

Jesus meets a suffering woman \* Luke 8:43-48  
January 31, 2021 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

A year ago or so, Julie's dad was in the hospital and very, very sick.

Two years ago now, we found out that my dad had cancer. Those were both scary times.

And I know that I'm not alone in that. You've been there too – loved ones who are sick; you yourself are suffering. Illness is something that we all deal with.

The passage of Scripture that we're going to look at this morning invites us to think about illness in light of Jesus. How does knowing Jesus change our experience of sickness? We all get sick, whether we know Jesus or not, but when we encounter Jesus and choose to follow Him, how does that change our perspective on sickness?

And the way that we'll answer that this morning is through the story of the woman who comes to Jesus and touches His cloak. That story is actually tucked right into the middle of another story – the story of Jairus and his daughter – and we'll talk more about them next week – but today, we're going to focus on the story of the suffering woman. So turn with me to Luke 8, right around verse 41 and we'll get into it. Luke 8:41.

So at this point in the Gospel, Jesus is going around the countryside, healing people and teaching them about the Kingdom of God. They come to a particular town and meet a man named Jairus. Jairus has a daughter who is twelve years old and that twelve year old daughter is very sick. Gravely ill in fact. Jesus agrees to go to the girl and it's on the way to Jairus' house that our story happens.

Because along the way, there was another person in that crowd who wanted healing. Verse 43 - 43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her (Luke 8:43 NIV). Some of the older manuscripts also say that she had spent all of her income on healing but no one could help her.

Imagine being this woman. Suffering from a disease that no one could cure. It sure looks like they tried, but nothing has worked. She emptied her savings trying to heal the disease but it's just gotten worse. And this has been going on for twelve years. Twelve years she's had it! Think back to 2009 – that's twelve years ago. Stephen Harper was prime minister; Barack Obama was JUST being sworn in as president. H1N1 – remember that? Swine flu? – was just being discovered. So imagine that you had gotten swine flu back in 2009 and nobody knew what it was and nobody could cure it and you've just suffered quietly in the background ever since. That's this woman.

And it's not just the physical pain and inconvenience. This poor woman is cut off from all sorts of social and religious support because according to the Mosaic Law, the bleeding makes her both is unclean and 'contagious.' You touch her and YOU become unclean too, in need of quarantine.

This woman is suffering. She is sick and she is alone. And so she comes to Jesus.

Now I don't know why she comes to Him as she does. She sneaks up behind Him to touch His robe. I suspect that it has to do with the stigma surrounding her disease. Nobody wants to come near an 'unclean lady' so better I guess to just sneak up and not let anyone know? At any rate, verse 44:

44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. (Luk 8:44 NIV). Healed, just like that. That is the healing power of Jesus.

And Jesus knew what had happened. He looked around, scanning the crowd and said 'Who touched me?' Everyone denied it and said 'no it wasn't me' and the woman pulled her shawl down further over her forehead and pressed back into the crowd.

And Peter said – "Master, the people are crowded all around you and pressing up again you. How could you possibly ask 'who touched me?'" This was clearly pre-COVID-19 situation.

But Jesus said "No, someone touched me. Someone touched me *intentionally*. I know that there are people all around me bumping into and jostling me. But someone reached out their hand and touched me on purpose and I know because power has gone out from me." (v. 46).

Does Jesus know who it is that has touched Him? I think so. I think He just wants the woman to own up to it. And to own it (her healing).

And then verse 47 - 47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. [And as she knelt there, it all came out – how she had suffered for many years, how she had lost all she had trying to be cured, how no one could heal her – and how she had just touched His robe and how He had healed her in an instant].

*(In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed (47).*

What will Jesus do in this situation? What will Jesus say? Is He angry for stealing His power? Is He miffed because He's got something better to do at the moment? (Remember, He's supposed to be off to Jairus' house to see his deathly ill daughter).

Verse 48, Jesus says to her - 48 *Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."* It's not the robe – Jesus' cloak is not a magic relic that doles out power when you touch it. It's the faith *that made her come to Jesus in the first place* that has healed her. Her belief that Jesus could do something about it and her initiative in acting on that belief has healed her. "Your faith has healed you" Jesus says. "Go in peace." And with that, Jesus is back on track and on His way to Jairus' house. And that's the story we'll pick up next week.

But let's pause now to think about what we can learn about illness and faith in light of this encounter with Jesus. Let me make three points.

1. Jesus is both willing and able to heal. He is both willing and able to heal. If you've been sick for a long time, like this woman has, it might be easy to doubt whether or not Jesus will actually help. It might be easy to think 'Does He not like me and that's why He's not healing me?' Or, 'is this one too big for Him and that's why He's not healing me?'

This encounter with Jesus shows that neither of those ways of thinking is true. Jesus is both willing and able to heal.

First – He is WILLING to heal. He doesn't chide the woman for touching Him in secret – He knows the desperation that she must be feeling. He knows the way that society has turned its back on her and He returns value to her by making her not just well, but 'clean' too. Everybody else in the crowd is probably backing off when they realized what she'd been sick with - calling her 'pariah' – but what does Jesus call her? 'Daughter.' This suffering woman is just as precious to Him as Jairus' daughter is to Jairus.

