

Dear Friends,

Mark 5: 24-32

Jairus has a twelve-year-old daughter who is at the point of death. He has come to Jesus and asked him to make her well again so that she may live. Jesus has agreed to go with him. Now Jairus is urging Jesus to hurry. Nothing must be allowed to stop Jesus from getting to his child. Any delay could be the difference between life and death.

In the crowd however, there is a woman. She has lived with vaginal bleeding for twelve years. She has put up with humiliating treatments and procedures that doctors have prescribed. Some of these medics have been genuine and caring and have been doing their best. Others have just been using her to make money.

Whatever their intentions, none of them have been able to heal her. She has not got any better. She has only become worse. And, as the blood has drained from her, so also her money has drained away. She has used it up on attempts to get better, all of which have failed.

Her bleeding is not her fault, but in this hard-hearted world it makes her one of the outsiders, one of the unclean, one of the cursed. In this hard-hearted world there is a hostile environment where people like her are told that they should not even be in the crowd, that they should not touch anyone. She is told that if she touches anyone, she will curse them, make them unclean, turn them into outsiders. She is however desperate and this forces her to cross the boundary and go where she is not supposed to go. She is risking her life by doing this. But maybe by doing it, she can save her life.

She the woman they call "unclean", wants to get to Jesus, the man they call "holy". She wants his attention. She wants him to spend time with her. If not that, what about if he reached out and touched her. If not that, maybe she could touch him. It would not have to be his body, just his clothes, or even the edge of his cloak. Her touch would make him unclean. But perhaps he would not even notice. And if she could touch him, surely, she would be made well.

I don't know what effort it takes to get through the crowd, but it is amazing what you can do when you are desperate. When she's near enough, she reaches out and her fingers are just able to touch his clothes.

And for the woman, in the moment when she makes contact, time stands still, the world stops turning, all sounds are switched off. She has been bleeding for twelve years and in this moment the bleeding stops. She feels it in her body. She knows that she is healed. It's what she wanted, but it's an awesome feeling. It frightens her. It makes her tremble. Then she realises that it's not just in her mind, the crowd actually has stopped moving and become quiet.

When she touched Jesus, he felt power go out of him. The word for power is a word usually used to describe the power of God. Jesus is brim full to overflowing with God's power. He knows that this power has gone out from him to someone else. He stops, turns around, and asks "who touched my clothes?" His friends, as ever, think he's being ridiculous. They say, "what do you mean who touched your clothes? You are surrounded by a crowd. They are touching you from all sides. Everyone's touching you."

But Jesus knows that this touch has not just been from someone brushing up against him. It has come from someone who touched him with intent. He looks carefully at all the faces in the crowd. Amongst them, he sees the woman.

Does he also need to be reminded of Jairus? Jairus is desperate for Jesus to forget about who touched him and remember his daughter. Every breath she takes could be her last. Every moment of delay makes her death more likely. Jesus surely does not have time to help both of these needy people. Which one will he choose to save?

God bless you,

Tony