



**A**ND a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, <sup>44</sup> Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, *Who touched me?* When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? <sup>46</sup> And Jesus said, *Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.* <sup>47</sup> And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. <sup>48</sup> And he said unto her, *Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.* (Luke 8:43-48)

Traveling the cities of Galilee in this text, the Lord preached the Word as a sower widely broadcasting his seed. As is always the case, the Word of God is efficacious to the soul, and powerful in the healing of the body. Many people were healed during this circuit of preaching and visitation.

You may remember these words taken from the Invitation to the Lord's Supper of the Communion Service: "Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling." We recognize the spiritual Presence of the Lord at His Table of Communion. His spiritual Presence is stronger than any physical Presence could be because His Spirit can be right beside, and in, every individual worshipper at the Table. Our Lord is a Lord who is always near those who call upon Him in faith and trust. "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." (Psalm 145:18) and, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb 10:19-22)

Being near to Christ is the comfort of the saints. Even in moments when faith may fail, as with the two men on the Emmaus Road, He is with us. He knows our doubts and pains, and, if we are persevering, He will open our eyes to His Presence and Love. He is the Lord whose TOUCH is a Balm. When we reach out in desperation to touch Him, it may happen that He will touch us in a more profound measure.

The lead text today recounts the story of a chronically ill woman who had been afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve long years. It is perhaps true that her hopes and dreams for a happy family life were shattered by this affliction. Moreover, this poor lady had spent all her life's savings on doctors whose cures not only failed to give relief, but the woman's condition only grew worse. Such are *the clouds that return after the rain* in the common fare of life.

### **The Setting**

Our Lord had been traveling a circuit of towns and cities in Galilee when He arrived at this venue. Every place He had visited saw many souls healed of leprosy, blindness, lameness, and many other ailments. Word had traveled like wildfire. Herod's spies had also reported all – so even the Jewish rulers were keeping a close account on the travels and actions of our Lord. Throngs of people, some curious, some desiring healing favors, and some out of genuine love and loyalty crowded about our Lord as He moved down the dusty street of the city.

### **The Particular Event (of the Woman)**

The woman who is the subject of the text had heard of all that Jesus had done in working miracles of healing. Owing to her illness, travel of any distance at all was tortuous. She spent many lonely hours suffering alone. But, now, there was a new hope in the air. She had heard rumors on the street of Jesus and how He healed simply by the touch of His hand, or the Word of His mouth. Slowly, a growing hope began to materialize in her oppressed heart – “What if I could come near to Jesus? I am unworthy to make any open request of such a Lord as He but, surely, a mere touch of His garment would suffice to heal me!”

As she dwelt on these hopes and dreams, she heard murmurs from the street below about this Jesus who, it was rumored, was headed for her very neighborhood. By the way, this was not by unforeseen accident. Our Lord had been aware of this woman's ailment throughout the entire twelve years of her affliction. Her condition was reserved for a testimony to us, and to countless others, of the miraculous works and compassion of a Lord who has been called in bygone days, “Beerlahairoi – the Lord who seest me!” Well, He is still the Lord who seest me, and all who believe, regardless our place or predicament.

Great kings and princes who grant favors do not fail of crowds of petitioners seeking relief of an abundance of problems. But our Lord Jesus surpassed these figures in grandeur, for He could offer healings which they could not do. So, as our Lord came down the narrow street near the woman's house, there were throngs of people around Him, so much so that any open approach to Him would have been impossible. Here is the way Mark describes the occasion: *And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.* (Mark 5:25-29)

There is a separate lesson for us in considering the 'press' of humanity about our Lord Jesus. Many knew Him to be their Master and Lord, yet they were unwilling to make way for a poor distraught woman to approach for healing. In churches today, many are so proud and boastful of their 'positions' in the church that they crowd out the humble seeker who is trying to draw near, by faith, to Christ.

The woman reckons on her possibilities and determines to penetrate the crowd at the lowest level. Pushing and bustling with those between her and the Lord, she finally is close enough to crawl among the dusty feet of the crowd for a near enough vantage point to reach out and touch – not Jesus – but only the hem of His garment. This she does and suddenly, a shiver went through her body! Blood rushed to her face as she blushed with joy. There was no question in the woman's mind that she had been totally and miraculously healed. She looked at her formerly pale hands and beheld the rosy color of healthy skin and blood tone. She forgot her place. She was overcome with joy! In Alabama, a term that might describe the occasion might be, "She was beside herself!" But now a new dread comes over the woman's soul as the Master turns about and asks "*Who touched me?*" The woman fears her audacity may have provoked anger. All present denied touching the Lord including Peter. Many of those among the throng had touched Jesus in the bustle, but it was in a different way. This touch was different for it came out of desperate faith.

Jesus is the reservoir of Life and Love. When the woman touched Him, He felt healing virtue pass from that endless reservoir. In fact, He already knew who touched Him, but He chooses for us to know the magnitude of the touch and the occasion brought on by this joyous touch. You will remember the Centurion whose servant was sick unto death whom the Lord healed from a distance without seeing. The touch of His garment was not what healed the woman – it was the touch of His Heart by the woman's faith. "*And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.*" In truth, it was not the woman who touched Jesus, but Jesus who touched the woman with healing power. "*And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.*" There was no healthier woman in all of Galilee who left the presence of the Lord that day. Not only was her issue of blood dried up, she was made whole in both body and soul. That is the way the Lord heals. He left that scene full of joy and love.

The love and power of God knows no geographical bounds. Neither does that faith that rises to believing faith. That God, who sees us, can behold us from the infinite distance of Heaven, and yet be right beside us at the same time. He spoke the earth, and all that is in it, into being from the distant pavilions of Heaven. He sees us in our wilderness moments, as well as in our triumphant moments when faith is affirmed miraculously by answered prayer.

Are you lonely? Is there no one to give you solace or comfort? Is your room dark with sorrow? Crawl out of that sad place and follow the Lord. You may, perchance, touch His garment, but more importantly, be touched by His love and healing compassion. Misery is a choice. We can be miserable apart from Jesus, or we can be joyful in the midst of the storm with our Lord abating the wind and waves as He teaches us to walk on the turbulent waters.