**The Touch of Jesus June 27 2021 Mark 5:21-43**

Some years ago the church I grew up in was celebrating a significant anniversary celebration and the mayor was invited. She happened to be one of my Sunday School friends. My dad had taught the Senior Sunday School class for many years and knew her reasonably well but had not seen her for probably 10 years. As she arrived adorned in her mayoral robes with her entourage my dad delayed the procession by going up to her and giving her an enormous hug. I inwardly cringed, our world was changing, and this may not be viewed warmly.

Touch can be a “touchy” subject in our world. Inappropriate touch is certainly unacceptable, yet sometimes ascertaining what is appropriate can also be tricky. My dad was rather like a tall, soft cuddly teddy bear type of person. He was an extrovert who loved children, loved his family and was prone to giving wonderful bear hugs. I think he may have found navigating life in this respect rather tricky if he was alive today.

The two stories we have read today feature “touch” the woman reached out and touched Jesus and Jesus reached out and touched the child.

**Embracing the breadth of Jesus touch**

The stories emphasise the breadth of Jesus touch. In these stories he reaches out to the influential and the supposedly inconsequential, the revered and the ostracised, the powerful and the weak, male and female, the religious observants and the excluded. Jesus doesn’t care who we are, what we have done, or how we have failed he reaches out to us all. Both of these people were in desperate situations and they dared to believe that Jesus could help them.

Jesus healing stories come in a wide variety of formats even here the woman reached out to touch his clothes and was healed, the child was touched by Jesus and told to get up, almost every healing story has some different element in how it is undertaken. There is a huge breadth in the ways in which Jesus heals.

Even today healing comes in many forms, through various means. Periodically we hear testimonies of people whose lives have been changed dramatically and comprehensively for the better, due to dealing with serious health issues. However dealing with any health issue involves a measure of humility. The recognition that we need the help of someone else to deal with an issue in our bodies or minds, and then the process of acting to get such help necessitate a measure of humility, as we lay down our independence.

The story of the synagogue ruler also reminds us that we may be seeking the touch of God for someone else rather than for ourselves. It reminds us of our deep connection with other people, and how their pain is also our pain.

In this case the girl was raised to life, yet we all know that this did not happen to every sick child in Jesus time or in our own. It can remind us of the need for the touch of God in our deepest experiences of grief and loss. Healing is a much broader concept than physical recovery from illness or injury. The healing power of God can touch the deepest needs of our hearts. Indeed I am convinced that there are things about our lives that only God can heal.

**Overcoming obstacles**

The stories point to a variety of obstacles that can hinder us being touched by God.

In the story of the haemorrhaging woman, she had to bravely ignore social restrictions, as one seen to be impure, unclean and determinedly push her way through the crowd to get close enough to Jesus. She needed to put aside her history of disappointment, her despondency at her financial losses in pursuit of healing and her twelve years of suffering, physically, socially and emotionally. Her illness had impoverished her in every way. However she chose to venture to trust that Jesus could be the one who could help her. She needed boldness, determination and perseverance and courage even to be able to get close to Jesus.

The synagogue ruler bypassed the option of sending a messenger to request Jesus help, he came himself, despite his deep distress for his child, in his desperation he bows before Jesus and pleads repeatedly for him to come and heal her that she may live.
Later in the story he needed to ignore the devastating report of her death from his messengers, and resist the temptation to give up. Instead he had to listen to Jesus and to keep on believing that Jesus could help. He was being told, “Don’t go on fearing the worst but do keep on believing for the best”[[1]](#footnote-1) he needed to, “Trust the person not the circumstances”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Then as they approached the home the synagogue leader needed to overcome the ridicule of his community who laughed at the thought of Jesus helping the girl. Sometimes the ridicule of others, the risk of potentially being distanced from close friends or family may hinder our pursuit of God.

**Healing comes through relationship**

There are some interesting elements in these stories. It is curious that Jesus calls the woman to identify herself in the crowd. The disciples find this quite unreasonable, but it is clearly important to Jesus and in the context of the story. Jesus perceives that power had gone out from him to another. The woman humbly and reverently acknowledges that she was the one who touched him. This type of reverential awe often accompany encounters with God.

So why did Jesus draw her out of the crowd, why did he need to identify her, she had been healed, what more was necessary?

There seems to be a need for her to understand what had happened to herself. This was not some magic inherent in the clothes of Jesus, this was a demonstration of the power of God at work. Many superstitious practices around healings in these days in the broader community. Her healing flowed out of her connection with Jesus. Power had flowed from Jesus to her, power which facilitated her healing. Her healing only occurred through her relationship with Jesus. She had received from Jesus, and then she was free to open herself to Jesus, and to tell him her whole story. It is interesting that there is a change in how she is then addressed, she was the woman in the crowd but now Jesus addresses her as “daughter”. The use of such a term conveys warmth, connection, welcome and acceptance. Her healing went deeper than just her physical symptom. Her healing opened up a new relationship with Jesus and her ability to be accepted within her community.

The synagogue ruler experienced his daughter’s healing through his relationship with Jesus. He could have given up when reports came of her death, or when the mourners laughed at Jesus, however despite the circumstances he chose to trust this person, this Jesus. He could testify “If Jesus remains with you there is no need to fear”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Jesus did not engage in sensationalism and grandstanding. He healed people gently sensitively and often only in the presence of a few witnesses, presumably people who were more likely to see that he wasn’t looking to be a high profile miracle worker. Healings flowed through His relationships.

So in our context today we can be encouraged to remember to that when Jesus is with us, there is no need to fear. We can trust in Jesus whatever our circumstances.

We can be encouraged that God brings healing in many ways, and that God’s healing power can extend beyond the realms of medical science. God can heal what nothing else can alter.

**What would we like Jesus to do for us?**

**Are we this impassioned in the way we seek Jesus intervention in our lives?**

**What else would we most like to see touched by God?**

1. Donald English, *The Message of Mark,* (Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1992) 116 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Donald English, *The Message of Mark,* (Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1992) 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Donald English, *The Message of Mark,* (Leicester, England: Inter Varsity Press, 1992) 115 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)