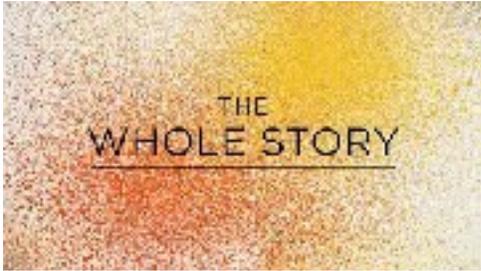


SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2018



Jesus heals two women in Mark 5:21-43. One enjoyed the center of community life, the other lived on the margins. Each had to take a different path to find Jesus' healing touch.

Do you like to be touched? I know that can be a touchy subject (groan), but really think about it.

Let's do a little experiment. I invite you all to stand up. Now turn to face one other person. Extend your hand and shake that person's hand. Good. Now, face that person, extend your arms out wide, and...How many of you just experienced an increase in anxiety? I won't force you to hug each other.

Seriously, though, how many of you started getting nervous when you thought I was going to make you hug somebody? Touch is a powerful thing, isn't it?

I read an interesting article this week about the power of human touch. Many studies have been done about the devastating effects on infants if they are deprived of human touch. This is even true for adults. We all long to be touched. Today we are going to look at the story of two touches and the power they had in a whole community.

Let's dive into our story. It's a story about three main characters: Jesus and two women found in Mark 5:21-43.

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, 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." And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the

ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But 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. Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat. **Mark 5:21-43**

FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT JESUS. JESUS WAS A ROCK STAR.

Wherever Jesus went he always had a huge crowd following him around. Have you noticed that? Imagine taking Dr. Phil, Oprah Winfrey, The Beatles, Billy Graham, and Garth Brooks, mashing them all together and multiplying it by 100. That's the kind of fame that Jesus had in the first half of his ministry.

You can describe the shape of Jesus' story by thinking of a roller coaster. The first half of his life was a climb to the peak of popularity, which came to its climax at the transfiguration. Then, after that event, Jesus starts heading to Jerusalem and his teaching becomes very intense, and the people turn on him.

This is my illustration of the Gospel of Mark. You can see that the crowds are a mob of fans in the first half of the story, then they turn into a Lynch mob in the second half.

We'll unpack that more as we progress through the story. Today, we are still on the popularity side of the story. There are three reasons that Jesus was really popular. I call them the three "P's" of Jesus popularity. They are his Preaching, Power, and Parables.

The people loved his preaching because he taught with authority. He boldly proclaimed this message that we will come back to again and again. "The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel.

You take a guy who can mesmerize people with his teaching and combine it with someone who can heal the sick and restore the tortured soul, and you've got...a rock star. Look at this story where Jesus heals two women. It is the story of two touches.

One woman is 12 years old and has a life threatening fever. The other woman is older and has twelve-year old disease. Here's the story. Let's start with the girl. This is not just any girl. This is the daughter of Jairus. He is the leader of the synagogue. He's a big deal in town.

That means his daughter is probably a big deal, too. If this were Downton Abbey, she would be like Lady Mary. On a bigger scale, she would be like the President's daughter. She's twelve years old. To be twelve in an ancient Jewish village would be equivalent to being 17-20 years old in our culture. She is just about to become a fully adult woman in society.

Think about this for a minute. Imagine if the President's daughter developed a life-threatening disease. What do you think the President would do? I'm sure they would go to the ends of the earth to find the best doctor to come and help her.

If you were the doctor that the President asked to come and help his daughter, how would you react? If it were me, I'd probably reschedule all my appointments and fly to D.C., especially if they offered to get me there on Air Force One. That's kind of what's going on here inverse 21-24. Jairus is the big man in town. He is so worried about his daughter that he walks up to Jesus, in the middle of a huge crowd, and falls at his feet and actually begs Jesus to come and heal her from her fever.

So, here you have a very popular girl. She's Jairus' daughter. She's probably the Belle of the Ball. Everybody knows her. Everyone is worried. She's the center of the crowd's attention. And Jesus starts walking to the house. Then something happens. Another woman enters the scene. Who is she?

She has had a hemorrhage for 12 years. Now, with our modern ears, we hear that and think, "Oh, that's a bummer," but it's not that big of a deal. So, we need to take a moment and try to get a grasp on what is really happening here.

These are Jewish people who follow the Laws of Moses very carefully. The Law states that when a woman is in her menstrual cycle she is unclean. An unclean person must remove herself from the population and live in isolation until she becomes clean again. In the case of the normal cycle, this was designed to protect the woman, to keep her husband away from her during this unpleasant time and to give her time alone. She would go live in the "Red Tent" while she waited for her cycle to pass, and then she would do a purification ceremony and be good to go until the next month.

Now, imagine if your cycle never stopped...for twelve years. This woman had been in the "Red Tent" of isolation for 12 years. No one had touched her...for twelve years. I wonder who those people are today. Who in our society has been pushed so far to the margins that they are untouchable. We minister to many of society's lepers at GPP on a daily basis.

This woman longed to be touched. She longed to come out of isolation. This woman musters up her courage, pushes through the crowd, and touches the hem of Jesus' cloak. He stops. In the middle of a swarming crowd. **"Who touched me?"**

He sees this woman. He sees the longing, the desperation, and the courage it took for her to do what she did. He stoops down, touches her, and says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." Just then, a messenger comes from Jairus' house. Jesus took too long. The girl is dead.

Here an interesting thing happens. Jesus leaves the crowd. He takes only a select few with him into the room with the dead girl. And he touches her. Let's look at these two touches for a moment.

In both cases, these were forbidden touches. The Law of Moses clearly stated that, if a person touches a Red Tent woman or a dead body, then that person would become unclean. The uncleanness is the powerful agent here.

But, when Jesus touches the unclean thing...the power is reversed. This is the power of Jesus' touch. To make that which the law declares as unclean to be clean. I want to make one more observation about this story. Notice what has to happen to these two women in order to be made clean. The woman who has been on the margins of community has to come into the center of the community in order to receive the touch of God and be made clean. All the people that she touched as she moved toward the center were technically tainted by her presence as she pressed in to find Jesus.

Jairus daughter, on the other hand, who enjoyed the limelight and the privilege of living in the center of the community, had to move outside of the community. She had to die. Jesus had to meet her in the darkness of isolation before she could receive his healing touch and be brought back to life.

I don't think these are accidental details in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus has come to turn the world upside down. The Kingdom of God calls the marginalized to be brought into the community and calls the elite and privileged to experience the death of that status.

Why? So that we can all have life and be made clean. So, here's the challenge today. We say, again and again, that we are the body of Christ. It's God's Work, our hands. How Do You Need To Be Touched By God Today? Who Needs Your Touch Today?