

INTRODUCTION

Life is full of setbacks. Did you hear about the cow that tried to jump over a barbed wire fence? It was an udder disaster. Or did you hear about the guy who fell into an upholstery machine? He's fully recovered. Or how about the butcher who backed into his meat grinder? He got a little behind in his work. Okay, that's enough.

Did you hear about the woman who moved from desperation to deliverance? It's a true story and we're going to read about it in Matthew 9:20. As I said in the last message, this is a passage that contains two miracles. While Jesus was on His way to Jairus' house to raise his daughter from her death bed, He was interrupted by a woman who slipped through the crowd and touched His cloak. I want us to read both Matthew and Mark's narrative of this miracle. We'll begin with Matthew's account.

Matthew 9:20-22. "Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.' Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed from that moment."

Mark, who often reported Simon Peter's accounts of miracles, added many more details to help us appreciate this miracle.

Mark 5:24-34. "So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 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.'"

Try to picture the scene in your mind. As Jesus, Jairus, and the disciples were slowly making their way through the mob, there is a woman who slipped through the crowd. She was on a mission and nothing could stop her. She had been bleeding for 12 years. When she finally pushed close enough she got down on her knees and desperately grabbed the bottom of his cloak. In a flash, she was healed. She moved from desperation to deliverance.

If you're suffering today, Jesus is here and, like this woman, you can find healing if you will reach out and touch Him by faith. I want us to dig below the surface of this beautiful miracle and find four personal applications that can help you move from desperation to deliverance as well.

I. EVEN IN A CROWD, JESUS RESPONDS TO A DESPERATE TOUCH OF FAITH

In the midst of this mob where everyone was elbowing each other, a desperate woman slipped between, beneath and beside people until finally she was close enough to touch the prayer shawl that every Jewish man wore. Instantly, she was healed. Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched me?" I can just see Simon Peter rolling his eyes and saying, "What kind of foolish question is that? *Everybody* is touching you!" That was true. Many people were crowding around Him with elbows of curiosity, but only one REALLY touched Him with fingers of faith.

There are different ways to touch Jesus. Jesus used a word for "touch" that doesn't mean to accidentally bump; it meant to "grab onto." It meant "cling to." Growing up in South Alabama, there were plenty of big snapping turtles. There is a myth that if a snapping turtle bites you it wouldn't let go until it thunders. That's probably not true of turtles, but it was true of this woman. She wasn't going to let go until she received a miracle. This woman didn't just delicately reach out one finger and gingerly touch Jesus' garment. She *grabbed* it like a drowning person grabs onto a life-ring. That kind of touch always gets Jesus' attention.

Was she the only suffering person in the crowd? Of course not—but she was the only one who grabbed hold of Jesus in faith. Sadly, there will be about 5,000 people here today, and in one way or another, most of us will touch Jesus with our songs, our offerings, or by reading the Bible. But in this crowd, Jesus can tell who is really suffering and who needs to grab hold of His power. This desperate woman was suffering in at least three ways, and she shows us that:

1. You can reach out to Jesus when you are suffering physically

She had been suffering for 12 years with a blood disorder. It's a creative miracle of God that your blood flows as a liquid through your veins and arteries, but when it leaves the body, it clots, or coagulates. At least that's what is supposed to happen. The WebMD medical website reports that coagulation is a complex process in which as many as 20 plasma proteins form a substance called fibrin to stop bleeding. When certain of these proteins are missing or deficient, a person can suffer from mild to severe bleeding disorders. The woman in our story stayed weak and anemic because of this constant blood loss. Some of you can relate to the suffering of this woman because you are living with some kind of a chronic medical problem.

2. You can reach out to Jesus when you are strained financially

Mark reports that this woman spent all her money on doctors and they hadn't helped her; in fact she had gotten worse. Luke omits this detail, probably because he was a physician himself! Two millennia ago, physicians didn't have to be trained or licensed and there was a lot of medical ignorance. The Jewish Talmud lists 11 remedies for blood disorders and most of them sound like superstitious spells. For instance, one remedy was to take a large duck egg, crack it open, burn the contents and the shell, and then carry the ashes in a linen pouch under your garment. This woman had probably tried this duck-egg remedy. No wonder they called those doctors quacks!

