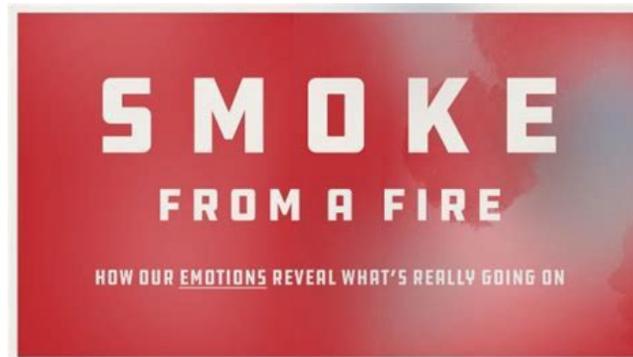


“Shame”

Luke 8:40-48

Smoke From A Fire #4

Weekend of July 27-28, 2019



It's our last week in our series Smoke from a Fire, and we need to discuss a pretty heavy topic, shame. All of us, at some point, know what it is to experience shame. It can range from simple embarrassment to things much more serious.

Most people know what the experience of shame is like, but most don't understand whether it is good or bad, or what role it is supposed to play. People tend to think it is just an extreme form of guilt — like guilt on steroids. Guilt is feeling bad about something bad you did; shame is feeling really bad about it.

While guilt can produce shame, shame is different. Guilt is focused on the what of what; shame is focused on the who. Guilt says, I did something bad. Shame says, “I am something bad.”

Shame can certainly arise from feelings of guilt (we see that in the Garden of Eden, right? After Adam and Eve sinned...That's the first-time shame is mentioned and it has been an inherent part of the human condition ever since then), but shame can also be triggered in our lives by things that have nothing to do with choices we have made...We might feel shame because of something done to us.

For many people, for example, shame comes from something traumatic that happened in their past. You were abused — physically, sexually, or verbally. You were talked to or treated in ways that communicate you were no good, worthless, damaged — until eventually those things seeped into your soul and they believed these things about themselves.

Maybe it comes from something about them over which they have no control — a disability; a weakness; infertility; you were divorced or cheated on through no fault of your own; even an unwanted attraction.

Counselor Ed Welch stated: **“Shame is the deep sense that you are inherently flawed, unacceptable and unworthy of love because of something you’ve done, something done to you, or something associated with you.”**

Shame says: “I am defective. I am damaged. I am broken. I am flawed. I am dirty. I am ugly. I am impure. I am disgusting. I am unlovable. I am weak. I am pitiful. I am insignificant. I am worthless. I am unwanted.”

For many of us, others have attempted to control us through shame. Your parents, or a friend, or a boss, or a pastor or church leader, or maybe your professor, tried to make you feel bad about yourself as a way of getting you to do what they wanted: You’re lazy. You’re ignorant. You’re a bad student. You’re a tramp. You’re a racist. You’re not a good father.

But even though it may work in the short run, it can have devastating effects in the long run. Pastor Craig Groeschel points out that shame often leads to...

Hopeless perfectionism: We attempt to overcome our shame through flawless performance, and we find it difficult to ever admit failure because that would confirm this judgment our shame has declared over us. If we perform at the highest standards, we feel like we will be able to say, “There, I did it. I proved it. I exceeded expectations, and therefore I have worth after all.”

Harsh criticism (of self and others): People suffering from shame are really hard on themselves because they nurse a deep dislike of who they are, which makes them hard on everyone else, too. When they see their own faults mirrored in other people, they become really judgmental as a type of self-loathing. You might see people as arrogant or self-righteous, but in reality, they are dealing with personal dislike that comes from secret shame. As you’ve heard said, “Hurt people hurt people.”

Helpless Feelings: People with an overwhelming sense of shame tend to focus on the worst possible outcomes, saying, ‘I know this bad thing is going to happen. They’re never going to like me; we’ll never have a good relationship. This will just fall apart, too. I’ll never get the promotion. I’m never going to amount to anything.’ You assume the worst because deep down you believe you are the worst and you deserve the worst.

