



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

September 13, 2015

Jump Start # 1419

Matthew 9:20-21 *“And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.”*

I am teaching a series of classes on Incredible Faith. It looks at the lives of men and women who truly believed. There are two occasions in the New Testament when Jesus marveled. To "marvel" is a "WOW" moment. Many things make us WOW. I stood in Buckingham Palace, in a long room lined with some of the world's finest art. That was a WOW moment. I've stood at the edge of the Grand Canyon. That was a WOW moment. I held each of my children moments after they were born and looked into those little eyes. WOW. I've sat in the audience as one of my sons led singing and other son preached. WOW. Sunrises, sunsets, they WOW us. I've seen England's Crown Jewels, held in a glass case, deep in a vault in the tower of London, WOW. I was in a store and held a pair of alligator shoes that cost more than three thousand dollars. WOW. There are many, many things that make us marvel.

We never read of Jesus saying, "Wow, I love those sandals, Peter. Where did you get those?" Nope, never happened. We never read of Jesus marveling at how strong, how tall, how rich someone was. He marveled two times and both times it was about faith. Incredible faith impressed Jesus. Incredible faith caught His attention. The other things do not really matter. We get impressed by brands, style and bling, bling. Not Jesus. It is the heart issues that matter the most to Him.

Our passage today takes us to a weak, sickly, tired and broke woman who has been on a long, one way journey that has not been pleasant. Mark tells us that she has spent all the money she had on doctors and had only gotten worse, not better. He also tells us that she has endured many physicians. When a person is sick, really sick, there is much enduring. There are tests and probing and remedies and medicines that can be very painful and disgusting. Some of the early medical theories would make most of us run the other way. There was a medicine that was made from the dung of a white donkey. I'm serious. They did things with the eggs of an ostrich that was supposed to make one better. It didn't. This woman, broke, sick, not feeling well, getting worse, endured much. I don't blame the docs. In their times, they did what they could. Even today, there are limits at what they can do. In her condition, this woman would not be allowed in the Temple. She was considered unclean. Add to that, many speculated that long term diseases were punishment for sins and the area where you are affected was directly tied to your sin. Rumors would have floated around about her. Her problem was a personal and private thing. It was not something that you shared with anyone.

Jesus is in town. He is passing through the streets. He is being led to the home of a synagogue official. Things are not well at home. The official's twelve year old daughter is gravely ill. She is dying. The dad, the synagogue official, drops all prejudices about Jesus, all concerns about image and rushes towards Jesus, bows before Him in public and begs Him to come save his little girl. There is a massive crowd.

(OVER)

They are hurrying through the village streets when our verse takes place. An unnamed woman, coming behind Jesus, reaches out and touches His garment. Two immediately take place. First, the woman is immediately cured. Just like that. No words spoken. No potions. Nothing. Just a touch. Second, Jesus immediately knew what happened. He stops. He asks who touched Him. He knew. He did this on purpose.

The apostles are amazed at that question by the Lord. The crowd is thick and tight. Everyone was bumping into everyone. It's like being squeezed in tightly on a subway. Hold your breath and hang on! But Jesus realized that there was one touch that was different. There was a touch of faith. Someone touched Jesus on purpose. Someone touched to be healed. We wonder how many other folks bumped into Jesus that had health issues, but they remained sick. Their touch wasn't by faith.

Jesus turns and talks to this woman. Face to face. Now everyone knows. She was trying to be secretive. She wanted to touch, be healed and blend back into the crowd unnoticed. She didn't ask Jesus, she took. Would He shame her? Would He make her illness return? Would He rebuke her? No, not Jesus. He was impressed. Her faith was remarkable. He assured her that it was her faith that made her well. It wasn't the garments. Jesus wasn't wearing magical clothes. Her faith in Christ made her well. She believed.

I like this story. I think many of us are like this woman. She had an issue of blood. We have issues of sin. We have issues of family problems. We have issues of turmoil. We are a bit afraid. We don't know what the Lord's reaction will be. We would like to slip up behind Him, and just reach out and touch Him. He doesn't want us to be afraid. He wants us to come to Him. In their conversation, this woman, now face to face with Jesus, bows, just like the synagogue official did. She believed. She was healed.

I wonder if we doubt that the Lord can forgive us. We have made wrong choices. We continue to repeat the same sin, over and over. We are weak, sickly and have tried everything but nothing seems to work. For some, we've only gotten worse. Fear and doubt can lead us to believe that there is no hope. We are never getting better. For some, they quit. They throw in the towel, quit fighting temptation and surrender to Satan. They are gone.

There is nothing in the text that tells us why this woman believed just a touch was all that was necessary. No one else seems to do this in the Gospels. She knew who Jesus was. She didn't touch Peter. She didn't think John had the power. She knew it was Jesus. She knew others had been cured. No one else in the Gospels seems to have what she had. Lepers were cured. Demons were cast out. The blind received their sight. The deaf could hear. But an issue of blood? This was a first. She believed. Her faith led her to the streets. She made her way through that massive crowd. She followed. She got the nerve and then reached out her hand. She touched. The touch of faith.

Yes, as the children sing, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me. When we reach out in faith, Jesus can change things like no one else can. Jesus can forgive. Jesus can give you a new life. Jesus can help you conquer the temptations in your life. Jesus can bring life to a dead marriage. Jesus can heal a broken relationship in the family. But mostly, Jesus can save your soul.

It take faith on our part. Not just saying, "I think Jesus can help me." It's getting out of the house. It's fighting the crowds. It's making your way to Jesus. It's reaching out and touching the Lord. The touch of faith.

Incredible faith. This woman, as far as we know, did not fight battles. She slew no giants. She hid no spies. She didn't raise a preacher. She didn't do many great things that we often expect from faith. She believed in the Lord. She wanted to be well. Simple. Incredible. Amazing.

Would you have done that? Could you do that? Are you willing to turn your life over to the Lord? Are you willing to believe that He is the Lord and that He can make a difference in your life?

The touch of faith...so simple and yet so incredible.

Roger Shouse