She was frustrated and broke because she had spent all her money on these ineffective cures. Some of you can relate to this sister in suffering because your most sensitive nerve right now is the one that runs to your wallet.

3. You can reach out to Jesus when you are struggling emotionally

She was considered an outcast. According to Leviticus 15, her bleeding disorder made her ceremonially unclean—continually. Any chair or bed she sat on became unclean. She really wasn't even supposed to be out in this crowd. Any person who came in the slightest contact with her had to wash their clothes and bathe themselves to be ceremonially cleansed. She was required to walk down the road warning people, "Unclean! Unclean!" Some of you feel the same sense of loneliness and isolation. You aren't ceremonially unclean, but you feel like you are some kind of an outcast.

One of the leading 21st century causes of emotional pain is abortion. When it comes to the subject of abortion, the Church has spoken loud and clear about how abortion is wrong. We've marched, picketed abortion clinics, and written letters to our leaders. While all of that is important, the Church has mostly ignored the opportunity to minister to men and women who are suffering emotionally because of an abortion in their past. Statistics tell us that 43% of American women have had an abortion. Every abortion has three victims: a baby, a mother, and a father, who often pays for the abortion.

Green Acres offers a ministry to those who have an abortion in their past. It's called, "Surrendering the Secret." Dr. Grace English leads this ministry, and here's what she asked me to share with you: "The woman who had been bleeding for years had enough courage and faith to come out of hiding and touch Jesus' cloak. She knew that if she could only reach out and touch Him, she would be healed. Jesus also wants to give the same healing to for that man and woman who has had an abortion in their past. He wants them to come out of their silence, their shame, and their secrecy. If only they would reach out to Him and come out of their denial that abortion hasn't affected their life, Jesus can heal them and restore them from the heartbreak of abortion." If you're interested or know someone who needs this ministry, you can pick up a brochure at the Welcome Center in the foyer.

The reason some people are still suffering emotionally is that they live in denial and they haven't gotten truly desperate yet. They haven't yet reached the point of total desperation. There is often a crisis event that pushes people over the edge to total desperation. If you're smart, don't wait for a crisis; push your way through the crowd and reach out to Jesus right now.

Dr. Vance Havner commented on this miracle with this insight: "This woman was shy and timid. She was not in habit of elbowing her way through the crowds, but when we are desperate enough, we'll do anything to get through to God. Our Lord said, 'if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.' Thirst is not casually wanting a drink of water. When we really thirst, water must be had and we will drive through any obstacle to get it. Christians do not drink of the living water because there is no burning, feverish, consuming thirst after God. The situation is desperate—but the saints are not." (The Secret of Christian Joy)

There are all kinds of suffering. You may be suffering physically, financially, emotionally, or relationally, will you reach out to Jesus today? There's another lesson from this miracle:

II. EVERY MIRACLE COMES AT A PERSONAL COST TO JESUS

Hidden in this beautiful story is a spiritual truth that shines like a diamond set on a piece of black satin. When Peter observes that everyone was touching Jesus, the Lord knew that ONE person had touched Him with expectant faith. The Bible says, "At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him."

Spiritual service of any kind takes something out of a person. Dr. Hershel Hobbs, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, said his doctor told him preaching one sermon drained a man as much as working an eight-hour shift in a factory would. Anyone who preaches or teaches SMBS realizes it is mentally and spiritually exhausting to give oneself away like that.

But I think what Jesus is talking about here goes much deeper than that. The scriptures reveal that the blessings Jesus has to offer always costs Him a huge price. No wonder we read that Jesus was often tired. I'm not surprised that we find Him sleeping in the boat in the middle of a storm; He was always giving so much of himself away.