I want us to look at a story in Luke’s gospel that gives us both a comparison and a contrast. Jairus is a respected leader in the temple. The woman in this story is considered unclean. Both have a need. Let’s look at the text....

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus’ feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.” And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence

of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.” Luke 8:40-48

Let's look at the story...both Jairus and this woman are in need of Jesus' help. He implores Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter, and Jesus consents. He's on his way to help this man. This woman shows up. **“Having a discharge of blood”** is a polite way of saying she had a disease that produced “an uncontrollable menstrual flow,” which meant that not only was she sick, and likely suffering from severe, chronic pain, she was unable to have children and according to Jewish law she was ceremonially unclean.

That means wasn't allowed in public for 12 years. No public worship. No place where others could come in contact with her. It means no one has touched her — for 12 years — lest they become unclean. For 12 years no one has hugged her or laid a hand on her to pray for her. She is outcast. Lonely. At one point he had so many hopes for her life — marriage, family, life in the community. All those seem over now.

Luke, the author, who was a doctor by trade, lets us know that according to medical opinions of the day she was incurable. And what's more, he tells us she had spent her family's entire fortune attempting to find a cure but nothing's helped. **She's hopeless.**

One last observation about her — and it comes from a detail that's left out: **She's nameless.** In contrast to Jairus, whose name everybody knows, Luke leaves this woman's name out because no one knows who she is anyway. That's intentional: She is hidden; she is invisible to people.

That's as much her choice, by the way, as anyone else's — shame does that to people. It makes them want to hide lest they just get exposed and more humiliated. She has a disfigured face that keeps her out of public, behind closed doors — she doesn't want even to be seen or known. Do you see the contrast with Jairus?

Jairus is the ruler of the synagogue; she's not allowed in the synagogue. He was respected; she, rejected. His is a household name; hers is a name nobody knows. But both need Jesus just the same: He's got a daughter, the apple of his eye, joy of his life, who is 12 years old and deathly sick. She's an outcast and dead to community and dreams for 12 years.

What keeps people like Jairus from coming to Jesus is usually pride — feeling like they don't need Jesus's help. And a lot of times it takes a tragedy like this one to get their attention: the death of a loved one. A job loss. A health scare. Through these things God is just gently waking you up saying, “You really don't have it all.”

But what keeps people like this woman from coming to Jesus is different — Her shame has led her to a subtle despair. It's not that she doesn't know she needs Jesus's help, she thinks if he knew the truth about her, he'd never help her. She clandestinely makes her way through the crowds, and as he passes by, she reaches out and grabs hold the hem of his clothes.

Look at verses 44-45... **She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” Luke 8:44-45**

QUESTION: Does he really not know? Surely, if he's God — and he's got the power to heal like this — surely, he could figure something simple like that out. So, why ask? He's saying, “Identify yourself...because I have something even more amazing for you than the healing you just received. In this moment, Peter steps in with his requisite dullness.

And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!” Luke 8:45 Peter has this ability to respond in profound moments with profound stupidity. “Uhh, Jesus...you know, everybody is touching you, Jesus. This is a crowd.” And you can almost hear Jesus say, “Thank you, Peter. What would I do without you and all your amazing insights?” Lots of people were touching Jesus that day, but this was a touch of faith. And that’s a whole different thing. Look how the story turns in verse 47...And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. Luke 8:47

Trembling. Terrified. She just wanted to steal her miracle and get home. The last thing she wanted was to be exposed again — and now in front of this famous Rabbi! Is she just going to be humiliated and rejected again in front of everyone?

What happens next might be the most profound moment in the Gospels, because it answers the most basic question of all religion: **What is it like to be exposed in all of our shame and ugliness and mess before a holy God?** He answers that question in verse 48....**And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”**

Not stranger. Or ma’am. Or even sister or friend. But a term of most intimate endearment: daughter. **Tim Keller says you should probably read it something like, “Sweetheart.”** It’s the only place in the Gospels where Jesus addresses someone this way. It’s the kind of word you would never use to address someone you just met.

