

**Series:** Mother's Day 2023

**Title:** A Woman Who Was Healed by Jesus

**Text:** Mark 5:25-34

**Date:** May 14, 2023

### **Verse 25**

Mark 5:25 tells of a woman who sought healing from Jesus. She approached Jesus while he was in route to heal another individual, the daughter of “one of the rulers of the synagogue...Jairus” (Mark 5:22). Within Mark 5:21-43, Jesus coupled two healing stories together. In Mark 5:25-34, he told of the way Jesus healed a woman. The story of Jarius' daughter is found within Mark 5:21-24 and 35-43. It seems Mark intentionally shared the healing stories in tandem in order to highlight common themes from the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Together, both miraculous feats served as signs and wonders (Hebrews 2:3-4) to confirm Jesus' Messianic identity (Isaiah 53:4).

In regard to the woman's healing, Mark described her ailment in verse 25 by saying, “And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years...” (Mark 5:25). The exact circumstances involved with the woman's illness are unknown to us. However, it does seem she suffered from some sort of internal bleeding and hemorrhaging.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps she suffered from uterine bleeding.<sup>3</sup> Because of the Mosaic Law's instruction in Leviticus 15:25, such a condition would have rendered the woman ceremonially unclean. Her ailment would have kept her from the Temple complex and from worshipping in the presence of God.

The woman's condition was dire indeed. Mark noted the way she had suffered from her condition for twelve years. Notice a parallel between her story and the story concerning Jarius' daughter. While the woman had struggled with the issue of blood for twelve years, Jarius' daughter was twelve years of age (Mark 5:42). It seems there was some sort of significance in the age of the girl and the duration of the woman's sickness. Maybe Jesus used the timeframe of the woman's sickness to encourage the father of the dead girl.<sup>4</sup>

Another possible rationale behind the timeframe is this — perhaps there was an allusion to the Lord's Covenant of Redemption. Though the Lord used the Twelve tribes of Israel to deliver the promised Seed of David (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-9; 2 Samuel 7:13-16), He also raised up twelve apostles to declare the truth of the gospel. Emphasis is placed on the “twelves” of the Old and New Testaments in Revelation 4:4. Perhaps Mark wanted to depict Jesus' New Covenant work amongst Gentiles through

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, James A. *The New American Commentary: Mark, Vol. 23.* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Mark, Volume 2.* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 124.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers Jr., Cleon and Cleon Rogers III. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ferguson, Sinclair. *Let's Study Mark.* (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 76.

the dual use of the number. Such seems likely, since the preceding passage provided an account of Jesus ministering amongst non-Jews (Mark 5:1-20).

### **Verse 26**

Mark continued his description of the woman who sought healing by saying she "... had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse" (Mark 5:26). In the first-century Jewish world, one would have visited his or her local synagogue for help with medical conditions (James 5:14). The Talmud, a foundational rabbinical text, provides an account of some of the heinous and horrific remedies rabbis often prescribed under such situations.<sup>5</sup> The woman in our text had likely suffered great physical pain from her condition. She likely also suffered from complications related to ill-advised treatments. In addition, she surely endured untold emotional duress because of all her troubles.

Mark said the woman "had spent all that she had" on seeking remedies. As she approached Jesus, she was completely helpless. Her physical body was broken and her financial state was bankrupt. Despite all of her attempts at finding a remedy, the woman was "...no better but rather grew worse." Mark used a play on words within the Greek of the New Testament. The word for "better" is one that was used for a business profit in the ancient world.<sup>6</sup> It seems Mark intended to portray physicians making a profit off of the woman while simultaneously portraying the woman as receiving no profit at all.

Mark's intent in verse 26 was to portray the helplessness of the woman who sought help and healing from Jesus. She stands as a memorial to the condition of humanity without Christ. Sin is like a sickness that cannot be cured through any means other than the cross of Christ. Deliverance from the curse of sin is only found in Jesus. Apart from Him, all are morally bankrupt victims of a spiritual disease.

### **Verse 27**

Mark described the way the woman approached Jesus for help, saying, "She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment" (Mark 5:27). According to ancient superstition, the essence of a person exuded from his or her clothing. Even a person's shadow could transfer parts of his or her nature. When Alexander the Great roamed the earth, it was believed that the act of touching him would result in a transfer of power.<sup>7</sup> If one wanted help or healing from a person, it was believed that physical contact with the person would help. It was even believed that objects belonging to the person could transfer his or her nature.

A similar superstition also existed amongst the Jews. Based upon a misinterpretation of Exodus 29:37, it was believed that holiness and power could be transferred to a person via physical touch. See Haggai 2:10-14 for an instance in which the Lord rebuked His people for a faulty perspective concerning these things.

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<sup>5</sup> Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 299.

<sup>6</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Mark*. (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 27.

