

**“The Touch That Heals”**

Mark 5: 21-43

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**Hands are a gift from God:** Have you had a good look at your hands. I think we too often take for granted these tremendous assets we have. The human hand is fascinating in terms of what it can do and how it is built with a mixture of bones, muscle, tendons, etcetera. They are specific to each one of us as well - no two individuals have the same fingerprint!

Hands help us do our work. They help us be creative in music, painting, trades, and a number of functions too numerous to list. Hands can be comforting but they can also be hurtful. The image of God holding us in the palm of his hand is a comforting thought. *“My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63.8)* The touch of the hand in a handshake seems ordinary perhaps, but it is a friendly act of greeting which displays warmth and welcome. The touch of the hand is a symbol of healing.

<sup>22</sup> **Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.”** Jairus was a powerful man in the Jewish culture. He had status and would have expected Jesus to respond quickly to his request. After all, Jesus had a great ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. That healing part certainly could be used for someone so important as Jairus and his daughter. Certainly Jarius had faith in Jesus, but probably thought that it was worth a try to ask Jesus because Jairus had easy access to him and Jesus would listen to him because of Jarius’ status.

**Reaching out to Jesus.** Suddenly we turn our attention to the woman who was bleeding for many years and was considered an unclean person in the Jewish culture. Those who were around her or who were touched by her while she was bleeding would also be considered contaminated or ‘unclean’. Women who were on their monthly period would also be considered unclean and would remove themselves from regular society and reside in the ‘red tent’ until the period passed. Then the woman would perform a cleansing ceremony so she could return to her husband and family. The woman in the story, however, had non-stop bleeding for twelve years and was isolated from society for that duration and nothing she tried could stop the hemorrhaging! She saw hope in Jesus and with faith decided to break the ceremonial law by going out in public though unclean. By doing this she could get close to Jesus with the hope that Jesus may have mercy on her with his healing touch. She took the risk and decided to reach out to Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> **She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.”**

**Who touched my clothes? (Matthew 5:30)** Jesus obviously knew, but this was a teachable moment for his disciples and all those around. His disciples were astonished with Jesus’ question of ‘who touched my clothes’. Many people were crowding around touching him.

<sup>34</sup> **He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”** It was not literally her faith that directly healed her. It was her ability to receive the gift of healing. She knew that Jesus represented grace, though her culture would reject her presence among them. She was not permitted to be in the crowd, though she knew that Jesus would accept her. Who in our culture are marginalized and not accepted. Those individuals will know from this story that Jesus indeed accepts them, loves them and heals them. They matter!

**“Do not fear, only believe.” (Verse 36)** After overhearing that Jairus’ daughter had died in the mean-time, Jesus was firm to say, ‘Do not be afraid only believe’ (only trust in God)! Jesus’ words commanded attention. Then one may ask why did Jesus delay and allow himself to be distracted by the woman and the crowd around him. One could argue that Jesus was using this situation as a teachable moment to make the point that just because Jairus was so important in societal standards, in God’s standard, the woman who was stricken with several years of bleeding was no less important – even though she contravened the ceremonial law.

<sup>39</sup> **When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”** <sup>40</sup> **And they laughed at him.** To say that someone is sleeping when it was obvious that she had died made no sense and seemed so literally ridiculous that it caused people to laugh at Jesus.

<sup>41</sup> **He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!”** Jesus brought back life when there was no life. Jesus healed though there was no life in the body to heal. Jesus had authority over death and brought this girl back to life!

<sup>24</sup> **He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross,<sup>[a]</sup> so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds<sup>[b]</sup> you have been healed. (I Peter 2: 24)** Though all of our bodies die we are offered the gift of ultimate healing of eternal life. In his great act of love, Jesus took ‘death’ with him to the grave. Then on the third day, he defeated the enemy of death by rising from the dead to eternal life. Because of what Christ has done, when we die, we die with him, and when we rise, we rise with him. *“Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).”* Jesus takes us by the hand and says our names and heals us of death and everything that leads to death.

**How are you are healer? How are we healers?** Each of us has at least two spiritual gifts from God whatever those gifts may be. We do not all have the gift of healing. However, as followers of Christ, we are all healers in Christ. In the name of Christ we can certainly reach out our hands and touch one another with a warm welcome and connection as brothers and sisters in Christ. We can reach out to others who may not be believers with the healing touch of Christ. When we intentionally reach out, we trust that Christ’s grace and his love reaches out to the most vulnerable and who society may deem as the most unworthy. In our story today, we are taught that no one is unworthy!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the power of the Holy Spirit use that incredible, miraculous hand of yours, and like Jesus stop and take the time from what seems so important and be a conduit of his healing touch as you reach out to others. Amen.