhaps the scene at the synagogue leader's house could bear no more people. As they arrive, there is a commotion – people wailing and weeping loudly. These would have been professional funeral mourners. They would be hired to grieve the dying and the dead. The presence of these people implies that the family believed death was imminent, that things were hopeless. The presence of these professional mourners indicates that the family has already begun funeral preparations. They believed the end was near. And they were right. When Jesus arrives, the little girl is dead.



Jesus enters the scene, questioning those wailing and weeping, saying, "*The child is not dead but sleeping*". The crowd laughs at Jesus. These professionals know death quite well; they recognize it very quickly. It is then that they are to perform, to earn their keep with loud wailing and weeping. In response Jesus clears the house – except Jairus and his wife plus the inner three. Jesus takes charge. Those with doubt, those without a real interest in the girl's life, those perhaps unworthy to see the miracle – they are all put outside the house.



Entering the girl's room, Jesus reaches out and takes her hand. He is not afraid to touch the dead, the unclean. But the physical touch does not heal this time. The faith

was not the little girl's faith. It was the father's faith that has brought Jesus to this place and time. Jesus says, "*Talitha cum*" – little girl, get up. It is Jesus' words that bring life to Jairus' daughter. The touch did not heal her, but Jesus' words brought life. In verse 42 we read that "*immediately*" the girl got up and began to walk around. Jesus immediately restored the little girl to wholeness, to her family, to society, to the world – just as he had done with the woman who had suffered for twelve long years. Instructing them to give her something to eat, Jesus indicates the fullness of the healing, the total return to normal life for this twelve-year-old girl.

These two daughters of God, they are made well by faith. The healer's touch reaches them both – one through their own faith and one through their father's faith. Both daughters were fully restored to wholeness. We too certainly know and encounter those who need restoration, who need to feel the healer's touch.

How do those who are on the fringes, on the edges, on the outside come to know the healer's touch?

You may know someone who is lost or suffering. You might know someone who is like the woman in the middle story. You might know a father or a mother desperate for their child's healing or wholeness. Healing, restoration, wholeness, redemption – all are only available through Jesus' healing touch. In our scripture passage we see the remarkable stories of a young girl and a persistent woman.

These two daughters of God help us see the range and the reach of this mystery we call Jesus. Their intertwined stories paint for us an emerging vision of not just healing, but new creation. Jesus' healing power goes beyond mere fixing to a restoration to life and even empowerment through the saving faith of others. This is evident in the joy revealed in the ones we know, perhaps ourselves, who have been drenched in Jesus' grace, love, and forgiveness. The healer's touch is available to one and all – regardless of condition, regardless of circumstance, regardless of anything. Who do you know that needs to feel and experience the healer's touch?

Let us pray... Lord, we must pause and ask ourselves, who is interrupting us with their needs and their cries? Who has been left on the margins due to things beyond their control and is reaching for a way into the community of faith? And how do we make space for such as these? How do we choose to stop our busy, headlong rush to accomplish our tasks so that we can find time to be touched by another's need? And Lord, how do we make space in our hearts for the hurting

of this world? We pray that you would break our hearts for what breaks yours. Shape and mold us to love as Jesus loved. Soften our spirits, Lord Jesus, and guide us to connect those in need to the healer's touch. May it be so. Amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. What is your story of experiencing Jesus' touch? When has your faith made you well?
- 2) *Pray*. Are you more like Jairus or like the woman with the bleeding issue? What is drawing you to fall at Jesus' feet in prayer?
- 3) *Study*. Read Luke 8: 40-56. What differences do you notice in this story? How do these differences affect how you read and understand the story?