

Luke 8:40-56

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[0 : 0 0] This morning I have a very pleasant duty to perform. I want to tell you about Jesus. I want you to see Him, to know Him, to appreciate, perhaps for the first time, just how much He loves you, and for you to see and to understand and to realize that His loving hand is out stretched to touch you and to lift you up, whatever you are, whatever your condition, whatever your need, whatever place or deep hole you might find yourself in. And you do need Jesus.

I need Jesus. You need Jesus. We all need Jesus. Only Jesus can make sense of your life. Only Jesus can make you whole. Perhaps you do realize in a measure that this is so. Or perhaps, as you hear what I'm saying, you think that the suggestion that you need Jesus is just a little bizarre or certainly curious to you. Well, whatever your view of Jesus, as you came into this building this morning, may you leave this place, having discovered in Him, in Jesus, the one who alone can meet you at the point of your deepest need and make you whole. Well, where will we meet this Jesus of whom we speak? Well, we will meet Him in the Scriptures, in the Bible, and particularly as we consider Him in the passage that we've read or as we consider the occasion that this passage speaks of. We've already read in Mark's Gospel and in chapter 5 of this woman who had a life-transforming encounter with Jesus. We want to consider this encounter. And in order to refresh our memory or to enrich our knowledge of the occasion, we're going to read about the self-same encounter as it is related to us in Luke's Gospel. So, if we read now in Luke's Gospel and chapter 8, and we'll read from verse 40.

Now, you, I am sure, we're following carefully the first reading, and so as we read this passage, you will discover that there is great similarity. It is essentially the same passage, but from a slightly different perspective, and it introduces one or two aspects that we don't find in Luke. And as we consider this encounter, we will be referring to both passages, both the Luke passage and the one that we are now going to read in Luke's Gospel and chapter 8 from verse 40. And we read, Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed Him, for they were all expecting Him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with Him to come to His house, because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on His way, the crowds almost crushed Him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind Him and touched the edge of His cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. Who touched me? Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you. But Jesus said, Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me. Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at His feet.

In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. Then He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.

Now, as we consider this encounter between this unnamed woman, this poor, suffering woman, and Jesus, we want to begin by considering just for a moment and seeking to, from afar as it were, even in time, to empathize and to appreciate the condition she was in. Hers was very clearly and very vividly a desperate situation. She had been suffering, we are told, for twelve years. Then in verse 43, and a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. Now, we can read that, and it's easy to read, and the words can be easily read and heard and understood. But just imagine what it must have been like for this poor woman to suffer for this length of time. I wonder how she felt when she first began to suffer from this illness, when the bleeding first began. Maybe to begin with, she wasn't unduly concerned. She maybe thought, well, this is nothing to be greatly concerned for. It's something that will pass soon. But a week passed, and there was no improvement. And then a month, and then two months, and then six months, and there was no change. And of course, as a result, she grew weaker and weaker, and less and less able to fulfill

her duties within the family that she was part of, no doubt.

[6 : 11] We're not told about her family, but it seems reasonable to imagine that perhaps she had a husband and children. And yet, as this bleeding continued and continued, well, she did inevitably, grew weaker and weaker, and unable to live in the way that she would have wished. And of course, it got worse and worse, because a year passed, and then two years passed, and three, and five, and six, and ten, and as we meet her, twelve long years of suffering. And I wonder what the consequences of this illness had been, in addition to the physical pain and the mental anguish of enduring this marathon illness.

Now, we don't know. We've already suggested, it seems reasonable to suggest, that she would have been part of a family, perhaps a husband and children. I wonder what her family did. Did they stick by her?

Maybe at the beginning, very supportive, at the beginning, looking for ways of helping her, but as the time dragged on, perhaps even for them, fatigue set in. Perhaps even compassion fatigue, as we're sometimes led to hear this expression. Maybe they too were tired and felt that there was nothing they could do. Did they stick by her? Well, we don't know. But she was suffering a big time, year after year year. Perhaps there are those here who know something of that. Maybe the circumstances of your condition, very different to this woman. And yet you know what it is to carry a burden of suffering year after year after year. And you can identify with this woman. You can empathize with her. You can feel what she feels in a measure.

But of course, her situation is described more fully than that. We're told that as a result of her condition, she had spent all that she had. In Mark's Gospel, in chapter 5 and in verse 26, we read as follows. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had.

She had spent all that she had. Now, we don't know how much she had at the beginning. But the suggestion would seem to be—though it's not categorically stated—but it would suggest that perhaps she did have some reasonable measure of savings. And maybe at the beginning she was confident that those financial resources that were hers would get her through this trouble. She had money set aside for a rainy day.

