**Woman with bleeding problem healed**  24/12/23dkm

Read: Mark 5

Text: Mark 5: 21-34

Psalms:

Jesus began his Galilean ministry in the synagogue at Capernaum. He came preaching, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel’ (1:15). In addition to preaching he healed sick people like lepers and cripples, and cast out demons. When the Jewish leaders threatened to destroy him, Jesus went through the towns and villagers of the region and ended up preaching from a boat anchored just off the shore of the lake. Huge crowds came to listen and be healed by Jesus. He took some respite by sailing across the lake with his disciples, but was soon back in Capernaum.

The crowd was awaiting Jesus as he stepped out of the boat at Capernaum. In this crowd was a man called Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. Whatever his thoughts about Jesus preaching in the synagogue, he was now worried about just one thing, his only child, a daughter of twelve years, was very sick. He came to Jesus pleading for his help. Jesus set out towards his house, but as he was making his way through the narrow city streets of the city something strange occurred. As Jesus pressed through the crowd he suddenly stopped, turned around and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ (5:30). What a strange thing to say! Lots of people were touching him, as the disciples pointed out, but Jesus in his omniscience knew one person had deliberately touched him in order to be healed.

India is the place of jostling crowds. It is not a place to go if you insist on personal space. I remember travelling on a city bus with someone standing on my foot all the way. I was hanging on, with one hand over my head, and holding my pocket with the other- my wallet was in that pocket. Another memory is that of negotiating a crowded city street on my bicycle. I gave up trying to ride. I ended up carrying it above my head, trying to free myself from the crush of people. We stayed off Delhi buses in our recent trip, but still had to abandon our taxi and walk when we came to a street filled with people worshipping a Hindu god.

**1. Flow of blood**

With people jostling him along, Jesus set out for the house of Jairus. A certain unnamed woman saw the opportunity of getting closes to Jesus and actually touching him (5:25-27). This woman was suffering from ‘a flow of blood for twelve years’ (5:25); it is interesting that the daughter of Jairus was twelve years old, but no more than interesting. The two stories are intertwined of course, with their own particular features, but both show the power of Jesus to heal in response to faith.

The flow of blood was a gynaecological problem, a serious affliction, especially for a woman in that society. Losing blood makes a person weak. This woman probably struggled to do her work around the house and in the fields. But the hardest thing for this woman was being cut off from society because of ‘uncleanness’. Because she was ceremonially unclean and she was not allowed into the temple or the synagogue to worship God. In Jewish society it meant social isolation. It meant anyone who touched her became unclean for the day; they had to wash themselves and their clothes to become clean. This was the law of the Jews (Lev 15:19f). She had spent all her money going to different doctors, but none could heal her; in fact she got worse (5:26).

**2. Fear**

Can you imagine not being allowed to come to worship because of a sickness you have? Maybe you have had a contagious disease and been quarantined for a week or so. This woman had been quarantined for twelve years. What a miserable life she had. This woman would have stayed at home most of the time in fear of contaminating anyone. In public she would have kept her distance lest she touch someone, making them unclean. Remember how lepers had to call out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ when anyone came near. Her life must have been much like that of a leper.

When the woman heard that Jesus was in town she determined to approach him for help. But she was afraid that Jesus, like other people, would not want to touch her. She would have to touch him secretly. The jostling crowd made this possible - but not easy. If anyone noticed her they would cry, ‘Watch out for that unclean woman!’ The woman was afraid, but had sufficient faith to make the effort to touch Jesus and be healed. She pushed through the crowd following Jesus until she was close enough to touch him. She reached out her hand and managed to touch the edge of his cloak. She did this without him noticing - or so she thought. She quickly melted back into the crowd, hoping to leave the scene unnoticed.

A woman thinking that by touching the robe of Jesus she would be healed sounds a bit superstitious don’t you think? On commentator writes, ‘Her touch combined faith with quasi-magical notions which were widespread in that day’. And not only in that day! We see a lot of superstition today, even in the church. We see people travelling half-way around the world in order to kiss a statue or relic, or drink the water at some holy place, in the hope of being healed. We see ‘prayed-over’ cloths or other trinkets being sent out by tele- evangelists for people to touch and be healed. What we see this woman doing in no way sanctions such practices.

