



## THE POWER OF TOUCH

MARK 5:21-43

The story of the cure of the woman with the haemorrhage takes place while Jesus is on his way to the house of Jairus, where he restores Jairus' daughter to life.

The woman with the haemorrhage is suffering unbelievably. She has been bleeding for twelve years. She has gone from one doctor to another, spending all her money on useless treatments. She is broke and desperate.

In Jesus' day, blood was considered to be a person's life-force. People who bled were avoided and isolated out of fear of ritual contamination. So, together with the haemorrhaging, the woman was socially isolated within her own community. She had no life and no future.

She has heard about Jesus and, summoning up her faith, she touches his clothes. She is cured instantly. She touches him and she is restored to health. Her life has been given back to her. ■

### SAY

"Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith. Help me to keep on believing and trusting in you. Amen."

### DO

Think about how you touch those close to you – your family, friends, schoolmates, work colleagues. How healing is your touch? Embrace someone close to you today, let them feel the warmth of your love.

### LEARN

Jesus' healing power can overcome all barriers that isolate and imprison us. Jairus was isolated by being part of the religious establishment that opposed Jesus. Yet his love for his daughter triggered within him the courage to cross that barrier and save his daughter. The haemorrhaging woman was isolated by her illness. Yet her desperation for a life in the community led her to touch Jesus in faith. Both were freed.

What are the barriers to freedom in your life? What might it mean for you to hear Jesus say to you today: "Do not fear; just keep on believing"?

### REFLECT

Jesus knew the importance of physical touch. Remember how the fever leaves Peter's mother-in-law as soon as Jesus touches her. His touch alone is sufficient.

Over and over again in the Gospels, the same story is repeated. Jesus meets someone who is ill or has a disability. He touches them, and their health is restored. The blind see, the crippled walk, haemorrhages are cured, even the dead are restored to life. All are made new again through the power of his healing touch.

Jesus' words alone would have done the job but he is tactile. Deliberately tactile. He knows how powerful and healing physical touch can be. Even to touch Jesus' clothes, as the woman with the haemorrhage does, is sufficient to be made whole again.

Jesus' use of the power of touch is an opportunity for us to reflect on how we touch others. It reminds us that we touch

each other in many different ways – not just physically, but through word and gesture also. It reminds us that touch can be positive or negative. It can build up or knock down; it can be constructive and life-enhancing or destructive and life-diminishing.

We can touch someone with a warm hug or embrace or we can touch someone with a slap or a blow or a beating. The statistics tell us that domestic violence and physical and sexual abuse are major problems in our society.

We can touch someone with a word of encouragement or gratitude or love. Or we can touch someone with a word of contempt or anger or abuse. We know that words have the power to wound as deeply as any physical assault. Bullying in schools and in the workplace is endemic, facilitated by social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

We can touch someone with a gesture that shows respect or appreciation or thanks. A thumbs-up, a smile, a nod. Or we can touch someone with a gesture that

shows anger or contempt or impatience. Think of the incidents of road rage or of the snarl of disapproval of someone who is perhaps socially inept or that we look down on.

Jesus' touch gave people life. All he said and did gave people life. He gives us life even now in the Eucharist and the sacraments.

And that's our challenge – to invite Jesus to touch and transform us, in the Eucharist, in the sacraments, in our life of prayer.

Our challenge also is to bring the gentle touch of Jesus to all whose lives touch ours. That all our acts of touch will be acts of love and tenderness and affection. That all the words we use will be gentle and encouraging and constructive. That all the gestures we make will be supportive and uplifting and positive. That all the ways in which we touch others will be life-enhancing and grace-filled, as Jesus' actions were. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

All peoples, clap your hands.  
Cry to God with shouts of joy!

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

O God, who through the grace of adoption  
chose us to be children of light,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may not be wrapped in the darkness  
of error  
but always be seen to stand in the bright light  
of truth.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Death was not God's doing,  
he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the  
living.