[9 : 16] She had managed to gather together these resources. And so, though she was ill, there was hope that this money would secure her healing. And so, she went to the doctor. She went to many doctors, we're told. Perhaps she went to the very best doctors in Capernaum. And perhaps she went further, seeking help for her condition. And she had these funds, and she was able to pay, and she was able to buy the medicine that they told her would help, and secure the treatments that she was assured would grant her the healing that she so much needed and longed for. And I wonder how quickly the money ran out. How much money did she have? Did it run out after six months, or a year, or two years, or five years, or perhaps? It is now at the close of twelve years. But it's all gone now.

The money that had granted her at one point in her life a sense of security, the money that at one point had granted her a sense that she would be able to face whatever trouble came her way. It was gone. And her money, her material resources, had proved impotent to help her in her desperate condition.

One doctor, then another doctor, then another doctor, and slowly but surely, the money ran out. Her money couldn't save her. Her money couldn't help her.

Now, that is a very contemporary situation. How many today, perhaps you are among them, whose life is focused on securing that much sought-after security? If only I have a certain amount stashed away, certain insurance policies in place, and I can cover myself for any eventuality, whatever happens, I'll be able to cope. I'll be able to handle it. I'll be able to confront it. If I lose my job, that's okay. I've got a way of confronting that. If I'm ill, there's a way of confronting that.

And so many trusting in their financial resources or their capacity to secure such resources, and it is dangerous ground, a very dangerous paymaster, a very dangerous focus for your confidence. For there are circumstances, and indeed many circumstances, where your money will be of no help, of no value. Certainly, it was true for this woman. She had spent all she had. It was all gone, and she remained desperately ill and suffering greatly. That same verse that we've read in Mark's gospel tells us that she had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors. Well, that's certainly the way that is expressed in the version of the Bible we are using. She has suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors. Now, it's actually quite interesting, because what is literally said there is

she had suffered under many doctors.

[12 : 37] The introduction of under the care of, though a reasonable way of seeking to get across the idea, is an introduction. All it says in the original is that she had suffered under many doctors, and there would seem to be at least the suggestion that there may have been on the part of some of these doctors a measure of culpability. It's interesting that Luke makes no reference to this. Luke himself, as a doctor, perhaps was being loyal to his colleagues. I don't know, but Mark says that she had suffered under many doctors. Now, I wonder what that might suggest. And we can't be more clear, or we would be unwise to be dogmatic on this, but does it maybe suggest that on the part of those that she had sought help from, there had been false promises? You can imagine she went to a doctor, and she said, Doctor, this is my condition, and I have money to pay you, but I just want to get well. And is it not within the realms of possibility that among those that she approached, there were those who made great promises and said, Don't worry, I can help you. I can bring you the healing that you need. If only you would pay this and secure my services, all will be well. And they had built up her hopes, only for her hopes to be dashed. Now, perhaps some were well-meaning. They genuinely tried their best. They really did want to help her. They did all that they could, but all that they could was simply not sufficient.

Maybe there were those who callously and cruelly exploited her condition. The human condition hasn't changed. Men and women are still capable of great evil and of exploiting those who are weak and oppressed and vulnerable. It happens all the time, and might it not have been her bad fortune, if we can describe it in that way, to have come across those who, recognizing just how vulnerable she was, exploited her condition? We don't know. Certainly, we are told by Mark, that she had suffered under many doctors. At the very least, we can say that whether they were well-meaning or not, they had been incapable of solving her problem. What about you? Maybe you, too, have suffered under others. Maybe you, too, have been let down by others. Maybe you, too, know what it is to have experienced depositing your hope in somebody, thinking that that person, that medical professional, that friend, perhaps a family member, they could help you. They would get you out of the hole that you were in, and you have been left disillusioned. Perhaps they did not show the interest you had anticipated, or perhaps they did do all that they could, but it simply wasn't enough, and your condition remains the same. There are many circumstances that we can face in life where the experts, however well-meaning and however well-trained and however well-resourced, they prove incapable of helping, incapable of solving the problems that we have. That was certainly true of this woman. She had suffered a great deal under many doctors. Mark summarizes her situation as we are brought to the point where she has this encounter with Jesus. Mark tells us that no one could heal her, and instead of getting better, she grew worse.