It doesn't say it in this account, but back a few chapters we find something that fits the spirit of this story perfectly.

Luke 5:12 – a leper comes to Jesus – same thing as here – long-term suffering, unclean in the eyes of the community - he falls before Jesus and says "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus doesn't hesitate – He reaches out His hand and touches the untouchable and says 'I am willing.' And he is healed and 'made clean.' I think that applies here too. Jesus is willing to heal when we are sick. He cares about you when you are sick.

And what's more, He can do something about it. Jesus is able to heal. Nobody else could heal this woman. Twelve years she went to appointments – they poked and prodded and guessed and hypothesized and nothing. They made her drink wine mixed with onions or wine mixed with rubber and alum and crocuses (there's evidence that those were considered 'remedies' in those days) (Darrell Bock, *Luke v.1* BECNT, 793) and nothing. And then she goes to Jesus and doesn't even ask Him. She reached out in faith and without an ounce of effort, Jesus healed her. He doesn't make a magic potion or say some magic words – He's not even paying attention in that moment – and He heals her. He is more than able to heal when we are sick.

So first observation – Jesus is both willing and able to heal.

But, second observation, let's add one more clause to that line – Jesus is both willing and able to heal in His time. This woman has been suffering for twelve years. Jesus has been alive that whole time and yet it was only now, on the way to Jairus' house, that this woman would be healed. We can't just expect to go up to Jesus every time and push a button and get healed. It just doesn't work that way – Jesus is not a vending machine for us to manipulate, He is our Lord whom we trust and we trust Him to heal in His good time.

And it is true that for some of us, healing will not come until eternity. Some of us will deal with the effects of living in a fallen creation all of our lives and that's just a reality. But you can bet your sweet bippy that Jesus will heal all for all eternity. The limbs that struggle to move now will be able to run marathons in eternity. There will be no more sickness and sorrow and pain. In His good time, Jesus will heal all things.

Now admittedly, I haven't suffered much in my life and so I'd like some perspective to make sure I'm not being glib and when I need that, I often go to Joni Tada Erickson. She is a quadriplegic who by the grace of God has given her life to write on suffering on the goodness of God and she once said:

"God may remove your suffering, and that will be great cause for praise. But if not, He will use it, He will use anything and everything that stands in the way of His fellowship with you. So let God mold you and make you, transform you from glory to glory. That's the deeper healing" (quoted on *Grace to You*, October 16, 2013). (<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/TM13-2/a-deeper-healing-joni-eareckson-tada>).

And that's something that we actually see in this story! Remember that while all this is going on - Jesus stopping and talking to the woman – Jairus is there next to Him wringing his hands and trying to be patient but all the while inside screaming 'This woman's been sick for 12 years! She can wait! My daughter needs help now!' In God's providence, Jairus has seen Jesus heal this woman by faith so that he will himself have faith when they get to his house and find his daughter is dead. He will have faith in that moment because he has just seen what Jesus does in moments like these. Jesus can be counted on to heal *in His time*. And whether it's in this life or the next, Jesus will heal.

So three, we need to go to Him in faith. Jesus is willing and able to heal in His time so we need to keep going to Him, just as this woman did, to ask for His healing in line with His good will. I remember hearing about a person asking a pastor if they thought God healed people and the pastor replied 'well of course' and the person responded 'well your prayers sure don't sound like it' and that was very convicting for him and for me.

We always want to leave room for God's good and perfect will to be done, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't believe any less fervently in Jesus' miraculous power to heal! He can heal with less effort than it takes for us to reach out in faith, so that's what we need to do. Keep on reaching out in faith. Go to Him for healing, again and again, trusting Him to heal.

Knowing that Jesus is both willing and able to heal in His time, we need to go to Him in faith. That's the big idea at the centre of this passage. Knowing that Jesus is both willing and able to heal in His time, we need to go to Him in faith.

Now let's take all of these ideas and answer the question head-on – what do we learn about illness from this encounter? – because that's where the rubber hits the road. How does knowing Jesus change our experience of illness, especially compared to those who don't know Him?

Well, I think it means two things – 1. You're not alone. And 2. You can have hope. You're not alone; you can have hope.

1. For people who don't know Jesus, for people like this woman, illness can be a terribly isolating thing. It can be quite lonely and it may feel like you're going through it alone. But if you know Jesus, then you're not alone. He is with you in it. He is supporting and sustaining and carrying you along even if realize it. Jesus has compassion on you – you are precious in His sight – and He is with you, delivering you from evil every step of the way. Knowing Jesus then means you are not alone; it also means that...

2. You can have steadfast hope that you WILL be healed. If not in this life, then certainly the next. But the fact that this woman's story in the Bible means that Jesus is both willing and able to heal in this life too. And so no matter the situation, we go to Him in faith, to ask for His grace and to ask Him to heal.

And I'll tell you, I'll never get tired of hearing this: "I went in and had my treatments and then the doctors looked at the results and they couldn't explain how much I'd been healed. They just couldn't explain it." We know what happened, didn't we? The Great Physician stepped in.

Have hope. Know you're not alone. Because Jesus will heal in His good time.