The movie, "The Green Mile," is about death row inmates. One of the main characters is a huge prisoner portrayed by Michael Duncan. In this story he has the power to take someone's sickness away. Tom Hanks plays a prison guard with a painful bladder infection. Out of compassion, this big prisoner reaches through the bars and takes away his infection. He literally takes it within his body, and then he coughs out what appears to be a swarm of ugly insects. Then he is so tired he has to lie down. Although the movie was pure fiction, when I saw that I thought immediately, "That's exactly what Jesus did whenever he healed someone." He took their sins, or their sickness, or their suffering into His life. However, He didn't cough it out like a swarm of insects. He carried it to the cross.

The ultimate miracle was when Jesus laid down His life on the cross. Our salvation is a free gift only because Jesus paid it all. The prophet Isaiah was led by the Holy Spirit to convey just what our salvation would cost Jesus. As we look at this wonderful verse, notice what Jesus paid for our salvation. In Isaiah 53:5 we read: *But he was PIERCED for our transgressions...* That means that Jesus allowed the Roman soldiers to drive nails into His hands and feet, all because of my transgressions, my sins... *he was CRUSHED for our iniquities;* That means Jesus bore my sins in His body on the tree and He was literally crushed beneath the weight of all our iniquities. *The PUNISHMENT that brought us peace was upon him...* A Holy God has to judge sin. And what is the punishment for sin? Hell. Jesus experienced the hell of separation from God. That's why He cried, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" He suffered the torment, the darkness at midday, the pain—why? So that we could have PEACE with God...*and by his WOUNDS we are healed...* That's what it costs Jesus to heal that woman or to heal us of our sin sickness. By his stripes, or His wounds, we are healed. That's what it costs Him. What a price! What a Savior!

III. JESUS WANTS US TO CONFESS OUR FAITH BEFORE OTHERS

When Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" He wasn't asking for information; He already knew. Out of compassion for this woman, He was giving her a chance to publicly confess what had happened to her. And the Bible says, "Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth."

It seems as if the woman would have been content to slip away into the crowd, but Jesus wouldn't let her. She didn't just sneak up and "steal" a measure of Jesus' power; it was something Jesus willingly surrendered to her when He felt her touch of faith. Jesus wanted to give her an affirmation for her public confession of His power. The same is true today. Jesus wants us to go public with our testimony of how Jesus has changed our lives. There is no such thing as a "secret agent" or "closet" Christian. Jesus invites us, He requires us, and He expects us to openly confess our faith in Him.

Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33)

1. When you confess your faith publicly, you let others know Jesus can make a difference in their lives as well

There are at least two good reasons why you should confess your faith openly. First, when you confess your faith you communicate to others Jesus can make a difference in their lives as well. The Bible teaches that the best way to first confess your faith is by baptism. When someone stands in the baptistry and says, "Jesus is my Lord" they are confessing with their mouth because they believe in their heart. Your willingness to confess Jesus by believer's baptism will help others make the same confession.

I've had many memorable baptisms through the years, but I'll never forget standing on a beach at the Black Sea near Yalta in the Crimea. There were about 300 sunbathers and swimmers standing around in their swimsuits. I preached the gospel over a portable sound system and then we baptized 20-30 new converts in the Black Sea. The people watching the baptism were fascinated and some of them walked up and started asking questions about how to follow Jesus. Your confession will encourage others.

2. When you confess your faith publicly, you let others know Jesus is the reason your life is different

But the best reason to confess your faith openly is to let people know Jesus is the reason your life is different. I've heard people say, "I don't have to tell people I'm a Christian, I just need to LIVE the Christian life." Well, we should live the Christian life for sure, but here's the problem with the position of silent Christianity. Imagine that I live a life of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness and self-control, but I never tell anyone that it's because of Christ in me that I'm different, who gets the credit? I do. People will look at me and say, "Wow, David Dykes sure is a good person. Look how loving, and joyful and kind he is!" But when I tell people continually that Jesus is the reason why my life is different, then who gets the credit? He does! If that woman had just slipped away into the crowd, stealing a healing,

people would not have given Jesus the credit and honor for His miracle.

