

## **Journey to the Cross 2: Jesus and the Hemorrhaging Woman**

In his book *Through the Eyes of Faith*, Father John Powell, counselor, speaker and theologian writes the following: "I have come to realize that people are not one thing, good or bad, but many things. In every human being there is warmth, love, affection, but there is also hurt, anger, weakness. We stimulate or draw out of them one or the other. It all depends upon our approach, and our approach depends upon our attitude."

"This was the genius of Jesus. He took people where they were and loved them into life. This is precisely what Jesus did for ... those whose lives He touched. He was a living portrait of love in action. And the caption under the portrait reads: Please love one another as I have loved you. Yes... this was the genius of Jesus. He took people where they were and loved them into life."

This is precisely what we see Jesus doing here in this dramatic passage in Mark 5 where we read of a twelve year old girl of the prominent synagogue leader Jairus, and a hemorrhaging woman in the crowd.

The thing that ties them together, is that they are both unclean. Now I want us to think about what it means for them to be unclean.

Sometimes when we see something disgusting we say, "Ugh!" For reasons we don't fully understand, the ancient Hebrews felt the same about a few things. Certain animals, foods, diseases, body fluids, and dead things made the people say, "Ugh! Don't touch them!" Such things were "unclean" or "impure". If you touched them you became unclean. If you had one of the diseases, you became unclean. Anything or anyone that you touched became unclean. Being unclean was the opposite of being holy. Being unclean meant that you couldn't come to the holy temple to worship the holy God. Anything unclean was unfit or unworthy to be in the presence of the holy God. If you were unclean, you had to go through a rite of purification or cleansing in order to be welcome back into society and into the presence of God.

The use of the word "unclean" can be misleading. It doesn't mean "dirty" like a two-year-old playing in the mud. Being unclean refers to the relationship between people or things and God. In some ways it may be like someone telling another, "Don't touch me!" There is something about the relationship that is estranged. Unclean things and people were estranged from God and each other. They weren't supposed

to touch each other.

In some ways their view of unclean things is like our saying, "One bad apple spoils the whole bunch." Contact with one of these unclean things made you an unclean person. There is some truth to this. If you hang around someone with a contagious disease, you are likely to end up with the same sickness. If you hang around with the wrong group of people, their bad influence may "spoil" you. There are some good reasons to stay away from certain people and things.

Jesus mixes everything up. Jesus doesn't become unclean by contact with the unclean people. They don't bring him down to their level. Jesus' holiness transforms their uncleanness. The flow of blood is stopped. The woman is healed. The corpse comes back to life. The young girl gets out of bed. With people in situations that others said, "Ugh" to, Jesus has no ughs!! He has a hug -- or at least a healing touch. Jesus' holiness transforms the people's uncleanness. Jesus raises them up to his level. Jesus makes them worthy to be in the presence of God. Jesus, as the one good, holy apple, can make all the bad apples become good.

Sometimes our lives may seem full of ughs. We may think that we are terrible, rotten, ugh-ly people. Jesus doesn't think so. To him, there are no ughs but rather people in need of his healing hugs. (This definition of unclean is drawn from the sermon notes of Brian Stoffregen, a pastor from the Wyoming)

There are three ways that we see this in our story.

### **I. First Of All, Jesus' hugs have the power to heal.**

Love plays a big part in the healing of a hurting body. Love has the power to heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We see this in the text for today. Mark tells us of the woman with the hemorrhage at verse 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."

No doubt she had tried everything to get well. The well known Bible commentator William Barclay says that the doctor's cures would have perhaps included things like the carrying of the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in summer and a cotton rag in winter, or carrying a barely corn that had been found in the dung of a white she-ass. Not only did her condition worsen but with remedy after remedy but this added to her uncleanness.

We are told that these physicians increased her suffering. They used her condition to make money off of her, but it was to no avail. She knew that Jesus was different. He could help her. If I but touch his clothes' she say, I will be made well.

Have you heard the legend of the Fisher King? When the Fisher King was a boy, he was sent out to spend the night alone in the forest as a test of his courage to be king. During the night, he had a vision of the Holy Grail (the cup used by our Lord at the Last Supper). It was surrounded by great flames of fire. Immediately, he became excited by the prospect of wealth and glory that would be his by possessing such a great prize. Greedily, he reached into the flames to grab the Holy Grail, but the flames were too much and he was severely wounded.

