

Twelve Year Quarantine

For many of us these past weeks, for the first time in our lives, we had a little taste of what it means to be quarantined, working from home or taking classes from home, can't go to a restaurant or to the barber or beauty shop, shut in. A few weeks of that was about all we could handle. Imagine if you were living under quarantine for years? What would that do to you? Not everyone under a quarantine mind you, just you, isolated and cut off from everyone else. That's what happened to a lady in the New Testament. Turn to Mark 5.

The bible says, “And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 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.’ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ ‘You see the people crowding against you,’ his disciples answered, ‘and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’” Mark 5:25-34

We don't know her name, her age, if she had family, we don't know if she was single or married, but we do know she had been sick for 12 years and because of her particular health problem we know she would have been placed in an ongoing state of quarantine.

She apparently had some kind of uterine bleeding that had been going on for 12 years and that meant, according to the Jewish law, she was ceremonially or ritually unclean. The Law in Leviticus stated, “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...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.” Lev. 15:25

According to the law and traditions of Judaism, anything and anyone this woman touched would be considered unclean and would have to be washed. She wasn't to be in a crowd. Her

condition isolated her from everything and everyone. Quarantined for 12 years. If she was single when this condition began she would have to remain single. If it began after she was married, it would be grounds for divorce. Any way you look at it, this condition had adversely impacted every aspect of her life.

Mark says she had suffered a great deal under the care of the physicians. He isn't implying that the doctors were cruel or unethical, simply that the treatments prescribed in the ancient world were painful and may have inflicted additional pain and suffering. Dr. Luke's account says "no one could heal her." It was an impossible medical situation. It was hopeless.

In addition to being isolated and alone and suffering every day for 12 years, Mark tells us she had spent all she had. She was sick, broke, couldn't work, couldn't be around people, couldn't shop, couldn't go to synagogue, totally isolated and alone and, by the standards of the Jewish law and in the eyes of the people, she was unclean.

Consider what 12 years of that would do to you. Imagine how you would regard yourself if everyone considered you unclean, unfit, impure, less than. How would you feel about yourself knowing that your physical touch defiled others? You're a social leper. She had to be thinking, "I'm nothing. No one would want me. I must be cursed!" And Mark says "instead of getting better she grew worse." Out of money, out of options, out of time. 12 years of sickness and quarantine was too much. It's hopeless and getting worse day by day. But then she hears a group of people out in the street talking about a man named Jesus.

Verse 27 says, "**When she heard about Jesus...**" **Mark 5:27** Don't you love that phrase? When she heard about Jesus, things began to change and she started to hope again. When she heard about Jesus, she decided he was the answer and it was worth the risk and the sacrifice to get to Jesus. Maybe she thought with the crowd no one would notice and call her out for being unclean and breaking quarantine. Faith began to arise in her heart and she thought, "Based on what I've heard, if I can just touch his clothes, I'll be healed."

I don't know what you've heard about Jesus. Maybe you heard he doesn't care about people like you. He couldn't love someone that's done what you've done. Maybe you heard he's come to condemn people like you. Perhaps you heard he's just watching from heaven and doesn't really intervene in people's lives anymore. Or maybe you read on social media that Jesus doesn't love Democrats or maybe it was Republicans he doesn't love, or Muslims or socialists, or perhaps you heard he doesn't love other races or colors other than your own, or that

he hates gays and lesbians or people whose lives are too messy, too broken, or people with too many marriages and divorces or people whose lives are too confusing. You heard Jesus wouldn't ever be around someone like you. That may be what you heard, but it's not what the bible says. It's not what this woman in Mark 5 heard.