Despite the warning of the prophet, the superstition is seen as being present in some of the healing accounts presented in the book of Acts (Acts 5:15; 19:12). It will also be seen again in the next chapter of Mark (6:56).<sup>8</sup>

### **Verse 28**

In Mark 5:28, Mark described the thought process the woman had as she approached Jesus. He said, “For she said, ‘If I touch even his garments, I will be made well’” (Mark 5:28). It seems the woman operated according to the mystical notions of her day to some degree. She expected to receive healing through a mere touch of Jesus. The verbiage of Mark 5:27 contained a finite verb that depicted the woman taking decisive action.<sup>9</sup> Despite the woman’s superstitious approach to our Lord, her faith was honored and she was healed. Her action reveals that a faith-filled pursuit of Jesus brings healing and restoration. Even if one doesn’t have a complete understanding of Jesus, one can benefit from even the most elementary faith in Him. In all of life’s seasons, struggles, and storms, we should be looking to Jesus for the hope and help we need. The Bible urges us to be “... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

### **Verse 29**

Mark described the result of the woman’s contact with Jesus by saying, “And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease” (Mark 5:29). According to the Law of Moses, the woman’s touch should have made Jesus ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:27). However, because He was holy God, contact with Jesus had the reverse affect. The woman was healed and she became spiritually clean before the Lord.

In the original language of the New Testament, Mark used a perfect tense verb. His language depicted a complete action with permanent results. When Jesus restores a person, whether physically or spiritually, He does so in an irrevocable fashion. He enacts lasting change.

Notice that Jesus’ healing of the woman was immediate. Just as the Lord created light, land, universes, stars, the moon, the sun, vegetation on Earth, animals, birds, and fish in an instant (Genesis 1:3-25), He recreated the woman’s physical body in an instant. The woman’s previous attempts at healing were vain. One touch from Jesus brought healing, instantaneous healing.

The last word of verse 29 was signifiant. The gospel writer gave one last passing reference to the woman’s ailment. He spoke of how “...she was healed of her disease.” The word for disease was a unique one. It was one that literally meant “to whip,” “to lash,” or “to scourge.” It was often used of public beatings. As used by Mark, it highlighted the way the woman’s sickness had previously subjected her to great public shame.<sup>10</sup> For twelve years, the woman had been known as the sickly one

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<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Schnabel, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Edwards, 163.

who was barred from public worship in the Temple complex. A touch from Jesus reversed her illness, but it also erased her shame. She was physically restored, but she was also welcomed to worship the Lord and enjoy the community of God's people.

The woman's healing provides us with a beautiful picture of what's involved in Christian salvation. The work of Christ heals God's people of all spiritual sickness. Sins are forgiven and one is made new by the Spirit of God. One is released from the penalty of spiritual and physical death (Genesis 2:17; 1 Corinthians 15:22). In addition, all of the shame that accompanies sin (Genesis 3:10) is erased!

### **Verse 30**

Mark described Jesus' response to the woman's touch, saying, "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments?'" (Mark 5:30). It is important to note that power did not emanate from Jesus' clothing, as ancient superstitions often maintained. Instead, power went "out from" Jesus. Supernatural, healing power was vested within Jesus Himself, not His clothes, His shadow, or an artifact of personal belonging.

The fact that Jesus sensed power exiting from His person was a testament to His fully human and fully divine nature. Theologians use the label "Hypostatic Union" to refer to Jesus' nature as God the Son Incarnate. From eternity, Jesus has existed as fully God, one member of the Trinity. Through His incarnation, Jesus embraced humanity. While on Earth, He was fully God and fully man. Because of His humanity, Jesus endured a full range of human experiences on our behalf. Remember His need for sleep in Mark 4:38.

While experiencing certain human limitations, Jesus maintained full divinity. It was His divinity that provided healing for the woman in our text. However, His humanity perceived the expulsion of power. Jesus' experience provides a reminder of the form He assumed through the incarnation. When He came to Earth, He retained fully divinity, but He also assumed full humanity. Such was necessary for our salvation.

Because He was fully God, Jesus had a full knowledge of who touched Him. Mark previously depicted the Lord as having divine insight and understanding (Mark 2:8). In our current text, Jesus didn't ask who touched Him for His own knowledge. His question was aimed *at* the woman and it was designed *for* the woman.

As with all other healing episodes, Jesus wanted to give the woman an opportunity to openly profess her allegiance to Jesus. When the demoniac of Decapolis was healed in the preceding passage in Mark 5, Jesus instructed the man to go and report his healing to others. Now, in Mark 5:30, Jesus gave the woman who touched Him an opportunity to similarly profess her faith in the Messiah. In doing so, He set a precedent for all who are healed by Him, whether physically or spiritually. All of God's children are called to publicly acknowledge Jesus as savior. Later in Mark's gospel, Jesus would say, "...whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). After His resurrection, He would instruct His disciples, saying, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Jesus' question also gave occasion for the woman's shame to be erased. Remember, a discharge of blood would have prohibited such a woman from public worship in the Temple complex (Leviticus 15:25). In giving public attention to her healing, Jesus provided her with an opportunity to experience restoration to her community. She had likely lived in isolation and loneliness for years. The reversal of her shame stands as a testament to the way the gospel provides transformation. Whereas Adam's first transgression brought sin and shame to all of humanity (Genesis 3:1-7), Christ's work brought about a reversal of such things. The Bible says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2).