As the years went by, the Fisher King became more despondent and alone... and his wound grew deeper. One day the Fisher King, feeling sad and depressed and in pain, went for a walk in the forest. He came upon a court jester. "Are you all right?" the jester asked. "Is there anything I can do for you? Anything at all?" "Well, I am very thirsty," the Fisher King replied. The jester took an old dilapidated cup from his bag, filled it with water from a nearby stream, and gave it to the Fisher King. As the Fisher King drank, he suddenly felt his wound healing for the first time. And incredibly the old cup he was drinking from had turned into the Holy Grail. "What wonderful magic do you possess?" the Fisher King asked the jester. The jester just shrugged and said, "I know no magic. All I did was get a drink for a thirsty soul."

This old legend underscores a great truth that is written large in the scriptures, namely this... Greed and selfishness bring pain and suffering, but love brings healing and life. We see it here in Mark 5 as Jesus reaches out to the hemorrhaging woman that Jesus' love has the power to heal.

## **II. Second, Love Has The Power To Reconcile.**

This is why Jesus insisted that the one who had touched the hem of His garment come forward. This woman was considered ceremonially unclean... she was not permitted to set foot in the synagogue. She was a social outcast. Jesus wanted to make it clear to everyone that she was well. He not only healed her, He restored her to an active place in normal society. He reconciled her with the community.

In his book, *The Preaching Event*, John Claypool tells a poignant story about identical twin brothers who never married because they enjoyed each other's company so much. When their father died, they took over his store and ran it together in a joyful collaboration. But one day a man came in to make a small purchase and paid for it

with a dollar. The brother who made the sale placed the dollar on top of the cash register... and walked the customer to the door to say goodbye. When he returned, the dollar bill was gone. He said to his twin brother, "Did you take the dollar bill I left here?" "No, I didn't," answered the brother. "Surely, you took it," he said, "There was nobody else in the store." The brother became angry: "I'm telling you, I did not take the dollar bill."

From that point, mistrust and suspicion grew until finally the two brothers could not work together. They put a partition right down the middle of the building and made it into two stores. In anger, they refused to speak for the next 20 years. One day a stranger pulled up in a car and entered one of the two stores. "Have you been in business very long here?" the stranger asked. "Yes, 30 or 40 years," was the answer. "Good," continued the stranger, "I very much need to tell you something... Some 20 years ago, I passed through this town. I was out of work and homeless. I jumped off a boxcar. I had no money and I had not eaten for days. I came down that alley outside and when I looked into your store window, I saw a dollar bill on the cash register. I slipped in and took it. Recently I became a Christian. I was converted and accepted Christ as my personal Savior. I know now it was wrong of me to steal that dollar bill... and I have come to pay you back with interest and to beg your forgiveness."

When the stranger finished his confession, the old storekeeper began to weep as he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you please come next door and tell that story to my brother?" Of course, with the second telling, the two brothers were reconciled with many hugs and apologies and tears. Twenty years of hurt and broken relationship based not on fact, but on mistrust and misunderstanding. But then healing came; reconciliation came, because of that stranger's love for Christ.

The point is clear: Christ is the reconciler, but as the Apostle Paul put it, we can be "agents of reconciliation" when we live in the spirit of love. Love has the power to heal. Love has the power to reconcile.

### **III. Third And Finally, Love Has The Power To Redeem.**

Let me ask you something. Be honest now. Do you know the redeeming love of Christ in your life? Has He turned your life around? Has He loved you into life?

There is a beautiful old story about Zacchaeus, the tax collector. It tells how in later years, he rose early every morning and left his house. His wife, curious, followed him one morning. At the town well he filled a bucket... and he walked until he came to a sycamore tree. There, setting down the bucket, he began to clean away the stones, the

branches, and the rubbish from around the base of the tree. Having done that, he poured water on the roots and stood there in silence, gently caressing the trunk with both of his hands. When his amazed wife came out of hiding and asked what he was doing, Zacchaeus replied simply, "This is where I found Christ."

I can just imagine that for the rest of their lives, that woman who touched the hem of Jesus' robe that day on the street... and the daughter of Jairus who was raised up in that room in her home, continually brought people back to those sacred spots and said, "This is where I found Christ! This is where Christ loved me into life!"

Do you have a sacred spot like that? This is the Good News of our Christian faith, isn't it? Love has the power to heal, to reconcile, and to redeem.