Far from seeing any measure of improvement that would have given her just a flicker of hope, rather her condition became darker and darker, and her suffering greater and greater. Hers was an incurable illness, perhaps abandoned by her loved ones, certainly ostracized by the community that she was part of, because of all the religious connotations of her condition that we are not going to explore this morning. And I wonder if there are those this morning who can, in a measure, identify with that. The suffering that you are experiencing, the trouble that you are in, the problems that you are carrying far from getting better seem to be getting worse and worse. And that in itself is a source of anxiety and suffering in itself.

But perhaps worst of all for this woman, and all that is being said, I think inevitably leads us to this conclusion, worst of all, all hope was gone, or so it would seem. She had clung tenaciously to hope, but those hopes had always been dashed. Hope had proved a cruel companion for this woman. So why hope any more? Only to then endure the dashing of such hope. And again, what about you? You see, many today in this city of Aberdeen, and perhaps even gathered here this morning, many suffer like this woman. The circumstances, of course, may be very different, but the suffering is much the same.

[18 : 29] Deep, longstanding, unrelievable. It may be illness, physical or mental. Depression, depression, anxiety, family crisis, problems in your marriage, abuse, resentment, fear.

You have suffered under others, victims of the exploitation of the cruelty of others, suffering under a burden of guilt, laden down by sadness, by frustration, and plans that have been dashed, and hopes that have not been realized, feeling isolated and alone.

And of course, we could go on and on. And like this woman, you feel that you have no one to turn to, no one who understands, no one who can help, even if there were a willingness to do so.

So, this was a desperate situation. But as we read the passage, we are confronted with what is an unexpected possibility that presents itself for her. This woman hears of a man called Jesus. That is what we're told. She heard about Jesus. Who told her about Jesus? Was it somebody who had been healed? Was it somebody who said to her, well, I know this man, Jesus, and he healed me. He healed my mother. He healed my daughter. You should go and see Jesus. Well, we don't know who told her, but she heard about Jesus. And he was in Capernaum. He was in her own town, not for the first time. Jesus had been in Capernaum before. Why had she not sought help on the other occasions? On the other occasions, he had been there. Had she been afraid? Was it because of unbelief? She didn't feel or believe that he could do anything for her? Perhaps she had never been quite so desperate as she was on this occasion. But today is different. It's worth a try.

[20 : 28] Nothing to lose. Today she will give Jesus a try. Today she will approach Jesus. Do you know what sets this woman apart from the rest of the crowd? We're told that there was this great crowd, perhaps hundreds of people. They were all there cramming in on Jesus. And you know what sets this woman apart from all the others? This woman recognizes her condition, recognizes her desperate need of help. And it is this need that carries her to Jesus, perhaps the only one in the world in the world. But it is this need that carries her to the rest of the world. And it is this true of you. Will you give Jesus a try? Or will pride or fear or unbelief hold you back from even approaching him? This woman recognized her need, recognized her condition, but we also discover in this woman a flickering, tentative, nascent, but sincere faith. We're told in Luke's gospel there in verse 44, she came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. And why did she do so? Well, what does Mark tell us in verse 28 of his account? She thought, if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed. This is genuine faith. It may have been tentative, but it was very real and very genuine.

If I but touch him, touch his clothes, I will be healed. That faith, a gift of God, was necessary. Jesus himself confirms how necessary it had been when he addresses her. Your faith has made you well. And what about you? You're conscious of your need. Well, that is a good thing. Suffering, though it is something we would never seek after, and we quite rightly seek to avoid. Yet, when it comes our way, can bring that opportunity to recognize our own utter dependence upon the one who can help us, our need of Jesus. Perhaps you have been told about him. Perhaps others have told you that you should approach him. You should put your trust in him. Perhaps you have had previous opportunities, as no doubt this woman had had, but you have scorned them. What about today? Will you touch the edge of his cloak? Will you approach him and seek help from him today? Will you approach him believing that he is the one who can heal you and make you whole? This woman recognizes her condition, is conscious of her need, believes that Jesus is able to help her, and she does something about it.

She does something about it. She gets into that crowd knowing that she is risking being ostracized and being cast away by those around her, but she plunges in that she would but touch Jesus, that she would but touch the edge of his cloak. And as she does, she receives a wonderful answer. She touches the edge of his cloak, a tassel on a wrap-over, a garment that would have been hanging over his left shoulder.