### **Verse 31**

In response to Jesus' question, the Twelve said, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" (Mark 5:31). It seems there was an air of sarcasm in the disciples' interrogative. For them, it seemed ridiculous that Jesus would ask such a question. According to Mark 5:24, "...a great crowd followed him and thronged about him." Considering the Beatle-mania like atmosphere, it seemed nonsensical that someone could have detected who touched Jesus. Everyone was touching Him and bumping into Him!

Jesus would later encounter more sarcasm in Mark 5:40. In that verse, sarcasm and scorn would come from people who were not His disciples. Our current text reveals that sarcasm is often inadvisable for God's people, especially in matters related to Christ. When it comes to the person and work of Jesus, each should be "... quick to hear, slow to speak..." (James 1:19).

### **Verse 32**

Undeterred by the sarcasm of the Twelve, Jesus sought out the woman who touched Him. Mark said, "And he looked around to see who had done it" (Mark 5:32). The original language of the New Testament depicted a continual action.<sup>11</sup> Apparently Jesus stopped, stood still, turned back and forth, and looked for the person who touched Him. His search continued for quite a while. The scene might have become a bit awkward. Maybe Jesus' sudden change of demeanor silenced the crowd. Everyone waited to see what He was doing. By bringing the raucous crowd to a hush, Jesus provided a prime opportunity for the woman to renounce her shame and publicly profess faith in the Messiah.

Jesus' searching gaze for the woman demonstrated His gracious concern for all His people. He wanted to personally interact with the woman who touched Him. Though He was busy, and though thousands thronged to see Him, He had time for one destitute, societal outcast. Mark's account teaches us that Jesus is all-powerful, while also being personal. Our Lord is omniscient and omnipotent, but He is also omnibenevolent. He said, "All authority...has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18), but He also said, "Abide in me" (John 15:4). The same eyes that stared in anger at religious hypocrites (Mark 3:5) also wept at the grief of two women who lost a brother to death

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<sup>11</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 77.

(John 11:35). The same hands that cracked a whip on greedy religionists also gathered up little children into His arms (Mark 10:13-16). Jesus is one who is always full of compassion for His people (Mark 6:34)!

### **Verse 33**

Mark 5:33 documented the way the woman came forward and presented herself to Jesus — “But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling....” Why was the woman afraid? She could have been fearful of the large crowd. Years of isolation may have made her scared of large crowds. Having the eyes of such a vast assembly focused on her alone must have been uncomfortable to say the least.

Apart from social phobias, the woman may have had fear of Jesus. Being in the presence of such a man of perceived power would have certainly been intimidating for a first-century woman, especially a woman of low social repute. Additionally, it is possible that the woman expected a rebuke from Jesus. What if He discovered that she had previously had a hemorrhage? According to the Torah, contact with a person who had an issue of blood would render one ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:27). Maybe she feared Jesus would publicly rebuke her if he learned of her condition.

Despite her apprehensions, the woman flung herself on the mercy of Jesus. Mark said she “...fell down before him and told him the whole truth” (Mark 5:33). The original language of the text used jargon that was employed in judicial proceedings of the ancient world.<sup>12</sup> Because of what follows in Mark 5:34, it is not unreasonable to see the woman’s prostrate position before the Lord as involving a confession of sin. Yes, she undoubtedly told him about her sickness and her rationale for touching Him, but she also likely told of her sinful state and of her need for forgiveness. She expressed a sense of dependency on the Lord’s mercy and grace.

### **Verse 34**

In response to the woman’s humble confession, the Lord granted salvation. Though she had been physically healed, she also experienced spiritual healing. Jesus said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease” (Mark 5:34). The word “daughter” was one used for an affectionate address. It was a term of endearment. Jesus’ choice of words in speaking to such a destitute woman was remarkable, especially when one considers the status given to women in the first-century world.

Our Lord indicated that it was the woman’s “faith” that made her well. She was healed both physically and spiritually because of her trust in Jesus. It was not physical contact that brought about her conversion. It was her spiritual faith.

Interestingly, the word translated “healed” in verse 34 is one that often meant “to save.” It carried ideas of deliverance. As used in our present verse, the term depicted the way the Lord brought salvation to both the woman’s physical body and spiritual soul.

After pronouncing salvation, Jesus told the woman to “go in peace.” Though the woman had been troubled by shame and anxiety for years, she obtained peace of

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<sup>12</sup> Schnabel, 127.

mind and soul through her interaction with Jesus. The peace in view was related to the Hebrew concept of shalom. For first-century Jews, peace involved much more than the absence of war. It involved a total sense of well-being, a fully functional, personal wholeness accompanied by a vibrant sense of community life.<sup>13</sup> Used of Christian salvation, the term speaks of a status of wholeness and well-being because of a right relationship with God.<sup>14</sup>

The inclusion of words like “healed” and “peace” in Mark 8:34 revealed that the woman’s healing was intended to serve as a sign and wonder that depicted realities related to Christian salvation (Hebrews 2:3). Both terms are used elsewhere in the New Testament to speak of the soul salvation one experiences through Christ. In Romans 5:10, Paul said, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” In Romans 5:1, he said, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>13</sup> Schnabel, 127.

<sup>14</sup> Brooks, 28.