She heard he had come to save the sinner, that it was the sick and broken that needed a physician and he came to heal the sick, to mend broken hearts and lives. She heard he was good, and merciful, a healer and a miracle worker and nothing was too messy or too hard for him. She heard there was something about Jesus that meant anyone could come to him and he wouldn't turn them away, instead, if they would believe on him and ask him, he would save them and forgive their sins, change them and give them hope and eternal life. Friends, Jesus came to save us, not to condemn us. You can choose to reject him, ignore him and choose to go to hell by rejecting his offer of forgiveness and salvation, but I'm telling you, he doesn't want that to happen. The bible says he is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance. He has come to save you and make you whole. He has come to take 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 you and give you hope.

I'm glad she didn't listen to the Pharisees that would have told her Jesus wouldn't have anything to do with a woman like her. What have you heard about Jesus? What have people learned about Jesus from you, from your social media page, from your actions and your conversation and your attitude toward others? What have you heard about Jesus?

When this lady 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 or what I'll have to sacrifice. I'm going to get to Jesus. I'm one touch away from a miracle, from a new life. I've got to get to Jesus!"

Perhaps she wrapped a scarf around her head so no one would recognize her and then she moved quietly and carefully through the crowd that surrounded Jesus, came up behind him and gently reached out and touched what Mark called his cloak, what the King James Bible refers to as the hem of his garment. The word they translate as hem means tassel or fringe.

It is likely that Jesus wore a prayer shawl known as a *tallit* with tassels on the corners of this garment that are known as *tzitzit*. The woman reached out to touch the tassel on his prayer shawl, just one thread. If you feel like you are just hanging on by a thread, I've got good news

for you. Put your faith in Jesus because one thread, one tassel is all you need. This woman said, “If I just touch one thread, one tassel on his garment, I’ll be healed.” With her faith in Jesus as her healer, this woman reached beyond the crowd and touched this tassel on his garment and the bible says, **“Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” Mark 5:29** One touch, one encounter with Jesus makes all the difference! You may be just one touch, one tassel away from a miracle today!

She had hoped to just slip in and slip out of the crowd unnoticed, but Jesus had another idea. At once Jesus realized 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 bump into him. Someone had touched him with faith! Someone had placed absolute trust in him and had received healing from him.

Trembling with fear the bible says, the woman comes forward. She knew she wasn’t to be in the crowd in her condition. She knew she wasn’t supposed to touch anyone. I’m sure she is expecting what she had received before, a rebuke, condemnation, an order to go home and stay home. Think about it. She has been unclean and quarantined, ostracized for 12 years; what else could she expect? But as she pours out her story to Jesus, He 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, not a little girl, 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, the synagogue leader was imploring Jesus to hurry to his home because his little daughter was dying, but this woman was someone’s daughter as well and Jesus made time for her.

Can you imagine what was happening to this woman? Not only her physical healing, but the emotional healing that was occurring, the restoration of her worth and value as Jesus speaks to her and calls her daughter! I think this is why he called her out in front of everyone. It wasn’t enough for her to privately, secretly receive a physical healing. Jesus wanted to make her completely whole, to restore her sense of value and worth by letting the people know she was clean and whole. “You may have been isolated and quarantined, rejected and suffering alone for the past 12 years, but daughter, I claim you as my own today. Your faith has healed you because

you believed in and trusted in me. Go in peace and be free from your suffering.” Everything she had heard about Jesus was true!

She wasn't just freed from physical pain that day. Jesus gave this woman her life back. Everything changed the moment she reached out to him and touched him. Do you need a touch from Jesus? Are you isolated, alone, feeling desperate, broke, sick, hopeless? 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, save you, 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? Free you from addiction? If so, I suggest you do what this woman did in Mark 5. Reach out in faith to him. “Lord, I believe. I reach out to you in faith. Help me. Heal me. Save 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 or deliver someone like me.” In case you are thinking it was just for this one and no more, look at Mark 6. **“They...carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. Wherever he went – into villages, town 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**

It's not just for one. It's for all who believe, all who reach out in faith to touch him. What have you heard about Jesus? I've heard he is faithful and good and merciful. I've heard he is a healer and a miracle worker and he is here today. Trust him, look to him and call on him in faith.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.