

## FAITH IS BUT A TOUCH AWAY

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, November 19, 2006



**Mark 5:24- 33** And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?' " He looked all around to

see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

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The earliest stories about Jesus are filled with excitement and drama. This incident takes place in a city street. It is a narrow twisted street packed with a diverse crowd of excited people, **surging** past its bazaars and pavement stalls with all the noise and confusion of an eastern market place. Jesus is surrounded by a mass of people. They are anxious to get close, to see him from nearby. They are pushing and shoving each other. They want to see this Galilean who seems to offer **healing** of mind and soul and body; **forgiveness** of sin; another chance - **a beginning again**. And then, it happened! Suddenly, unexpectedly ~ Jesus stopped in his tracks and asked. "**Who touched me?**" That is an electrifying question when you realize who asked it, and under what circumstances. You cannot escape the thrill of it ~ the tingle of excitement that grips you when you think of Christ stopping in response to the touch of a poor nameless woman.

There is another face in the crowd - the face of a woman. Great lines of suffering mar its beauty and sweetness, and even now her lips are drawn in a thin line of agony. The face is streaked with pain. Her body is racked with acute suffering.

Who is she? Well, some say her name is Martha and some say Veronica. Tradition gives her various names, but I cannot tell who she was. It does not matter. Is it not enough that she was a woman in pain? Call her Martha . . . or Mary . . . or Margaret . . . or mother . . . or sister . . . or wife. She represents all the people who look everywhere for peace of mind and heart - for hope and comfort - and find none. She represents them all - whatever their wants their fears their hopes their pains. She believed that if she could but touch Him - even only the hem of His garment - she would be healed and suffer no more.

She believed that she could not afford to lose this opportunity? She must touch Him. **He is drawing nearer**. Now she can almost reach Him - another moment - at last just as He passes,

she is able to reach out her hand, and with the tip of her finger touch His robe.

It was enough! With a trembling finger she had touched Him with the touch of a mighty faith! No one had noticed her - no one - but Christ! Recognizing the one magnetic touch of faith amid the pressure of the crowd, He stopped and asked that terrific question: "Who touched me?" The question seemed absurd to those who heard it. Impatiently, almost with sarcasm, the disciples asked, "How should we know? There are hundreds of people here -pushing all about you. Look at the crowd and yet you ask 'Who touched me?" But, looking around Him, Christ stood still - His kind, but searching, glance fell at last on the face of the woman who had done it.

His gaze held hers. Something passed between them, and she told Him her story while His eyes were fixed upon her; His eyes gave her confidence. They seemed to promise all that she desired. Her fear disappeared. Then He answered her, not in scorn at her action not in resentment not in anger at her presumption not in ridicule at her faith not in indignation at her audacity but in the sympathetic tones of understanding love. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

She touched Him in faith - in desperate believing faith and He stopped! The touch of one anonymous woman in a crowd halted the Prince of Glory. That is the glorious message of this incident. She touched Him and so can we! That is the story of our faith. In and through Jesus Christ we get to know and to touch God. We need to touch Him - O how much we need to touch Him!

Most of us are thronging Him - just like the crowd. . . It is easy to throng the Lord and never touch Him. A great many people in the churches, and perhaps a great many outside the churches, are thronging Jesus ~ seeking Him ~ coming close to Him ~ but never actually touching Him. This story about Jesus and the suffering woman in the crowd brings the message. We have to touch Him for ourselves!

One can feel close in the crowd without touching the Lord. And that is exactly the trouble with most of us. We are following the crowd thronging the Lord but few are actually in touch with the Master. And because we are not in touch, there is no vitality in our spiritual life. There is no thrill in our prayers no tingle of contact with the infinite resources no flush of reality about our religion. Because we are out of touch with the Lord, we are lost in the crowd and are living separated from the Master.

He promised that we would have power! Power - to do amazing things grace - to do unnatural things, such as to harbor no grudges and to forgive those who hurt us ~ to love even those who treat us unjustly or unkindly ~ to pray for those who hurt us to try to make right situations that have been wrong, even if it means humbling ourselves, swallowing our pride, and risking a snub or a slight.

We can have grace to do these things, and we know perfectly well that it takes a lot of grace to do them! He who made these promises is here with us now. He assures us, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

But you may ask: "How can I touch Christ?" It was one thing for that woman long ago, for she saw Him with her eyes, and could touch Him with her fingers. She heard His voice, saw the sunlight dance on His hair. He was right there, and she could touch Him. How can I, today, touch Him with the same results?

Some may seek healing of body or mind or of soul. Some may seek insight on some problem. Some need faith to stand up under the tensions and stress of life. Some seek forgiveness and a new beginning. All of us need to touch Christ for some reason or other.

Give God a chance. Take your problem, whatever it may be, to God in prayer. In the telling be absolutely honest and sincere. Hold nothing back. Our minds are sometimes shocked when we permit our hearts to spill over, but it is good for our spiritual life when we do. If we would only have the courage to take a good look at our motives for doing certain things we might discover something about ourselves that would melt away our pride and soften our hearts so that God could do something with us and for us.

We get to know God's will in many ways. You may not see any writing in the sky and have any unusual experience. It often comes through your own conscience! Or it may be given to you in the advice of friends of sound judgment - those who love you most. O yes, sometimes we discover God. Some of you may already have reached out and touched the heart of God, even while you were listening this morning. In Jesus, God is waiting is waiting for your touch! The hand of faith is enough. If you and I decide to reach out to touch God through Jesus in faith today, God will not ask, "Who touched me?" God will know!

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