

## **The Story – Master Over Disease**

As part of our series we have been talking about Jesus as the Master of all. He is master over the storm and nature, master over evil spirits and the devil, master of provision, providing what we need and this morning we are going to talk about Jesus as the master over disease. Turn with me to Mark 5. If you are following along with us in your reading guide, you will read this story this week. There are actually two miraculous stories intertwined, but we are going to focus on one more than the other this morning. Let's read the story and then I want to go back and make some observations. (Read Mark 5:21-36)

While Mark gives us Jairus' name and his position as ruler of the synagogue, we know nothing personally about the woman who interrupts their journey to Jairus' house. We don't know her name, her age, if she had family in the area. We don't know if she had married or had children before she became ill or if she was still married at this time. However, we do know she had been sick for 12 years. We don't know specifics, but because of her health condition, there are several things we know about her and her life.

This woman had what the King James bible called an "issue of blood." NIV reads "subject to bleeding." She apparently had some kind of uterine bleeding that had been going on for 12 years. This was not simply her monthly menstrual cycle but something much more serious. The fact that she was bleeding in this manner meant that according to Jewish law she was ceremonially or ritually unclean. Leviticus 15:25 states, "When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge...any bed she lies on...will be unclean...and anything she sits on will be unclean...whoever touches [those things] will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water and he will be unclean till evening." Leviticus 15:25-27.

According to the law and traditions of Judaism, anything this woman touched would be considered unclean and would have to be washed. Anyone she touched would be required to bathe and launder their clothing. She should not have been in a crowd in this condition. This is one reason why Jewish men tried not to get too close to a woman in a crowd or on the street. You couldn't tell when a woman might be ritually unclean and even if by accident you touched them, you would be defiled and have to bathe and cleanse yourself. You couldn't go to temple that day.

Verse 26 tells us she had suffered a great deal. One commentary suggested that since the average life span was only about 40, that this might have been a young woman, perhaps in her twenties and that she had been suffering with this condition since puberty. If that is the case then she would have never married because of her condition. If this condition began after marriage, it is possible her husband would have divorced her because of the condition. Any way you look at it, this illness had adversely effected every area of this woman's life. Hers' was a lonely life.

Medical practice in the ancient world was nothing like today. Mark implies that she suffered at the hands of the physicians. He is not implying that the physicians were cruel or that they were charlatans, simply that some of the treatments prescribed were painful and themselves inflicted additional suffering. Dr. Luke's account says "no one could heal her."

In addition, she had spent all her money trying to find a cure and now she was broke. Imagine how she must have felt. Life was passing her by while she sat in her house, alone. Again, we don't know when her illness began, if she had married or not, but the illness meant she couldn't have children and children were a sign of blessing from the Lord. People no doubt wondered what terrible thing she had done to suffer like this.

If she had married, this meant she couldn't be with her husband. For him to even sleep in the same bed meant he would be unclean. (I think it is likely she was a young woman and had never married.) She couldn't go out in crowds. She couldn't shop or be with friends. She was socially cut off from everyone. Spiritually she was cut off, considered unclean, unable to go to the synagogue or to the temple at the feasts.

Consider what 12 years of this would do to you. Imagine how you regard yourself after 12 years of being unclean, impure, knowing that your physical touch brings defilement to others. You're a leper. Psychologically and emotionally this woman is devastated and broken. Self-esteem doesn't even register. She has only contempt for herself by this time. "I'm nothing."

Not only this, Mark tells us instead of getting better, she grew worse. Time was running out for this lady. Perhaps she woke up that morning feeling like giving up. She sat alone in the house wishing she was dead. "I'm alone. I have no one and no one would want me in this condition. I have no one to help me or be an advocate for me. What am I going to do? Out of money. Out of time. Out of options. It's hopeless."

Then she hears a group of people outside her house talking about someone named Jesus. They said he was master over storms and evil spirits. He fed 5,000 with just five loaves of bread

and two fish. They said he was a miracle worker and a healer – that he had even made lepers clean and whole again. Maybe he could do something for her. For the first time in years she began to feel hopeful. Perhaps you know what this woman was feeling that morning.

She wasn't to be in a crowd, but if she wore a head covering and stayed to one side, maybe no one would notice. She could slip through and touch his garment. If she touched only the tassles that hung from his prayer shawl, maybe he wouldn't know and maybe he wouldn't be defiled and maybe she could be healed. She knew she had to do something and do it soon because she was growing sicker and weaker by the day.

She dresses, covers her head with a scarf hoping no one will recognize her in the crowd and starts out the door. She hasn't gone far when she sees the crowd pressing all around Jesus. "How will I ever get through that crowd to touch his garment?" You know how it is when you get an idea and you tell yourself this is going to work, and the closer you get you think, "this won't work. What was I thinking?" That may have been what was happening with this lady. "I can't do this. What if someone recognizes me? I'll be publicly humiliated and scolded, ostracized again. And isn't that Jairus up there with Jesus? I heard his little daughter was really sick. I bet they are on their way to his house to help his little girl. I shouldn't bother them. I shouldn't have come. I mean, she's someone's daughter and I'm, well, I'm nobody. If only I was someone's daughter..."

Ever felt that way? "Jesus wouldn't have time for me. Jesus wouldn't help me. I don't have enough faith to approach Jesus. I'm such a sinner that Jesus wouldn't want to help me. I'm too far gone, I'm beyond help from anyone, including Jesus. I'm no one special. I'm not a leader like Jairus. I'm nobody's daughter or son that matters. I'm nobody that Jesus would care about."

She could have turned around and gone home at that point. "There's no help for me, I'm just a hopeless case. I'm a hopeless \_\_\_\_." Fill in the blank: liar, adulterer, sex addict, thief, alcoholic, fraud, ex-con. You name it.