And what happens when she but touches the edge of his cloak? Well, she is immediately and wonderfully healed. Such is the power of Jesus. And be assured, and of this may there be no doubt, whatsoever. This Jesus remains the same Jesus today. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This same Jesus who healed this woman is the same Jesus who is able and willing to make you whole, to make me whole, to answer your cry, and to meet your need. He remains attentive to the slightest touch, to the most timorous cry for help. He will hear you if you would but cry out, and he will answer.

[24 : 42] It was a wonderful answer. But was that the end of the story? Well, it could have been. It could have been the end of the story. The woman is in great need. She is suffering from this terrible condition.

She hears of Jesus, and she approaches Jesus, and she touches the edge of his cloak, and she is healed, and she returns home happy and grateful for the miracle she has received. The story could have ended there.

But it doesn't end there. There is, finally, a curious question that Jesus poses and that we want to briefly consider. There in verse 45, in Luke's account, we read, Who touched me? Jesus asked. And we say it's a curious question, and indeed the disciples also considered it a curious and bemusing question. And they themselves explain why it was a strange question. They say, Master,

how can you ask such a question? The crowds are all around us. There are so many people touching you and brushing the side of you, and how can you ask such a question? Indeed, we're told that the question was answered by many. There in verse 45, the question evokes many responses. Who touched me? Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you. They all denied it. Presumably all those who were within earshot of the question, all those who felt that perhaps the question was directed to them, they said, well, it wasn't me. But they're confused, they're bemused, because it is indeed a curious and strange question. But one thing we can say is that though many were confused by the question, many were bemused by the question, many didn't understand the question, there was one person who knew perfectly well what the question was about. There was one person who was completely sure that the question was directed to her. The woman knew. She had no doubts. She knew that Jesus was asking her.

She knew that Jesus was referring to what she had done. Of that we can be sure. And is it not often so even today? Even as the Word of God is preached and proclaimed and the invitation of the gospel is made, there are many who return home, and even today there will be those who return home untouched, unmoved, just another service. But you know that Jesus is speaking to you.

[27 : 31] Others bemused. Others curious. Others confused. Others thinking about lunch. Others thinking about what the week holds. But you know that Jesus is speaking to you. He's addressing you, and he wants you to answer and you to respond, because it is you he is speaking to. Why this question?

Well, I think we can identify two reasons why Jesus poses this question, who touched me? The first thing we can say is that Jesus had bigger plans and more wonderful purposes for this woman. She came for an answer to her physical need. And of course, her concern was entirely legitimate. And Jesus was genuinely concerned for her physical condition and was very pleased and delighted to be able to relieve her physical suffering. That was important to Jesus. But Jesus, though he considered that important and attended that need, he had a bigger plan.

Listen to the words that he addresses to her when she does recognize that she had been the one who had touched him, and they enter into a conversation or dialogue, or we have this face-to-face encounter.

What does Jesus say to this woman? We read that in verse 48, then he said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.

And in these words, we discover that the plans of Jesus for this woman went way beyond her physical wholeness, important though that was. Even in the manner that he addresses her, daughter. Those who have studied these things and explored the Gospels assured us that this was the only occasion in which Jesus addressed a woman in this way, in this tender, familiar way, Daughter, daughter, your faith has healed you. This woman is special to Jesus, and even in the manner in which he addresses her, he gives eloquent expression of how special she is to him, daughter.

[29 : 51] I love you. I care for you. That's why I healed you, and my purposes for you are greater and more wonderful even than the physical healing you are right now, thrilled in and enjoying. Daughter, I love you. I love you. You are special to me. Others think nothing of you. Others have abandoned you.

Others marginalize you. Others ostracize you. Others don't give you the time of day, but I love you. I love you. Daughter, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. And this is God's great purpose for you, that you would be part of his family, that you would be the object of his special love.

But he goes on, daughter, your faith has healed you. The word that is used here, and this is something that often happens in the Gospels, we have this word that can be used, depending on the context, to mean different things. And on this occasion, it is quite properly translated, your faith has healed you. There is, of course, a direct reference by Jesus to the physical healing that she has enjoyed. And so he tells her, your faith has healed you. But of course, this word healed has a broader meaning. On other occasions, it is translated saved.

Your faith has saved you. In fact, these exact same words, with the exception of the address, daughter, are found just in the page before, in chapter 7 and in verse 50. And this may be worth just reading from verse 48 to understand how this verb that Jesus uses has a broader meaning to simply physical healing, though it most assuredly does mean that. In Luke 7 and verse 48, Jesus

said to her, he is in this encounter with another woman, this woman described as a sinful woman. And we read there then Jesus said to her, your sins are forgiven. Here very explicitly and clearly, her need, her felt need indeed, her obvious need was for forgiveness of sins. And Jesus says to her, your sins are forgiven. And then we continue reading, the other guests began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? But what does Jesus say to the woman? Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. The selfsame word that he addresses to this woman who had been suffering and who had healed. Your faith has healed you. Your faith has saved you. Your faith has made you whole.

