

Touched by His Love

It is easy, in this hectic, dog eat dog world to feel that nobody really cares about us. It seems as if this world is growing more and more impersonal and colder with each passing day. So it comes as no surprise that we begin to feel like another nameless face in the crowd or another number lost in prison.

As we become victims of loneliness and depression, life becomes meaningless. Our hopes for tomorrow, full of promises, seem to fade. We begin to feel like all the life in us has been bled away.

Today when many people put more trust in statistics than God, as vast numbers of people are hurting, let's look at a woman who was hurting in Mark 5:25-34.

There we find a nameless, desperate woman whom verses 25 and 26 describe as follows: "Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse."

This woman had been taken for everything and was still bleeding. Sounds like our 21st century society at its finest. The insurance companies have their rates so high that poor and struggling middle class folks can no longer afford to be insured. The politicians bleed us with their taxes and then use the money for football stadiums, and other projects for the elite. They then tell us there is nothing they can do to help with affordable housing. These same politicians can always find money to build more prisons, locking up more and more of the poor.

Sick and alone, a nameless face in a vast crowd, was this woman who wanted more. She was not satisfied with just getting close to Jesus.

She didn't want to just celebrate His presence. She was determined to touch Jesus because she was desperate.

Desperate people do unusual things. Some engage in self-destructive activities like drugs, alcohol or the accumulation of materialistic things. They are people who are often lonely, living on the edge, who somewhere along the way have lost their purpose for living.

But not this woman. She had a purpose and she was going to accomplish it. She was going to touch Jesus at all costs. She was not satisfied with the Jesus whom crowds had seen. She was not interested in a Jesus who was an impersonal miracle worker or who only responded to the rich, the powerful, the strong, or those who dropped money in the collection plate. No, this woman knew the Christ of the scriptures. The Christ who reached out to the prostitute, the homeless, the despised leper, the condemned, the sick, the possessed and the nameless, hopeless, and the desperate.

She pushed her way through the crowd pushing and shoving people that got in her way. She had to touch Jesus. She was desperate. When He passed by she reached out and touched the edge of His garment.



Like an electric shock, there surged into the shrunken veins, the panting lungs, the withered muscles Jesus power and vitality! Recognizing the magnetic touch of faith amid the presence of the crowd, Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me?"

The question seemed ridiculous to the disciples. They answered, "How should we know there is such a crowd of people?" But Christ stopped, looked around, and gazed into the face of the desperate woman as He said to her, "Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

This woman had no money, only faith! She met Him on the street, in a crowd. This nameless, hopeless woman had touched Jesus in desperate believing faith and He stopped! The fact is the touch of one hurting woman in a crowd halted the Lord of glory. She touched Him and so can we.

You might want to say, "That's impossible, God's not interested in me". Yes He is. Think about it, the one who conquered sin, death, and the devil stopped because one sick and lonely woman touched Him. But there is even more. Jesus died and rose for you. As Romans 8 declares there is no limit to His love.

In this selfish and greedy world, we need to touch Jesus like never before. Oh how we need to touch Him. But we too often are like those in the crowd who are curious, seeking Him, even coming close to Him, but never actually touching Him. The fact is that this world is self-destructing and coming closer is not enough. It's like missing a plane by a few minutes or an hour, you still missed it.

We can go to church and still feel close without touching Jesus and that's the problem today. We are following the crowd, but not actually being touched by His love.

All too frequently our walk doesn't really make much difference in the world we live in. We let fear cause us to lock out the homeless, the hurting and the incarcerated from our lives. We get so busy, we never have the time to even see Jesus in the faces of our loved ones, a stranger, or even in ourselves.

Yes, we preach, pray, and say the creeds that set forth the belief that the Lord is near us, but we never actually touch Him nor experience the power He has promised. We need to ask ourselves this question: "How can I be touched by Jesus?"

You can begin by pouring out your loneliness, hurt, and pain to the Lord in prayer. Push through the crowd of feelings and thoughts of unbelief. Believe that God will hear and that He will answer in a very special way. Start stepping out by faith as you wait for the answer.

Do what He tells you to do. Be touched by His love as He outlines His presence in Matthew 25: 31-46. Help those in need. Then develop a growing conviction that He's waiting for you to accept the touch of His love.

Many are not touched by His love because they refuse to stop believing they are born losers because they were born poor. Moses was one of those you could say was a born loser. He was born a Jew in a land ruled by anti-Semitic people. Moses entered a world where his parents had to hide him to secure his life and then they had to release him to Pharaoh's daughter. His people were whipped, oppressed, hated, abused, misused and even murdered. The world that Moses entered was one of cruelty, pain and despair.

At this time of despair, ungodliness and injustice, Jesus promises in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Jesus hears, cares, and desires to touch you with His love.

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In Exodus 3:7-8, God said to Moses, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians..."

God is always aware and He cares very deeply and will do whatever it takes to rescue you. Whether it is parting the Red Sea, closing the lion's mouth, or providing alternative energy sources in response to oppressive utility companies, God will make a way. God has promised, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Now we must never forget the promise of Romans 8:37-39, "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is no accident that you were born at this time in history, even if it seems you were born into a hopeless situation. Remember the darker it seems the brighter your light can shine. In the midst of such darkness God is looking for a man or a woman who will believe the fact they can touch Him by being more than conquerors through Christ who loves them.