But look at verse 27 - **"When she heard about Jesus..." Mark 5:27** I love that phrase. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

I don't know what you've heard about Jesus. Some of you may have heard that he doesn't care about people like you. You may have heard that he is just standing by waiting for

any excuse to grab you up and send you to hell. You may have heard that he is just watching from heaven and he doesn't intervene in people's lives anymore.

You may have heard from reading social media that Jesus doesn't care much for democrats or depending on your friends, perhaps it's republicans. You may have heard he didn't like President Obama, or the Clintons. You may have heard he doesn't like Muslims or Hispanics or refugees or that Jesus doesn't think black lives matter. You may have heard he doesn't like gay or lesbian folks or transgendered people, or that some people's lives and circumstances are too messy, too broken, too confusing and Jesus wouldn't want to be around those folks. That maybe what you've heard but it's not what the bible says. It's not what this woman in Mark 5 heard.

She heard he was good. He was merciful. He was a healer and a miracle worker. She heard there was something about Jesus that meant anyone could come to him and he wouldn't turn them away. He would heal them and change them and save them and give them hope. I don't know what you've heard about Jesus, but it's time you heard the truth. Jesus came to save us and not to condemn us. You can choose to go to hell by rejecting his offer of salvation, but he has come to save you. He has come to deliver you and give you eternal life. He has come to help us, heal us, mend our brokenness and make us whole. He has come to get the poison and stain of sin out of your soul and out of your life and out of your family. He has come to transform your life and give you hope.

I'm tired of us trying to put walls around Jesus. We keep claiming to speak for Jesus but too often we are just speaking for ourselves and our side of some issue. I'm not sure Jesus is fighting some of the battles I hear people insisting he's fighting. People need to hear God's truth about Jesus! What do people hear about Jesus from you?

This lady didn't hear some Pharisee's version of a legalistic Jesus that wouldn't have to do with an unclean woman like her. She heard about a loving Jesus who had come to heal the hurting. A Jesus who had come to give his life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

When she heard about Jesus...faith began to arise in her heart. She started to have hope again that things could be different. What have you heard about Jesus? I'm here to tell you he is the bread of heaven come to satisfy the hunger of your soul. He's the water of life and if you drink from him you won't ever go back to trying to get water out of the ditches and cesspools of life. He is the way, the truth, the life. He is the miracle worker, the life giver, the deliverer. He

is exactly what you need. He is the one that can do what no one has been able to do for you in your entire life.

When she heard about Jesus I think she said, ‘I don’t care what anyone thinks about me. I don’t care who sees me in this crowd. I don’t care what this will cost me. I’m going to get to Jesus! I’m one touch away from a miracle!’

She moved through the crowd, came up behind him, reached out and touched what Mark called his cloak and what Matthew and Luke called, “the edge of his cloak”. The King James Version refers to it as the hem of his garment. The word they translated as hem means tassel or fringe.

It is likely that Jesus wore a prayer shawl with tassels on the corners of this garment with a blue cord on each tassel. The woman reached out to touch just the tassel on his garment, just one thread. If you feel like you’re hanging on by a thread I’ve got good news for you. Put your faith in Jesus and one thread is all you need. This woman said “If I just touch one thread of the tassel on his garment, I will be healed.” With her faith in Jesus as her healer, this woman touched the thread of this tassel and the bible says, **“Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” Mark 5:29**

She thought she could then just slip on through the crowd but Jesus had another idea. “At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my garment?’” The disciples said, ‘Lord, everyone is touching you, bumping into you. It could have been anyone.’” But Jesus knew someone had done more than just bumped into him, someone had touched him with faith. Someone had placed absolute trust in him. Someone had received healing from him.

Trembling with fear the bible says, the woman comes forward. She knew she shouldn’t have been in the crowd; she knew she shouldn’t have touched anyone. I’m sure she is expecting a rebuke. Think about it, she has been unclean and ostracized for 12 years. What else could she expect? But as she pours out her story, Jesus looks at her with compassion and says, **“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” Mark 5:34**

It’s interesting to me, this is the only time we know of that Jesus spoke directly to a woman and referred to her as daughter, a tender term. I can’t help but think it had been a long time since anyone had spoken to her with such kindness and affection. Jairus was pleading with Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter, but this too was someone’s daughter.

Imagine the emotional healing that comes, the sense of worth and value that rises in her heart and mind as Jesus speaks to her, calling her daughter. “You may have been isolated and ostracized, you’ve been alone for the past 12 years because of your suffering, but I claim you as my own today. Daughter, your faith has healed you. You believed in me. Now go in peace, go in wholeness and be freed from your suffering.”

She had not just been freed from physical pain. Jesus gave this woman her life back. Everything changed the moment she touched his garment and his power touched her life.

Do you need a touch from Jesus? Are you hanging on by a thread? Let me ask you, what have you heard about Jesus? What do you believe about him? Do you believe he is able to heal you, to save you, to deliver you? Do you believe he has the power to change your life, your circumstances, to make you whole, to free you from your suffering? From addiction? If so, I suggest you do what this woman did in our story today. Reach out in faith to him. “Lord I believe. I reach out to you in faith. Help me. Heal me. Deliver me.”

Maybe you are thinking, “I know he healed this woman in Mark 5, but that was just for her, right? I don’t think he would want to heal someone like me.” In case you are thinking it was just for this one woman, look at Mark 6:53-56.

**“They ...carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Wherever he went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak and all who touched him were healed.” Mark 6:56**

All who touched him were healed. That’s for us today. What have you heard about Jesus? I’ve heard he is faithful and good and merciful. I’ve heard he is the master over every sickness and disease and he is here, ready to help us today.