

HOPE FOR HEALING AND WHOLENESS

A Sermon Presented by Irma Heppner Mahone
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Text: 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.

This passage is about healing and wholeness. The woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and experienced healing. She had just enough faith to make the effort to get close enough to brush up against Jesus, believing she could be made whole.

*She only touched the hem of His garment
As to His side she stole;
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him
By faith she was made whole.*

Refrain:

*Oh, touch the hem of His garment
And, Thou, too shall be free;
His saving power, this very hour
Shall give **new life** to Thee.*

*He turned with, "Daughter, be of good comfort,
Thy faith hath made Thee whole."
And peace that passeth all understanding
With gladness filled her soul.*

How long has it been since you felt Jesus' healing power in your life? How long has it been since you've experienced that "new life" that the woman in our story experienced? What would it take for me... for you... to "touch the hem of His garment," so we can experience healing and wholeness?

I invite you to come with me to take a little closer look at this story today and maybe together we can discover how WE might "touch the hem of Jesus' garment".

It is important to note that the woman had to realize she was sick. She was in need of healing. She was not whole. May I suggest that if the woman in this story had not realized she was in need of healing, she would never have received healing. The Bible

tells us she came up with this scheme to sneak up close enough to Jesus in the crowd so that she could just touch His clothes. She would not have done all this if she had not known she needed healing.

Some of you might say, “Why should I do that? I’m not sick. I don’t need to ‘touch His garment’. I became a Christian years ago. I know all about faith, the Christian walk and the Lord.” Does the Bible not say that “Those who are whole don’t need a physician?” (Matthew 9:12)

In his book, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, David Seamands asks, *Can we yearn to see if we do not realize we are blind? Is it possible for us to grow to greater freedom if we are not conscious of our lack of freedom?* So I submit to you the first thing to learn from this story is: We must realize we are sick. We are in need of healing. We are not whole.

In his book, *Becoming Human*, Jean Vanier, claims that accepting our humanness with all our weaknesses and brokenness is necessary for true spirituality. In my life, I began to understand this most poignantly in relation to parenting. No matter how much I loved my child, no matter how committed I was to being the best parent in the world, the time came when I just had to come to terms with the fact that I was human and therefore an imperfect parent. I can know I did the best I knew how. I might even acknowledge that if I had it to do over again I would definitely do things differently. But eventually I got to the place where I just had to admit that I was human. I had made mistakes. I had made some poor judgments. I had some weaknesses.

So I came to embrace this weakness within me. From that moment on I stopped judging other parents for their mistakes. Instead, there was a compassion - an understanding that other parents, too, are human. And I could trust that they were doing the best they knew how.

So embracing weakness within us and those around us is the way to discover greater compassion, trust, and understanding.

Vanier says that the soil in which spirituality, wholeness and holiness can flourish includes understanding what it means to be human in the context of fellow humans. We must eventually come to see that we all belong to a common, broken humanity; have wounded, vulnerable hearts; and need to be loved and appreciated.

Discovering our common humanity means seeing the brokenness and evil in our own hearts, accepting our personal limitations and weaknesses, discovering we need others, and learning to appreciate others and to thank them.

To learn how to forgive we must begin with an awareness of our fears, darkness, barriers and brokenness - we must discover and name our shadow areas. We must learn that it is acceptable to be less than perfect. Life is all about growth. It is possible to grow to a new order of love.

Sharing weaknesses and needs calls us together in “oneness,” causes our masks and barriers to drop, causes new life to flow, frees us to be ourselves, and leads us to a new

wholeness, an inner unity. Maturity then is acceptance of yourself with your flaws and weaknesses AND acceptance of others with their flaws. True freedom is knowing who you are including both the brokenness and the beauty.

For some of us our brokenness comes from damaged emotions. David Seamands says, *Like rings of a felled tree expose the hidden wounds the tree has suffered during its lifetime, many people's wounds lie hidden behind a façade of normalcy.* His thesis is that unless and until those wounds are exposed and healed, they will be a festering source of brokenness throughout life.

We must find freedom from inner hurts actively inflicted on us (eg. verbal or physical abuse), feeling unappreciated, rejected, or even ignored. Such things have left wounds in our hearts but they often are pushed down and covered over in the recesses of our being. Inner hurts affect us in many ways. They can create feelings of guilt, shame, and worthlessness. Sometimes they create low self-esteem, perfectionism, or some kinds of depression. Unhealed hurts will cause us to hurt others, create shadow sides, cause lack of trust in ourselves, and affect our ability to love and be loved.