There is an interesting account in the Bible of handkerchiefs or sweat bands being taken from the apostle Paul for people to touch and be healed (Acts 19:11, 12). We read that God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. Paul would have agreed to this ‘unusual’ practice, a special practice for that special time. Reading on in this chapter of Acts, we see what happens to those who try their hand at magic, or manipulation of the Spirit of God. Unlike the ‘holy’ relics or cloths used in some churches today, those who touched Jesus’ cloak or Paul’s head bands were all healed.

This woman who touched Jesus had faith in God, as Jesus later acknowledged (5:34). She did not cut off a piece of his cloak for a magic charm. She came in fear, but also in faith. Her faith was not strong, but not like the centurion’s great faith. He believed that Jesus could heal his servant without even touching him (Luke 7:9). This woman, like Jairus and many others, believed that Jesus had to touch her, or she at least had to touch Him. That she did so secretly was because in her heart fear was still mixed with faith. She was a woman of weak faith but Jesus still blessed her. If you have little faith you can still come to Jesus in that faith and he will bless you.

**3. Faith**

While this woman’s faith was not strong, it was present and it was real, and it was seen by Jesus. Jesus said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Mat 17:20). Many have come to Jesus with little faith, and found that faith rewarded with abundant grace. Maybe you struggle to have faith and to trust in Jesus in times of difficulty. Maybe you have the tendency to fear what is happening to you. If so, come to Jesus and see what he will do for you.

This woman’s faith brought her to Jesus. She managed to touch his cloak. When she did so she was instantly healed. Immediately her bleeding stopped. ‘She felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction’ (5:29). Her healing was instant and complete. ‘By an act of sovereign will, God determined to honour the woman’s faith in spite of the fact that it was tinged with ideas which bordered on the magic’ (Lane). She was happy- but still fearful. She did not start praising God but tried to slip away quietly.

Many were touching Jesus but with the touch of this woman Jesus knew that power had gone out from him, power to heal and power to save (5:30). Even when Jesus healed with a word it was a word of power, the power of God. The power came, not from some mantra or form of words, but from God. Jesus stopped and turned around. ‘Who touched my clothes?’ he said. No one owned up. His disciples tried to reason with Jesus but he insisted on finding the person who touched him. He knew who it was of course, but he wanted this woman to step forward of her own volition, which she did. With fear and trembling she stepped forward, knowing that she was in the presence of one with great power, power to heal and to save. She fell at Jesus feet and told him the whole truth about herself and her life (5:33).

Jesus wanted her to tell everyone what God had done for her. He wanted her to do this, not only for the glory of God but for her own good. Jesus did not want this woman returning to her old life of fear. He wanted her to live the new life of faith. He wanted her to be free to come to him for help in her time of need. He wanted her to call God her Father- Jesus called her his daughter. He wanted her to confess the grace and power of God that she now knew. After spending all her money on human means, she found salvation was free.

**4. Full healing**

What would life have been like for this woman if she had managed to slip away without being noticed? She would have had no assurance of being completely and utterly healed. She would have had to convince the priests she was healed, and then get ceremonially washed. Above all, she would not have heard the words of Jesus, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace’ (5:34). ‘Your faith has made you whole’ or literally ‘Your faith has saved you’; the Greek word can apply to physical and/or spiritual healing. This woman received both by the power of God through Jesus Christ. In fact, a different word is used for healing in the last sentence so this word translated ‘made well’ refers more to spiritual healing, to being made whole in Christ. This healing, like all the healing miracles, was a sign of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of power and grace. God’s grace and power are seen most importantly in salvation from sin.

With Jesus’ eyes upon her, this woman came forward trembling. Now the eyes of everyone were fixed on her. She fell down before Jesus, telling him why she had touched him, and how she had been healed instantly (5:33). Confession before Jesus, and confession of Jesus, brought release to this woman - as it does to all who confess the name of Jesus. She heard Jesus call her his daughter- something he called only this woman in the whole NT. That meant she was in a new relationship with God. God was her Father. She heard Jesus say it was her faith that healed her. Her faith, like your faith, had its object in Jesus. She did not sneak up behind some priest or holy man (or woman) to touch their cloak! She did not sneak up on a lump of wood or stone expecting to be healed!

To the paralytic that he healed Jesus said, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’ (2:5). To this woman he said, ‘Go in peace’ (5:34). While this was a traditional greeting, Jesus was not simply being polite. He was declaring that she now had peace with God. She had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. She had the peace of Jesus in her heart, peace that would keep her heart from being troubled and afraid (John 14:27). Remember, what Jesus did for this woman he will do for you, if you come to him in faith, even a little faith. The Lord says, ‘If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved’ (Rom 10:9).