

Wesley United Methodist Church

July 1, 2018

“Your Faith Has Healed You.”

Mark 5:21-43

A father was talking with his rather rebellious son one day and said, “Every person who lives in the United States is a privileged person.” The boy answered, “I disagree.” And the father replied, “That’s the privilege.”

Wednesday, we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is a day we celebrate our freedom. But there is a different kind of freedom that we need to talk about today. Freedom that Christ can bring.

Jesus had attained celebrity status. People were coming from all around to hear him teach. Even more to the point, they were coming to him for healing. We can understand. There were no reliable doctors. No MRIs, no CAT scans. Not even x-rays. No diagnostic tools of any kind. Only prayer and herbs and doctors of the most primitive skills and knowledge. So, people who were desperate for help had no reliable place to turn. But then word got out about a man whose very presence brought healing. So, quite naturally, the people rushed to him and reached out to him. And, of course, he responded. Many were healed. And the net result was that even more people came. By the thousands they came. And they crushed around him, seeking to help themselves of his healing power.

In the middle of the crowd was a woman who had been seeping blood for twelve years, what doctors would call a hemorrhage. How sad. How uncomfortable. How humiliating. Even worse, Leviticus 15 denotes such a woman as “unclean.” What this means is that no one was supposed to touch her as long as the bleeding continued. Her condition would prevent her from getting married. She was not even supposed to go into the temple for worship or religious instruction. She was a despised and solitary woman.

And there was no one who could help her. Mark tells us that “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.” The doctors had taken her money yet had not given her any relief. So, here she is impoverished, an outcast, almost without hope.

What do you do when the doctors have done all they can do and you’re no better? It happens, doesn’t it? Even today it happens.

The whole world was saddened when Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. died in a medical clinic in Mexico. What was she doing in Mexico? It’s simple. Doctors in this country had told her they could do no more for her. The clinic in Mexico offered hope. That hope may have been an illusion, but who can blame her? We’ll do anything for hope. Ask someone who has been in chronic pain and has discovered that even the finest medical professionals don’t have a clue about how to stop their pain. Many of these sufferers will go to any lengths to find someone who can give them relief. Wouldn’t you?

This woman comes to Jesus. She has heard that this is the physician she has been looking for. There she is in the crush of the crowd. She is in a delicate situation. She can’t cry out about her condition to get Jesus’ attention. The crowd would push her off to the side. No one’s supposed to even touch her. How can they help but touching her in a crowd like that? Who knows what an angry mob might do? She can’t risk speaking up and having Jesus reach out to touch her, but, she thinks to herself, if I can just get close enough to touch him, just touch the hem of his garment, then maybe I will be healed. Probably the physician won’t even know.

But he does know, Jesus always knows. You’ve got a problem, you’ve got a need. Jesus knows. You kneel down by your bed and pour your heart out over some situation that seems to have no solution. Jesus knows. You take your concerns to God, he knows. This woman came up behind Jesus and touched his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she was freed from her suffering. And Jesus knew. He turned around and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

The disciples are mystified by Jesus’ statement. “You see the people crowding against you,” they said, “and yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. The woman is mortified. She thought she could hide in the crowd, but it didn’t work. She’s been found out, exposed. Mark tells us, “Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.” We can feel for her, can’t we? Her condition was humiliating, and socially isolating. She’s probably kept it hidden as best as she could for many years. But now it’s out there. No more hiding. No more pretending. Now everybody knows. Why couldn’t Jesus just heal her in private? Why couldn’t he allow her to keep at least a shred of her dignity? But, here is the point: exactly because the community had shunned her due to her condition. Confession is not only good for the soul, it helps us to be restored to our rightful place in the community. Jesus was not exposing her so she would be embarrassed, he was giving her the opportunity to come forward and to truly be set free.

He speaks to her. "Daughter," he says. This is the only time recorded in the Scriptures that he ever used this term "daughter." "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Be freed physically. Be freed socially. Be freed spiritually. Be freed!

What a beautiful and important story. There is someone in this room who is feeling hopeless about some situation in your life. Maybe you've kept it a secret from your family, even your closest friends, but Jesus knows. Maybe it has to do with your health. Maybe there is a situation in your family that needs healing. Perhaps there is a son or daughter you are concerned about. Maybe our business is failing and you are at your wits' end to know how to reverse your financial slide. And more... You think to yourself, if only there was something I could do. If I could touch even the hem of his garment, I would be set free.

First of all, Christ knows about your concern. If you have any question that Christ knows and is concerned about your situation, let me put your mind at ease. He knows. The depth of his knowledge is unsurpassed, and what he knows best is people.

Lloyd Ogilvie, former pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian Church, and a popular speaker and writer once spoke at a large convention. The woman who introduced him began by saying, "We have a very unusual privilege tonight. In our midst is without a doubt the world's finest communicator. He is extremely sensitive, alert, compassionate, and wise. He can sense a person's true needs immediately and speak just the right word to heal a hurt."

Dr. Ogilvie later confessed that he felt both flattered and frightened. How could he live up to all that? He didn't have to. For as the woman came to the end, she said, "We are in for a tremendous experience tonight because this supreme lover of people is in our midst. Who is he? He is Jesus Christ. And now here is a man named Lloyd Ogilvie who will tell us about him."

Jesus is the supreme lover of people. He can sense a person's true needs immediately and speak just the right word to heal a hurt. He knows your situation. But there is a second thing to be said: It is very difficult to carry a heavy burden alone. Is there a trusted friend or counselor with whom you can talk? Yes, you can talk to Jesus, but sometimes it is helpful to have a friend you can share your troubles.

One more thing. Don't forget your faith. Jesus said to the desperate woman, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." So often the answer to our problem is our faith in God. Amen.