Will you be that person of faith who will yield to God's will and seize the day for God's glory? You may feel unqualified, uneducated, unworthy and even one who was born in the most hopeless of circumstances. But if you truly believe that #1. He is with you always even unto the end of the earth and #2. Nothing can separate you from the love of God and His divine truth, you will be able to arise at this moment and let your light shine through courageous acts of compassion and justice.

But what about those times in the past when you really believed, tried, trusted, stepped out by faith and then fell flat on your face? Now your memory of those moments hold you in the paralysis of fear. You are dominated by a fear that if you try again you will once again fail. You can begin to settle that issue right now by returning to Romans 8 and mediating on verse 28 where it says, "we know that all things God works for the good of those who love Him, and have been called according to his purpose."

Perhaps it is time we begin to redefine success as Winston Churchill did in the midst of Nazi bombings when he said, "Success is moving from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." This definition particularly makes sense when you realize that this word enthusiasm comes from the Greek Ethos meaning "in God". When you are in God, moving forth in his Love, you realize that God has not called you to be successful in the world's definition of the word, but to be faithful to his will and calling.

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This verse from the classic hymn "How firm a Foundation" expresses it this way, "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, my grace all sufficient, shall thy supply; the flames shall not hurt thee, I only design, thy dross to consume, thy gold to refine." As 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

The time has come for us to stop whining over the things that did not work out the way we expected in the past and start winning in behalf of those who need the touch of the love of Christ flowing through us. We live in a hurting world which wants to see the light and love of Christ shining in us.

Moses let his light shine in the midst of injustice. He confronted Pharaoh and things went from bad to worse. In fact the very people Moses was trying to help responded to his attempts in Exodus 5:21 by saying, "you have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have a sword in their hand to kill us."

Many at this point would have given up but not Moses. As he reached out to God, God responded five times in Exodus chapter 6 by saying, "I am the Lord..."

Maybe at this moment you are like Isaiah, troubled and sick at heart over the moral condition of our country. Then do what Isaiah did when he looked into the sky one day and "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up," Isaiah 6:1. When he did that his whole perspective changed.

It's a fact unless your eyes are fixed on the Lord Jesus as Hebrews 12:2 says, you will not be able to endure when things go from bad to worse. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

As Moses looked to the living God, he was able to hear God also say seven times in Exodus 6, I: I will bring you out, I will take you as my own people, I will be your God, I will bring you to the promised land, I will give it to you as a possession. But we read in Exodus 6:9 that "Moses reported this to the Israelites but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage." Even though he got this response, Moses did not give up. He obeyed God and God worked through him.

In order to experience this touch provided through the power and presence of the resurrected Christ we must be set free from the most populated prison in the world. This is an oppressive prison that has more inmates than beds. In this prison the prisoners are hopelessly held captive by their wants. These are the prisoners who always want something bigger, faster, better, or different than what they have now.

If you feel better when you have more than you are in the Prison of Want. So many, year after year, miss the touch of Jesus because they remain captivated in the Prison of Want. This is the prison where satisfaction comes from something you drink, drive, deposit, digest, devour or divulge yourself in.

If we want to be set free from this prison, then we must discover the key found in Psalm 23:1. There it says, "The Lord is my Shepard; I shall not want." Like the Psalmist David we must go to the pasture where contentment abides. It is in this pasture that we experience the freedom from always having to have more and more and more. It is there we develop an attitude of gratitude along with a desire to touch Jesus.

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Paul having touched Jesus declared, "I have learned to be satisfied with the things I have ...I know how to live when I am poor and I know how to live when I have plenty." Philippians 4:11-12.

Jesus has come to set the captives of greed free by touching them with his love. For "Godliness with contentment which is a great gain," 1 Timothy 6:6. When one surrenders to Christ the doors to the Prison of Want are opened and the person is set free.

If we desire to touch God we must realize that worry and fear can isolate us. It is through reconnecting with creation that we are also able to touch Jesus as our eyes are opened to our Creator's wonders. Come to the window and behold the wonders of His creation. Hear the chirping of the birds. Stop and watch the squirrels. Look at the sky and the floating clouds. What variety there is in God's vast universe! Allow His Spirit to enable you to reconnect, to deliver you from the asphalt jungle of hopelessness. Feel the earth beneath you and the breeze wrapping itself around you. Experience the life that God has placed in His world.

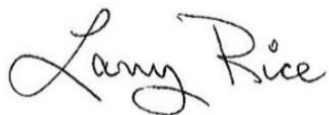
When spring arrives plant something, and as you do experience a new connection with the life placed in that seed. Planting is an investment in the future. As a new cycle of life miraculously emerges, so will your connection with the Creator, as you rediscover that all life is a miracle. Explore the sense of touch as you let the soil crumble within your hand. Smell the fragrance of the flowers. Thank God for the natural sounds which can take your mind from worrying and allow you to be reconnected with His loving presence.

Life is a gift. Learn to live it and love it as you are reconnected with God's loving presence. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Experience this reconnection with God as you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Today is the day to break through the crowd of negative thoughts and hopelessness. Be touched by His love and discover for yourself how Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. As scripture says and all of creation declares, Jesus is, "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:15-17).

Accept Jesus now and be touched by His love. Through Him you will have life both now and for all eternity.

Yours in Christ,



Larry Rice