The girl nobody wanted Jesus refers to as “precious sweetheart.” The girl no one would touch is now being embraced by the arms that shaped the stars. The name nobody else knows Jesus knows. He’s on more than a “first name basis” with her. He’s in the tender nickname stage.

Don’t miss the contrast! Jairus is a dad who is pleading the cause of his 12-year-old daughter before Jesus. But this woman for 12 years has had no father to plead her cause! So, Jesus pleads it for her. And he won’t let her just steal a miracle in secret, because as much as he wants to heal her, and as great as that is, he also wants her to know the even greater thing — that she is loved, accepted and cherished. I still have an unanswered question from this text...

What typically happens when an unclean thing touches a clean thing? The clean thing doesn’t make the unclean thing clean; the unclean thing makes the clean thing unclean. Yet, that doesn’t happen here with Jesus. when the unclean thing touches the clean thing, the unclean thing becomes clean. So, what happened to the uncleanness? That’s the million-dollar question of the Gospels.

And the answer is that (though you can’t see it), Jesus silently takes it into himself. He’s on his way to die on a cross where he will bear our sin and our shame. Isaiah said he would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities...but he would also carry our shame: people would hide their faces from him and consider him cursed by God.

To those whose shame comes from something you have done, mistakes you have made, Jesus offers cleansing through his substitutionary death on the cross. He went to a cross so you could go home in peace. When you touch Jesus in faith, he takes into himself the guilt and penalty of your sin, like this woman’s disease and uncleanness passed into Jesus, and his righteousness and new life passes into you.

To those whose shame comes from things done to you — you need to hear Jesus’s response to this woman, because it is his response to you. He calls you “daughter.” this new identity outweighs any thing other identity put upon you. You are not what others have said about you. You are not what others have done to you. You are what Jesus has declared over you.

Right now, you are hiding in the crowd wondering what it’s like to be exposed in all this mess before Jesus...He is calling you daughter. He wants you to know that you are not damaged, second-rate, unworthy or unloved; you are a precious and beloved child whom he has created and redeemed specifically for his purposes.

You were precious enough for him to shed his blood to buy you back; he put his Spirit inside of you; and destined you to rule and reign with him forever. One day, Hebrews says, he will put you on a throne higher than the angels and all creation will shake their heads in wonder at the love God has bestowed on you and the honor and esteem with which he holds you.

What does all this mean for those stuck in shame? Christian counselors say the person held captive by shame needs 3 things, and they are all right here in this story. **We need...**

To have our story heard: You have to come out of the shadows. Like this woman. Shame thrives in secrecy. You have to take the chance of exposing yourself. Maybe you have a secret sin to confess. Or a weakness. A prolonged addiction you can’t shake. Like this woman, Jesus is calling you to speak your shame. The church is not supposed to be a trophy case of the righteous but a hospital for the broken. **We need...**

To have our head lifted: In this story, Jesus takes the initiative. He raises her head before she can even raise it. She’s still looking at the ground in fear and shame and he says, “Look up to me, precious daughter!” **Here is the Greatest Gospel Secret...The power of new life begins with a new identity.** It’s what separates Jesus’s message from that of every other religion: Every religion tells you — change be better, and then you’ll be a good person and God will accept you.

The gospel flips that upside down — God declares you righteous in Christ as a gift, an identity he bestows on you that you don’t deserve, and you change in response to it. **The lifter of your head is here!** It leads to the last idea...

To be restored to loving community: Feeling the embrace of Jesus will give you the courage, eventually, to re-engage with community. God forms his church from broken people—guilty people; people overwhelmed by shame. He declares them new creations and endows them with purpose and power. His purpose and power.

The road to healing from shame begins as we speak it. As you come out of the shadows and speak it, you’ll hear the voice of your Savior and Shepherd saying, “Daughter! My son!” And his declaration will heal those wounds. And, if your shame does come from, or tie into, things you have done, he’ll take that from you and make you a new creation in him!