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Mark 5:25-34

Healing Stories: "An Embarrassing Problem"

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Being sick has implications. Being sick creates fallout. And so, it was for the woman we read about in the gospel of Mark. The implications were

- she suffered (physically and possibly mentally). Chronic conditions cause severe wear and tear.
- she spent so much of her time trying to get well. Going to doctor appointments, much less going to see doctor after doctors is time consuming. It is exhausting.
- She was isolated. Being sick in those days and even in our own days can become a solitary journey as friends get tired of hearing about your condition and suffering. On top of that they feel helpless when they cannot relieve your pain and condition, so they disappear. The cards no longer arrive in the mail for you to read, the phone calls cease and you sit for long hours only with your pain. The visits stop too, and thus you are no longer able to talk about what is eating away at you.

And so it is with us.

She tried what all the doctors of her time recommended Taking gum from alum and crocus, crush it, and blend it with wine and have the patient drink it. If nothing happens, take three pints of onions and boil them in wine and have the patient drink it. If this does not work, put the patient where two paths meet and have her hold a cup of wine in her right hand and have someone behind her frighten her.

Carry barley corn from the droppings of a white female donkey. Carry the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in the

summer and in a cotton bag in the winter. It sounds weird to us, yet let us not forget her pain, shame and embarrassment and her desperate measures to find a cure.

Next, we heard that this woman who had been bleeding for twelve years heard about Jesus healing a lot of folks. Yet, she did not stop there, saying, "Jesus is such a nice guy." Rather, she said, "I need to get a piece of that action. I need to go where he is. For me to be healed, it must be up close and personal.

She wanted what others had received – healing. Interesting to note, she got more than she had hoped for; but more about that in a few moments.

The woman believed that if she touched Jesus she would be healed. Now, that took some risk. She had a huge crowd to go through. Would she even be able to touch him with so many people around. Turns out she is able to touch the tassel which hung from the inner tunic of every Jewish man of her time.

We want Jesus to touch us, yet here, we are reminded of the way it must go sometimes – we must touch Jesus. Why would God design it this way; because, God never forces things on us. God gives us the freedom to choose. This woman had a choice and she chose to admit she needed help by reaching out to Jesus.

Some of us want to have a religious experience that feels life changing for us. We come to church Sunday after Sunday, and we feel nothing. We leave the same way we came. Could it be that we are trying to get the healing warmth of the sun, yet we are staying under the umbrella, hoping proximity will be enough. Yet, our faith at times demands more direct contact. It

requires us to not just passively sit here and absorb through osmosis. Rather, to reach out to Jesus and touch Jesus and in so doing experience healing.

The woman in our story knows right away her effort has been rewarded. What was is no longer. Literally, she can feel it.

We are told in the text that she was not the only one who felt something – Jesus did too! Right away, he felt the power had gone forth from him to her. She now had the power she needed within her very being. I think this is a way God works. For many of us we have been taught that God and God’s power resides outside of ourselves. Yet, here we see the receiving and thus indwelling presence and power of God.

Some of us feel lost in a crowd. We have been overlooked, undercut, minimized, and even rendered invisible. Yet, it is important to know that this never, ever happens when Jesus is involved. Jesus wanted to know who touched him.

The disciples reply to Jesus, after he asked the question, “who touched me” with something akin to “you’ve got to be kidding with all these people, how can anyone know who touched them.” And then, as if to say, Jesus comes face to face with the woman and calls her “Daughter”. There is something so personal about that in an initial greeting. She was not just a patient, or an unclean woman, or a destitute Jew. No, she was someone with whom Jesus was connected. In the naming of her as his daughter, he was telling her once so isolated that she belongs. In the healing of her, Jesus restored her to community.

Is this not the healing work we are called to do, as well? To not see people by just one prominent or negative identifying factor, but to see them as family, a legitimate part of our community.

Our healing work is not complete, as it was not with Jesus till there was both individual recognition and communal restoration.

The gospel of Mark writes like I talk. Sometimes like him, I start on one subject only to interrupt that story with another one. And then, I eventually get back to the first story and complete telling it. So, the writer of Mark puts the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, right between the top slice of bread where a leader of the synagogue named Jairus comes to Jesus saying his daughter is at the point of death. "Please, come touch her he begs."

In Mark sandwiched between the beginning and end of a resurrection story about Jairus daughter. Is Mark just bumbley when it comes to telling a story or did he insert the story as a way of saying, these two stories go together. And if that is the case, then this story is nothing less than a resurrection story. Do healing, wholeness and resurrection go hand in hand? I dare say they do, and so does Jesus.

After the woman is healed (and not before) she tells Jesus the whole truth. Wouldn't you have loved to be a fly on the wall for that conversation. Even though we don't know the content of that conversation we know two things – it was the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help her God. In other words, upon being healed she was able to see it all and admit it all. See what – what had happened to her, why it happened to her, who was involved, and where that led her. She was able to see the whole truth, no longer believing the lies that people told her, lies they told about her, lies about why she could not be fully among them.

Scripture tells us, she was not only able to know and tell the whole truth, and have the very power of God, she was also now free. Her faith had made her well.

As it was for her, so it can be for us. Thanks be to God.

*Anyone who would like to receive healing are invited to express your desirer for healing by opening your hands at this moment to the healing touch of Jesus, as we pray.*

Jesus, our Great Physician,  
For those who have not been healthy, and who have suffered for a longtime, for those whose illness has cost them much, and those who have been ostracized and felt so alone, touch them we pray. May they feel your very power within them, healing them, giving them peace, and setting them free. Amen.