And this is God's purpose for us, for you, that you would be made whole, that you would be saved, that your sins would be forgiven, that you would be able to live the life that he has purposed you to live.

[32 : 41] And he goes on in his words of dismissal, if you wish, but in the best possible sense of that word, go in peace. Go in peace. And the Greek word here used is the Greek equivalent of this rich Hebrew word, shalom, that speaks of total welfare. Go in peace, freed from the anxiety that your physical condition has caused you for all these years. Go in peace. Go in peace and reconciled with those around about you.

Go in peace. Enjoy peace with God. This is all part of the purpose of Jesus for this woman. And this is what Jesus wants for you. He is concerned about your felt needs, about your physical needs, about your material needs. He is also concerned for all of your needs, your deepest and most profound needs, some of which you may be conscious of and aware of, and others you may be oblivious to.

Your need of salvation. Your need of forgiveness. Your need of reconciliation with God. And he wants to shower his love upon you, to welcome you into his family, to restore you, to make you whole, to give you peace. All of these things he wishes for you. And what do you have to do? How can you enjoy these many blessings that he would have for you? Well, you have to do what the woman did.

You must believe. There was in this woman, despite all the suffering she had endured, despite her hopes being dashed on so many occasions, there was this genuine, sincere, tentative, though it may have been faith. Because when she approached Jesus, she did so with that conviction and with that genuine hope that in that approach she would receive what she was seeking. You must believe. And as you believe, so you will be made whole. So you will be healed. So you will be saved.

What does the Scriptures tell us in that regard as to the consequences, the wonderful consequences of believing? Paul, in his letter to the Romans, tells us, therefore, since we have been justified through faith, by believing, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. As we put our trust in Jesus, as we believe in Jesus, as our altogether perfect and sufficient Savior, so we enjoy peace with God. And you might say, well, how do I approach Jesus today? Is Jesus passing through Aberdeen today, as he was Capernaum a couple of millennia ago? He's not just passing through Aberdeen. He is here this morning. He is here today amongst us. As surely as you are here, he is here. Ask him to help you. Ask him to help you there where you are. Believe and put your trust in him, and he will not disappoint.

[36 : 10] So in answer to the question, why this curious question, who touched me? Well, the first answer is that Jesus had greater purposes for this woman, and it was necessary for him to demonstrate to her the greater purposes that he had. But also, finally, the reason he poses this question, the reason he wishes to have this face-to-face encounter with this woman, is that Jesus wanted this woman to publicly profess her faith, for he knew that it would be good for her to do so. It was necessary for her to do so, that she would be recognized as one who had sought help and received help from Jesus.

And so he provokes or secures this opportunity for this woman who touched me. And she, though reluctant, responds. We read there in verse 47, then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, she wished to go unnoticed. It was her desire to quietly return home. She didn't want to be seen.

She didn't want anybody to know. She didn't want anybody to discover. She just wanted to slip away. But because of the question, she was obliged to respond, because she knew that it was addressed to her, and she came trembling and fell at his feet. And again, though we don't want to be too bold in this conclusion, but this suggestion that she came trembling. Now, in order to have

touched Jesus, she must have been right next to him. And yet here we're told that she came trembling.

Does that suggest that she had already been making her quick exit? Does it suggest that she already had been drifting away quietly, that nobody would see her? But now she comes trembling, and she recognizes, it was me. It was me. And this was good for her, that she would, before the multitude, profess that she was the one who had touched Jesus. She was the one who had sought help from Jesus.

She was the one who had been healed by Jesus. And before the gathered and bemused multitude, she professes her faith. It was me. And you too must do the same.

[38 : 42] This is what Jesus would have you do. If you come to Jesus, if you have come to Jesus in the past and have secured from him that forgiveness of sins, that new life that he offers to all who would but come, then you, like this woman, must make that known. You too must profess to others whose you are and whom you serve. Well, there was a multitude surrounding Jesus that day in Capernaum. But only one, only one of that great multitude, returned home with these words ringing in her ears, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. And these are words that Jesus will gladly direct today to any—perhaps just one—but any who will but come to him, recognizing their need and putting their trust in Jesus. I urge you and commend you to do so. Let us pray.