Have you publicly confessed Jesus? Have you followed Christ in baptism since you were saved? Are you constantly using your mouth to tell people that Jesus has changed your life? Or are you trying to slip out into your world without confessing Jesus?

IV. WHEN WE TRUST JESUS WE ARE WELCOMED INTO HIS FAMILY

Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." If she hadn't come back and confessed Jesus, she would have missed the blessing of hearing Jesus call her "daughter." Jesus honored her by calling her one of His own, a part of His family. And you know what the daughter of a King is called: A princess! In one day she was changed from a lonely, suffering, unknown woman into a princess!

There was another miracle that happened to her other than simply having her bleeding stop. She was saved. There's a powerful word-play that doesn't come out in the English translation. In her confession, the woman spoke of how she had touched Jesus' garment and been instantly healed (*iaomai*, a medical word). But what Jesus literally said was not, "your faith has healed you." He said, "Your faith has SAVED you." He used a different word (*sozo*). That's the word the New Testament uses for salvation. For instance, Ephesians 2:8 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved..." it's the same word (*sozo*) that Jesus spoke to this woman.

This woman came seeking a physical healing, but she found *more* when she confessed her faith in Jesus. She had a broken heart. There was bitterness, frustration, questions, confusion, and dark memories that had tormented her for twelve years. She found healing for all of those problems. Jesus said, "My daughter, take heart! Because of your faith, you are saved, now go in peace." The same thing happens to us when we touch Jesus by faith. He welcomes us into His family. One of the wonderful mysteries of salvation is that long before I ever chose Jesus, He chose me. The Bible says, "For he (God) chose us in him (Jesus) before the creation of the world...In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." (Ephesians 1:4-5). I love the last part of that verse. Do you know WHY God chose us to be adopted into His family as sons and daughters? Two reason: First because He loved us. And second because it was simply His pleasure. It pleased Him to choose us!

We all know the chorus to the Gaither song, "Family of God." But it has some great verses too. It says, "You will notice we say, 'brother and sister' 'round here; It's because we're a family and these are so near; When one has a heartache, we all share the tears, And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear. From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King; No longer an outcast, a new song I sing; From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong; I'm not worthy to be here, but Praise God! I belong! I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God. I've been washed in the fountain and cleansed by His blood. Join heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod. For I'm part of the family, the Family of God!"

How wonderful it is to hear Jesus say to us, "Daughter, Son, your faith has saved you. Go in peace!"

CONCLUSION

Sometimes God allows us to reach the point of desperation so we will depend totally on Him. One of the Bible misquotations I address in my new book is, "God won't lay more on you than you can bear." No, that's not in the Bible. The truth is that God will sometimes allow us to get to the point of utter and complete desperation so that we will depend **TOTALLY** on Him.

Are you just part of the crowd, or will you reach out and touch Jesus today? In his book, *Intimate Moments with God*, Pastor Ken Gire prays an honest prayer that expresses my desire and maybe yours too: "I confess, O Lord, how often I have followed in the crowd pressed around you. I have touched you, but only in the rush hour of religious activity. Sunday after Sunday I take my part in the crowd as I sit through the service. I sing the hymns and hear the sermon. I read my Bible, say my prayers, give my money. How could I be so close your presence yet so far from your power? Could it be that my arms are folded? Could it be that my hands are full? I pray that if my arms are complacent, you would unfold them in outstretched longing for you. And if my hands are full, I pray that you would empty them so that I might cling only to you."

Jesus is here. It's as if He is passing through this crowd. Will you reach out and touch Him by faith today? If you will take hold of His promise, He can take you from your desperation into your deliverance.

OUTLINE

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You can reach out to Jesus when you are

1. Suffering physically
2. Strained financially
3. Struggling emotionally

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"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." *Isaiah 53:5*

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When you confess your faith publicly, you let others know

1. Jesus can make a difference in their lives as well
2. Jesus is the reason your life is different

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes