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*The Need for and the Power of Touch*

*Psalm 147:1-11, Mark 5:24b-34*

She touches him – She touches Jesus

 at least she touches Jesus cloak – his outer garment!

If anyone has seen her do it

 they are aghast - appalled!

Oh the shame of it - the scandal!

How could she??????

This woman – with no name (at least her name is not revealed to us)

touches the cloak of Jesus

 even though she knows that in so doing

 she has crossed the religious and cultural boundaries of her community!

That’s why she’s trembling, filled with fear…..

 What she is doing is taboo…..

You see - she is a woman in a patriarchal culture –

that’s why she goes unnamed

Women in her culture

 are supposed to be quiet, modest, unobtrusive – inconspicuous!

Women in her culture must

 never ever talk to – much less touch

a man who is not her husband or son, father or brother

 **That’s forbidden – taboo!**

But this is the least of her worries…

 much more shameful is the fact that

 she is unclean –

because she is hemorrhaging – bleeding~

She remembers learning at a young age

 that when a woman has her menstrual period

 everything she touches becomes unclean – unholy

 and if she bleeds longer than the normal seven days

 the curse of that uncleanliness continues on and on and on

 until the flow of blood stops.

Therefore – this woman with a hemorrhage knows only too well **2**

that she will make Jesus unclean

 by reaching out and touching Jesus’ cloak

 and she is so afraid.

What will Jesus’ think? What will Jesus do to her if he finds out?

But as she says to us: I am desperate - yes desperate!

I have been bleeding, hemorrhaging for 12 years,

 I have been sick and unclean… for 12 years!

**An outcast – untouchable! For 12 Years!!**

I think to myself - I am fortunate - to have inherited some wealth.

It gives me the means to see not just one – but many – physicians.

 And I endure the humiliation of all their poking and prodding

and the adverse side effects from all their remedies.

And I use up all my wealth, all my resources – everything –

 just to see one more physician

 hoping against hope that one of them can heal me.

 But none of them - can help me! **None of them!**

Well you can imagine – with this continual bleeding

 my health is quickly deteriorating.

And here I am – in dire poverty - living on the street - as good as dead!

 **And no one – no one wants to come near me!**

Then I hear about this person Jesus

 the miracles Jesus is performing…

 healing lepers, raising up the paralyzed, casting out demons…

 **and Jesus is coming to my hometown…**

I know I have to see Jesus! **But – and it’s a big BUT>>>**

 I know because I am a woman and an unclean one at that

 that I will never get to see Jesus

But Jesus is my last – my only hope!

 So I devise a plan…I think to myself – when Jesus comes….

 I will melt into the crowd…

 and catch Jesus from behind…

 All I will need to do is touch the garment of this holy person

 and I know that then I will be healed!

 **This I believe with all my heart…**

It is this strong belief **3**

 that gives me the courage to do this

 My faith in this person, Jesus

 overcomes all my fears….

I say to myself, “I can do this –

 and I melt into the crowd and touch Jesus’ cloak,

And I think - I have succeeded in doing this unnoticed

 because no one ridicules me or throws stones at me,

 which they surely would have done if they had seen me.

**But alas**  - Jesus knows that someone touched him!

 Jesus feels the touch.

And He feels the divine love and healing power within him -

 going out from him - into me – to heal me.

 And then – Jesus stops -

 Even though Jesus is hurrying on his way

to heal Jarius’ daughter, who is dying,

 Nevertheless – Jesus stops

and Jesus refuses to go on –

until he finds out who touched him..

 **Oh no – I’m in trouble now!!!**

What will Jesus do to me - a woman –

and an unclean one at that - who has touched him?

 **Who is the one who touched me? – says Jesus**

What should I do? What shall I say???

Filled with fear and trembling - I decide I must come out from hiding

 because I feel I owe it to Jesus

 – since Jesus is the one who healed me!

In great humiliation and shame

 I fall at Jesus feet and tell Jesus my story..

My story of suffering, My story of desperation –

My story of crossing cultural and religious boundaries…

At Jesus’ feet – I look up into the eyes of Jesus

and I can see and feel that Jesus’ heart –

is filled with great compassion for me.

**Jesus Spirit is touching my spirit.**

It is clear that Jesus deeply loves me **4**

 for he addresses me as – daughter –

Yes – addresses me as daughter - as if I’m a member of his family.

Clearly Jesus is not offended

 by my touching him – even though I’m a woman and I’m unclean.

To the contrary – Jesus seems glad that I touched him

 and Jesus is not going to let me melt away into the crowd.

Jesus refuses to go on his way without first seeing me face to face

 Jesus wants to let me know how much he loves me

 Jesus wants to heal my heart – as well as my body –

Jesus wants to make me whole.

I touched Jesus – and Jesus touched me back –

 **and I still can feel the touch of Jesus’ love in my heart.**

**Oh - the Power of that Divine/Human Touch of Love!**

Touch is the first sense we experience in our mother’s womb.

 As our mother’s heart beats, the beating of her heart

 moves the amniotic fluid to touch us – to soothe us

And while we’re still in the womb

we also feel the touch of our mother massaging us

 loving us, calming us in the womb -----

as she rubs her stomach ….. Father’s do this too!

And when the child is born - we love that new born child through

 human touch – physical and spiritual touch

 With a warm embrace - we hold the child close to us.

 cuddling and patting the child,

rubbing their back, their arms,

kissing their cheeks, their nose, their toes,

 holding their tiny hands.

Touch is also a part of our playing with our children

 Pat-a-cake, high five, tickling, wrestling, playing tag

And of course there are always hugs in abundance for our children –

even our grown children …

Just think about how much we express **5**

 our love for our children and grandchildren through human touch.

Human Touch can express so much more

**than mere words can say.**

And as psychologists tell us…

Touch is essential for a child to live and grow and thrive.

 Without that loving human touch

 children become lethargic and their

 growth is stunted –

 Without that loving human touch

a sense of despair and a lack of trust

 grows in the heart of the child

 causing grave problems – such as….

anti-social behaviors and sometimes triggering mental illness.

Studies have shown that the right kind of touch – a loving touch

 makes us feel loved, makes us feel special, makes us feel good!

**The Loving Touch**

Creates a bond between us

 and strengthens our relationships.

 That Loving Touch also

 calms our fears,

 comforts and consoles us

 reassures us and encourages us

and therefore it lowers our blood pressure

and boosts our immune system. Did you know that?

A Loving Touch

 lifts us up and get us back on our feet,

 clears our mind, improves our memory, enhances our performance..

 and gives to us the gift of new life!

**WOW!!! THE GIFT OF HUMAN TOUCH!**

 The Gift of Touch also conveys how we are feeling:

 as Psychologist Rick Chillot writes:

***Sometimes I’ll touch my wife and can tell instantly* –**

 ***even if my eyes are closed – that she’s stressed”***

**Yes – through touch we can learn how someone else feels**

 **and also convey how we feel..**

Through the urgency of the woman’s touch – **6**

Jesus learns of her desperation

Through her touch he feels her great need for healing…

 and immediately the touch of Jesus’ love and compassion

 flows out through Jesus into her – healing her.

Jesus and the woman touch each other:

When she touches Jesus – the divine Love in Jesus touches her.

We’re never too old to give or receive –

 the gift of a loving touch

 a hug, a backrub,

or just the touch of a hand or arm or shoulder

That Gift of Touch

aids healing,

 soothes suffering

 takes away sadness

 lightens burdens

 brings joy to the lonely heart.

Oh – how we have missed that loving, healing physical touch

 these past 2 ½ years as we have taken precautions

 to mitigate the spread of COVID-19

But we found ways to compensate

ways to touch the spirit of others with love

 through Zoom gatherings and letters and cards and phone calls

 and parade visits outside a person’s home.

Indeed, we dwell in the Luminous Web of the Divine Spirit,

 Interconnected by the Spirit!

 We are a spiritual community as well as a physical community.

And our spirit of love

is able to reach out and touch the spirit of others –

through an invisible energy of love

 touching their heart.

 And their spirit responds in love!

**The Gift, The Power of –**

**The Divine/Human Touch of Love!**

 **Conveyed through you and me!**