

Sunday July 1st

Healing Power

Friends, sickness is the great interrupter of life. It enters without knocking, changing all plans, mocking the idea of certainty, and diminishing hope for the future. It intrudes like a burglar in our home, touching every part of our life. Such an interruption occurred to a woman in Jesus' time. Her encounter with Jesus is in the scripture we read this morning. (Mark 5: 21-43). The incident takes place on a city street, a narrow twisted street packed with a crowd of excited people. Not unlike the malls at Christmas, people were moving past bazaars and stores filled with noise and confusion. The crowd is there not to purchase gifts, but to catch a glimpse of the one named Jesus. He walks like a king, and the common people speak of him with deep affection. The beggars whisper his name softly. The children may be heard singing about him, he is known to the diseased. His fame has spread to all the streets of forgotten men and women. It is Jesus of Nazareth!

At the request of one Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, Jesus is on his way to restore to complete health Jairus' dying daughter. He is on a mission of restoration, and the crowd is following him in order to see him perform this miracle. Opinion is divided, there is argument and discussion. Some are declaring that he can do it and some are doubtful.

His walk is interrupted by a very sick woman, her face is marred with lines of agony. Her body is racked with pain, who is she? Tradition gives her various names, but I cannot tell you who she was. It does not matter, it is enough that she was a woman in pain! She is typical of countless cases of endless pain and suffering. For twelve years she had suffered and twelve years is a long time. She wants relief, restoration, health, life and she hopes that Jesus can heal.

She had every reason to want to be healed (her) sickness, as any sickness, had a profound effect on her. She felt the losses caused by her illness every day.

In sickness, as in any battle, there are losses, even for the victor. The pain and uncertainty of illness usually amplify the sense of loss experienced by the victim. Among the most common feelings of loss are:

1. Loss of control, suddenly the body, rather than obeying you, has its own agenda and does whatever it pleases. (If you ever had the flu you know what I mean). It's like driving a car on an icy highway, suddenly your car hits a patch of black ice, and you spin out of control. You hit the brakes, twist the steering wheel--- nothing helps. All you can do at this point is to hold on

and wait for the crash. It's a sick feeling, a helpless feeling. This was the embarrassing condition of the woman. She had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, her body was out of control.

Sick people become defined by their illness. Isn't it interesting that the lady in the story is not called by name. Simply, "a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding". The same is true today. We speak of certain people and say "she has cancer", "he has AIDS", or she is mentally unfit. Sick people lose their identity in their sickness. One is no longer the person that they were; they are the person who has an illness, the one who is disfigured, who endures chronic pain, who is dying. Sickness puts a strain on families, relationships and finances. In today's scripture reading it says that "the woman had spent all she had."

Sickness makes us do strange things, doesn't it? We look for instant cures and new medicines. Some alternatives may prove valid, even miraculous. The woman in the story was desperate. She was willing to try anything to bring healing to her body. She had heard about this Jesus, a healer. She had also heard that he was in the area. This was her last chance, if only the stories were true about His healing. She went to the village and saw a large crowd surrounding this robed man with a beard, he had this look about him, and he was taking to another important looking man. She thought to herself if only I could get close to just touch him, perhaps I would be healed. So she came up and touched his cloak. As instantaneously as the woman touched Jesus she could feel her body being healed, he turned around to see who touched him. Jesus says "who touched me", as he felt power draining from his body. The woman was very scared and afraid. She came forward and told Jesus that it was her who touched him. Jesus says to her, "Daughter your faith has healed you!" go in peace and be free from your suffering.

That is the record, these are the facts, and it's all a matter of history. That is the miracle, Jesus heals a woman who had a bleeding problem for many years. And what a miracle it was! This is the only miracle recorded in scripture where no word was spoken or action displayed by Jesus.

Notice the woman didn't meet Jesus in a house of worship, she met him in the streets surrounded by people. She touched him in faith, desperate believing faith. That is the miracle that I don't want you all to miss. The

touch of one anonymous woman in a crowd halted the Lord of Glory. That is the glorious message of this miracle, she touched him, and so can we. The other miracle is that the human touch has the power to arrest God. Yes to stop him, to halt him, to make him aware of your problems, your petition. We need to touch him, most of us are thronging him, just like the crowd in today's scripture. It's easy to throng Jesus and never touch him. A great many people in the church, and perhaps a great many outside the church, are thronging Jesus but not trusting him; seeking him but not being found by him, coming close to him but never actually touching him. Coming close to Jesus is not enough. It's like missing a train, you may miss it by one minute and that's pretty close but you have lost the train, it's gone, and you are left behind. Thronging saves nobody, coming near to Jesus will not bring healing. We have to touch Him for ourselves.

So how can we touch Jesus? It is one thing for that woman long ago, but how can I touch him today?

1. Give God a chance, take your problems whatever they may be to him in prayer. Tell him everything, don't hold back, and be honest.
2. Believe that God will hear you, remember that he heard that poor woman who only touch the hem of his garment. Believe with all of your heart and faith that God does care for you.
3. The most important, be willing to wait patiently for the Lord. He does not answer every prayer on Sunday, sometimes you have to wait until Friday. Remember God is not in a hurry, the person who waits on God never loses time.
4. Reach out and touch him, many people bump into Jesus, but few reach out and touch him.
5. When he speaks to you, do what he tells you. He may not tell you with a voice, or writings in the sky, but through your own conscience or through a trusted friend or relative. When he lets you know what you must do, just do it.

The message that I leave with you is the woman in today's scripture had

Courage to step out in blind faith and touch the Lord, to find healing and hope, can you do no less. Don't miss out on that miracle. Amen