We are not quite who we wanted to become. Parents feel guilty because they are imperfect parents. Husbands and wives feel guilty because they have imperfect or failed marriages. Perhaps you longed to be a missionary or go into full-time ministry and that didn't happen. Perhaps you dreamed of making an important contribution to mankind like Thomas Edison or Newton did and that didn't happen. And as Seamands says "...to the extent all of us are disappointed in ourselves, so we disappoint others."

In our biblical story we note that the woman had to find Jesus. I do not think she brushed up against Jesus by accident. She had heard of Him and that He healed others. She had the courage to believe this healing might be possible for her. She believed Jesus would want to heal her. But she had to look for Jesus. Maybe she heard where He was teaching or where He was going to be. She had to find Him because she wanted to be Healed!

On another occasion, when Jesus saw an invalid lying there and discovered that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, *Do you want to get well?* (John 5:6)

Do you want to be healed or do you just want to talk about it? We must look deep within our hearts to ask if we really want healing. Our wounds and scars need to be brought to the balm of Gilead - into the healing presence of God's grace. Paul states in Romans 8:26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us...*

"Help" implies a mutual participating; the Holy Spirit becomes our partner and helper; the Holy Spirit works along with us.

But what if we don't know where we need to be healed? David Seamands tells a moving story to illustrate that the Holy Spirit knows where we need to be healed.

Charlie Steinmetz had built the great electrical generators that ran Henry Ford's first car manufacturing plant. One day they stopped functioning. After many attempts to get them to work had failed, Henry Ford called Steinmetz. The great genius came, appeared to tinker around for a few minutes, and the generators sprang to life. When Ford received

a bill for \$10,000 he complained to Steinmetz and asked for a discount. Steinmetz returned the letter of appeal with a note attached, "\$10 for tinkering on the generators. \$9990 for knowing where to tinker." Ford paid the bill.

James 5: 16 says, "Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed."

Some problems cannot be resolved until they are confessed to others. Perhaps some people miss that deep inner healing because they lack the courage to share deeply with another person (eg. a counselor).

Like the woman in our story, we must accept responsibility for our healing. Many persons blame their parents, others who have hurt them, life or God. To be healed we must stop blaming others and accept responsibility for ourselves from here on.

Forgiveness is almost the same thing as accepting responsibility. The unforgiven are the unforgiving and so the cycle goes on. Forgiveness implies removal of our masks, accepting who we really are, that we have been hurt, that we have hurt others, and discovering our true selves, both brokenness and beauty. Recognizing the brokenness and beauty in others creates a desire for wholeness in ourselves, in others, in our church family, in our community, and in the world.

All the woman in our story had to do was get close enough to Jesus. She did not have the faith to speak up about her need. She did not have the faith to ask Jesus for healing. She did not know how to get onto Jesus' calendar. No one had ever been healed by touching Jesus' clothes before. She had only enough faith to gingerly reach out and quickly touch his robe. How much faith does it take to be healed?

Hebrews 4:15 says, *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities...* God understands our sins, failures and mistakes and God is able to wrap His loving purpose around us to change us.

Romans 8:28. "For we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

God is able to take our human hurts and turn them into our good and His glory. Seamands calls it God's recycling grace. God takes our infirmities, our damaged emotions, the garbage of our lives and changes the meaning of the hurts within the circle of His redeeming love. God turns them into means for growth and instruments to be used in His service.

God is the great Alchemist who can turn it all into spiritual gold...He can take every damage, every hurt, every crippling infirmity and weave them all into His design (Seamands). God can change hurting people into healed helpers. God recycles our hang-ups into wholeness and usefulness.

So the question for us is how to rediscover the trust and faith needed to open up to others, to do something beautiful with our lives, and to liberate each other from inner hurts.

God's presence and love is deeper than all the hurts. They call forth new and deep energies within, make us aware of our importance and our blessedness, return hope to our lives, and are there for all those locked up in prisons of past hurts.

Just like the woman who got close enough to Jesus, liberation of the heart happens in communion with God because God reveals the uniqueness and preciousness of our being just as we are. He brings us to inner wholeness and liberates the life of God in us. This, in turn, allows God to flow in and through us into the world.

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And, Thou, too shall be free;
His saving power, this very hour
Shall give **new life** to Thee.*

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