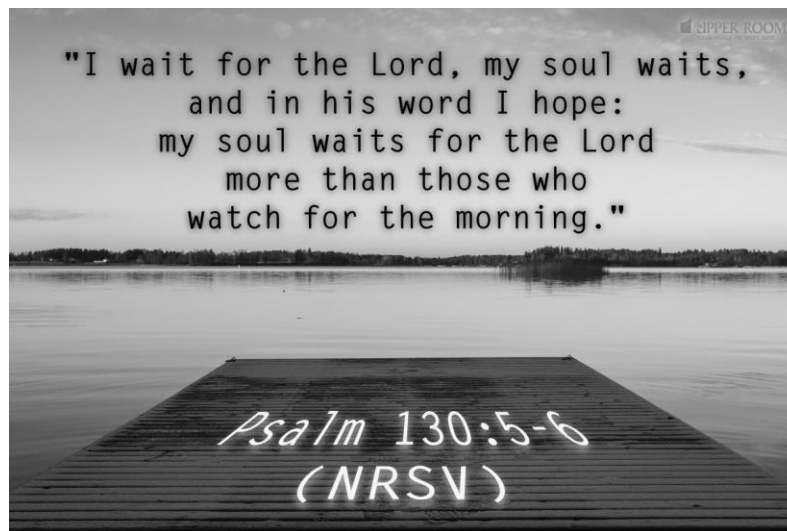


HEALING TOUCH



Scripture:

Psalm 130:1-6

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. ²Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? ⁴But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

Mark 5:25-34

Introduction

Jesus is on his way to heal Jairus' daughter. She was the dying child of Jairus, a Jewish temple leader. The crowd is urging Jesus onward towards Jairus' home because Jairus is pretty close to the top of the social ladder there. But on the way, Jesus is interrupted by an un-named woman who is close to the bottom rung of the social ladder. Jesus stops even though the crowd is urgently trying to get him to ignore her. Listen now for the word of God:

²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



HEALING TOUCH

Let's see what that might have looked like back in the days of Jesus:

<https://youtu.be/yArWsPS1ZU8?t=5m52s>

Jesus' journey to Jairus' house was interrupted by an unnamed woman who approached Jesus secretly. She hoped he would not notice, but she trusted that if she just touched his cloak she would be well.

Notice this is the one and only time in all of Jesus' healings where he doesn't do the touching. The woman did the touching. She reaches out, she acts boldly and she initiates the healing.

This was a fearless woman. As one who was considered "impure and unclean," (Leviticus 15:25-30) she had been cut off from the religious community that provided a social safety net. So she must have felt she had no choice but to act daringly while Jesus was passing by.

She was at a point of desperation. The Bible says that for twelve years she had "suffered a lot" under the care of the medical practitioners. (Mark 5:26) The "suffering" isn't explained but we can imagine how awful it must have been to bleed for twelve years and to also suffer the severe social scorn.

She faithfully realized that not only touching *Jesus* but touching *only his clothes* would provide healing. She trusted God's power but was afraid that if she publicly asked for healing she might be called unclean and the crowd would attack her for contaminating Jesus. Despite being on a mission to heal the child of a temple leader, Jesus took the time to get to know the woman who had been suffering for so long.

TRUTH AND FAITH

Not only was this woman desperate but she was honest and truthful when Jesus asked who touched him. She might have been expecting punishment for touching Jesus since she was publicly designated as "unclean."

But instead of punishment, his response to her truthfulness provided further healing, "Daughter, he said, your faith has made you well!" Wow, just consider for a moment what an impact those words must have had on her life. Truth and faith go together.

We don't hear about this woman again, but I imagine she became one of his followers since Jesus had an entourage following him throughout his ministry that was made up of many others besides the twelve identified disciples.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In the dictionary there are many definitions for touch. The first two are have to do with making contact or manipulating an object. But the third definition is: "have an effect on; make a difference to." Jesus was especially effective at this kind of touch.

Have you considered how you have an effect or how you make a difference to others, those of your family and friends, but also, how do you make a difference, how do you "touch" the strangers that come in contact with you each day?

How do you make a difference for the people in the stories in the news that break your heart? We say things like: that story was "touching," meaning it had an emotional impact on us. Where in your life story are you having a spiritual emotional impact on others? Prayer is a form of spiritual touch.

EMPATHY

So is empathy. Melissa McCarthy's story was in People magazine recently. She is a very successful actress now and with her husband as the director they have made four popular movies together in recent years.

Reading Melissa's story had an impact on me. I found the way she teaches their daughters how to handle negativity very touching.

When she first appeared in Hollywood, she was bullied for being plus sized, so she developed an effective empathic way of handling the negative comments. Even to this day, if someone says something mean about her in the news media or on Twitter, etc, she tells herself: "That person is having a bad day!" Or "That person has been through some bad times and must be still in the midst of them."

