

The Woman with the Issue of Blood

On Sunday Lynnette Pullen Bradford was our special guest speaker. Her sermon was drawn from the Gospel story where a woman is healed by touching Jesus.

1. Warm-up Question: As you look back over your life, what's the worst illness you've experienced and how did it make you feel?

2. In our Gospel story, Jesus is teaching a large crowd gathered by the Sea of Galilee when two very different people approach him seeking miracles of healing. Jairus was a leader in the local synagogue. Others in the crowd would have respected him a lot and welcomed him into their midst. But then there was also "a woman with an issue of blood." Her bleeding would have made her "unclean" under Old Testament law. Anyone she touched or who touched her would also be rendered unclean. The people in the crowd would have been upset that she was placing them (and Jesus) at risk of being cross contaminated by her presence. Read Mark 5:21-34, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. How the people around us feel about us can have a huge impact on our comfort level in being among them. How do you think Jairus felt about being in and among this crowd of people gathered to hear Jesus speak?
 - b. How do you think the woman felt about being in and among the crowd?
 - c. When and where in your life have you felt like the woman in this story, i.e., like you were in a place where others (if they knew who you were) would be upset that you were there?

3. Verse 25 tells us that the woman was "afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years," i.e., bleeding from her uterus. Menstruation is, of course, a normal, painful part of a woman's cycle. But apparently this woman was stuck in an ongoing, unrelenting state of pain and bleeding. Lynnette said, "Cycles are normal and necessary; we see them everywhere – the earth rotating around the sun, the life cycles of insects and animals, blood circulating through the body, and so forth. But cycles can become abnormal as well and we can become stuck in a part of the cycle," like someone who gets stuck in the anger part of the grief cycle.
 - a. Tell us about a healthy, helpful cycle at work in your life.
 - b. Tell us about an unhealthy cycle of dysfunction you're stuck in at present or in your past. How does or did that feel?

4. Verse 26 tells us that the woman in our story "had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors. . . , but only grew worse." Desperation motivated her to infiltrate the crowd around Jesus. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Note that key word "touch." As a female, she was not permitted to touch an adult male. As a bleeding female, she was not permitted to touch anyone or permit them to touch her. Yet she sensed that touching was the only thing that could save her.

- a. Why do you think touch is so important to physical and emotional healing?
 - b. In traditional commentaries, the woman is often portrayed as being sneaky, pathetic, or selfish for covertly approaching Jesus. In Christian circles she has historically been referred to as “the woman with the issue.” Where does all this come from? If you had been “the woman with the issue,” would you have covertly touched Jesus or taken a different approach? Why or why not?
5. When the woman touched Jesus, verse 30 says that he was immediately “aware that power had gone out from him.” The Greek word for power here is *dynamus*, the same root word from which we get our word “dynamite.” Jesus immediately stopped and asked who had touched him. The Greek word for touch is *hapto*, which means: (1) to fasten to; to connect; or (2) to kindle; to ignite. As Lynnette said, “There was a spiritual combustion that happened that was initiated by the woman touching Jesus.”
- a. Jostling around in the dense crowd, the woman would have bumped into, i.e., touched, many people, not just Jesus. And many others would have also touched Jesus. But the only time spiritual combustion happened was when the woman touched Jesus. What was different about the kind of touching she did? What should we learn from this?
 - b. Verse 32 says, “Jesus looked around to see who had done it.” He apparently knew he’d be able to identify the one who received his power just by looking at them. How do you suppose the woman looked in the moments after touching Jesus? Can you tell when someone has been “touched” by Jesus? What gives them away?
6. When the woman confesses that she deliberately touched Jesus, the crowd was likely upset that she had violated norms by touching Jesus (and them). The crowd probably expected Jesus to rebuke her for being a “sneaky woman with an issue.” Instead, Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.” Verse 34.
- a. The Greek word used here for “daughter” means “acceptable to God, one who rejoices in God’s peculiar care and protection.” While others viewed her “as the woman with the issue,” Jesus didn’t. He called her “daughter,” a daughter of God. What should we learn from this?
 - b. Lynnette observed that the woman didn’t just experience physical healing, but also emotional and spiritual healing. “Her life, her joy, her spirit, her connection, her sanity” was restored. “She was made whole.” We’re all somewhere on a journey toward wholeness. How would you describe where you are on that journey? For you personally, what role does Jesus play in that process?
 - c. What’s the most important insight you are taking away from this Gospel story? What is God most trying to say to you through it?

Mark 5:21-34

21 When Jesus had crossed again [in the boat] to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.

22 One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet,

23 and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, “My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live.”

24 He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

25 There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.

26 She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse.

27 She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak.

28 She said, “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.”

29 Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

30 Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who has touched my clothes?”

31 But his disciples said to him, “You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

32 And He looked around to see who had done it.

33 The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.

34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”