To be – for this he created all;  
the world's created things have health in  
them,  
in them no fatal poison can be found,  
and Hades holds no power on earth;  
for virtue is undying.  
Yet God did make man imperishable,  
he made him in the image of his own nature;  
it was the devil's envy that brought death into  
the world,  
as those who are his partners will discover.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 29

Response:

I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me.

1. I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued  
me  
and have not let my enemies rejoice over  
me.  
O Lord, you have raised my soul from the  
dead,  
restored me to life from those who sink  
into the grave. (R.)

2. Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love  
him,  
give thanks to his holy name.

His anger lasts but a moment; his favour  
through life.  
At night there are tears, but joy comes  
with dawn. (R.)

3. The Lord listened and had pity.  
The Lord came to my help.  
For me you have changed my mourning  
into dancing.  
O Lord My God, I will thank you for ever.  
(R.)

**SECOND READING** 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to  
the Corinthians.

You always have the most of everything – of  
faith, of eloquence, of understanding, of  
keenness for any cause, and the biggest  
share of our affection – so we expect you  
to put the most into this work of mercy too.  
Remember how generous the Lord Jesus  
was; he was rich, but he became poor  
for your sake, to make you rich out of his  
poverty. This does not mean that to give  
relief to others you ought to make things  
difficult for yourselves: it is a question of  
balancing what happens to be your surplus  
now against their present need, and one day  
they may have something to spare that will  
supply your own need. That is how we strike  
a balance: as scripture says: The man who  
gathered much had none too much, the man  
who gathered little did not go short.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Your words are spirit, Lord,  
and they are life:  
you have the message of eternal life.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Mark 5:21-43

(For shorter form read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Mark.

>When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the  
other side, a large crowd gathered round  
him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one  
of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus  
by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and  
pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "My little  
daughter is desperately sick. Do come and  
lay your hands on her to make her better and  
save her life." Jesus went with him and a  
large crowd followed him; they were pressing  
all round him.<

Now there was a woman who had suffered  
from a haemorrhage for twelve years; after  
long and painful treatment under various  
doctors, she had spent all she had without  
being any the better for it, in fact, she was  
getting worse. She had heard about Jesus,  
and she came up behind him through the  
crowd and touched his cloak. "If I can touch  
even his clothes," she had told herself "I  
shall be well again." And the source of the  
bleeding dried up instantly, and she felt in  
herself that she was cured of her complaint.  
Immediately aware that power had gone out  
from him Jesus turned round in the crowd  
and said, "Who touched my clothes?" His  
disciples said to him, "You see how the  
crowd is pressing round you and yet you  
say, 'Who touched me?'" But he continued  
to look all round to see who had done it.

Then the woman came forward, frightened  
and trembling because she knew what had  
happened to her, and she fell at his feet and  
told him the whole truth. "My daughter,"  
he said "your faith has restored you to  
health; go in peace and be free from your  
complaint."

While he was still speaking > some people  
arrived from the house of the synagogue  
official to say, "Your daughter is dead: why  
put the Master to any further trouble?" But  
Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs  
and he said to the official, "Do not be afraid;  
only have faith." And he allowed no one to  
go with him except Peter and James and  
John the brother of James. So they came  
to the official's house and Jesus noticed all  
the commotion, with people weeping and  
wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to  
them, "Why all this commotion and crying?  
The child is not dead, but asleep." But they  
laughed at him. So he turned them all out  
and, taking with him the child's father and  
mother and his own companions, he went  
into the place where the child lay. And taking  
the child by the hand he said to her, "Talitha,  
kumi!" which means, "Little girl, I tell you  
to get up." The little girl got up at once and  
began to walk about, for she was twelve  
years old. At this they were overcome with  
astonishment, and he ordered them strictly  
not to let anyone know about it, and told  
them to give her something to eat.

The Gospel of the Lord.<  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

O God, who graciously accomplish  
the effects of your mysteries,  
grant, we pray,  
that the deeds by which we serve you  
may be worthy of these sacred gifts.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all within me, his holy name.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

May this divine sacrifice we have offered and  
received  
fill us with life, O Lord, we pray,  
so that, bound to you in lasting charity,  
we may bear fruit that lasts for ever.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.