She focuses her mind on the sadness in the life of the mean person rather than letting them make her sad. McCarthy dismisses the negative and cruel

criticisms by telling herself: That bully is passing along her own miserable feelings of sadness to others. But I bet I'm not the only person they are behaving this way towards. "I am not going to let them ruin my day, ... but I hope they get help somehow." She teaches her two daughters to "root for the bullies to find joy," because they must not have real joy in their lives so they want to make others miserable, too. She remembers that if someone is being mean it is probably because they are deeply unhappy.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

That is truly the root of the meaning of 'love your neighbor as yourself.' If you don't love yourself, you can't sincerely love your neighbor. If you hate yourself, you probably are going to show hate to your neighbor or to strangers in some way. Try to walk in their shoes.

Jesus was well loved by his parents and his deep connection to God's love made it easy for him to look beyond the anti-social behaviors of others to the heart of people. He touched people at the heart of their souls and healed them in body, mind, and spirit by loving them unconditionally.

A METHOD OF HANDLING CONFLICT

I am doing some pre-marriage counseling leading up to a wedding in August. When we discussed how they handle conflict, I explained a method I was taught to defuse an angry argument. It involves touch.

It goes like this: when you are mad at your spouse, face each other, hold both hands, and then talk calmly about what is upsetting you. Set a timer. First one talks for two minutes, then switch and the other gets to talk. But you hold hands the whole time. Think that would work for you? They find that the argument is much shorter when this touching method is used for communicating. Try it sometime. If someone is mad at you, ask them to face you and hold your hands and see how long they stay mad. They will probably start laughing right away!

TOUCH IS IMPORTANT

Touch is such an important aspect of nurturing that it is essential for a child to grow in a physically and mentally healthy way. When a child loses his mother in his younger years, one of the most

difficult parts of that separation is the lack of nurturing touch the child needs to develop.

That is why I am so upset that our nation separated so many young children from their parents. Want to create a monster? Separate a young child from his mother in a traumatic way and that child will grow up to have some form of mental and/or physical health problem. Even if they are returned in a few weeks, the trauma to their nervous systems is long lasting. Our president was separated at age ten.

MONKEY STUDIES

Monkey studies show us what happens when youngsters are separated from their mothers at a young age. The famous Harlow Study in 1950 found that deprivation of touch from their mothers had long-term mental affects on the monkeys' behavior and physically they didn't mature normally. They also found that baby monkeys yearned for physical touch more than food, and if they had to choose, they always chose touch over food.

RECLAIMING JESUS

I am in touch with a social justice group of theologians called Reclaiming Jesus. They created a statement called Suffer the Little Children: the separation of immigrant children from their parents is not biblical. What is biblical, they say, is in Matthew 25 where it explains how you are to treat a stranger the same as if you were treating Jesus.

The statement goes on to say that the tearing of children, including infants and toddlers, away from their mothers and fathers is a form of child abuse and will cause irreparable harm. And it is contradictory to every teaching of Jesus Christ.

In their own statement the Conference of Catholic Bishops declared that "the separating of babies from their mothers is immoral." Then they recalled that Romans 13 has been misused in the past to rationalize the practice of breaking up the families of slaves and selling the children off

separately. They also recalled that Native Americans were kidnapped from their parents and sent off to white schools up until the 1960's.

Like the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, the families making treacherous journeys to seek refuge in the US are desperate. These families seeking asylum face extreme violence, persecution and poverty in their home countries. You cannot deter people who are fleeing for their lives, even with policies as cruel as taking children away from their parents.

People who come to our borders only hope to give their children a chance. We should be meeting these people with compassion and helping them get to the right asylum office so they won't be arrested for making an illegal crossing.

OUR GOVERNMENT'S SEPARATION POLICY

An immigration lawyer, Lauren Dasse, who has seen the impact of our government's separation policy on the children said, "Although the policy is now reversed, in the meantime, children who already were separated are still crying out for their parents. Child welfare experts have equated this cruel practice to torture, citing irreparable damage and toxic stress on young brains. Dasse said, "I saw a five-month-old baby in detention. The harm to him cannot be undone."

We must protest the abuse of children, and like the woman who touched Jesus cloak and was made well, we must also act and seek healing, but not just for us, but also on behalf of the children who so desperately need the healing touch of their parents.

We must also pray. Here is a prayer poem by Rabbi Paul Kipnes who leads a Jewish congregation in Calabasas. He is also the author of a book on Jewish Spiritual Parenting. This is a:

PRAYER FOR WHEN CHILDREN ARE FORCIBLY SEPARATED FROM PARENTS

**Pray for the children
The ones who were taken away
And pray for the leaders
Whose moral compasses have gone astray**

**Pray for the kids
Who wallow in their cages
And pray for the guards
Whose work sullies their wages**

**Pray for the dads
Who are now childless and under arrest
And pray for the moms
Whose kids were ripped
right from their breasts**

**Pray for the parents
Away from their children day and night
And pray for our government
Which desperately needs to see the light**

**Pray for the religious
Who use the Bible to
justify pulling children from their parents
They profane God's name**

**Pray for the people
Who avert their eyes from this travesty
And pray for government
Which employs this immoral strategy
But mostly,
Pray for the children
Created in the image of God
And pray for us all
As we all sufferthis 4th of July.**

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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