

THE FIRST 15

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God designed us to live in community. He knows healthy relationships will bless us. This week we study the healing miracles of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Not only does Jesus heal physical infirmity, He also frees people from places of isolation and restores them to community.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord, as a new day dawns I seek Your gracious presence. I quiet the busy chatter of my mind, still my body and rest in the goodness of Your love. Help me hear the message You have for me today. Thank You for the blessings of a life lived in community with others. I am grateful for my relationship with You and my relationships with family and friends. May the cornerstone of my life and our life together be Christ and Christ alone. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

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." Luke 8:42b-48

REFLECTION

There was a large crowd on the seashore that day. I imagine walking along a rocky coastline, people talking and pressing in, donkeys braying, everyone waiting for Jesus to do something - teach or heal. His reputation had spread across Galilee. He encounters two people - a prominent man named Jairus and an unnamed woman suffering in obscurity.

The woman had a gynecological condition causing long term bleeding. This would have been painful and uncomfortable. Such a condition made her ritually impure under Levite Law. She would have been socially isolated. Whoever she touched was made impure so she was an outcast. Intercourse was forbidden when women bled, and her condition would make her unable to bear children. If she was married her husband would have the right to divorce her. Divorced women could not earn a living and there was no one to care for them in that society. Apparently, she did have some means. Whatever money she had was used searching for a cure. She was likely destitute and even desperate. The woman came up behind Jesus and touched His cloak. She was healed instantly and she knew it.

Contact with a woman bleeding made you ritually impure for one day. Jesus is not worried about this or ashamed to be considered unclean by others. Jesus instead makes clean those whom

He touches. We might relate this to our own “uncleanness.” We are spiritually unclean and separated from God because of our sin. Jesus goes to be with sinners because He is not worried about becoming unclean, He instead makes clean those whom He touches. One drop of His blood cleanses away all our sin, guilt and shame and it is gone forever. What once was scarlet is whiter than snow (Isaiah 1:18). Our sin is removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

The woman had faith in the power of Jesus. She believed He could heal her. We can have faith in Jesus for ourselves and faith for the ones we love. Praying for God to heal, forgive and bless them. The woman with the twelve-year bleeding is unable to bear a child. She will die without bringing new life into the world. Jesus restores her life-giving capacity - to bear children. She will now be able to bring life forth from her body once racked with disease. Jesus brings life! This is the nature of God. Not only healing and restoring life, but allowing another generation to be born into existence through the miracle. The blessing is multiplied!

Ask: How have I experienced the cleansing power of Jesus’ love? How has Jesus washed away my sin, guilt and shame? How has Jesus healed me and restored life in me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me, forgiving me, cleansing my sin, healing my heart, sanctifying my soul and restoring my life. I have faith in Your power and I pray for those who need to know Your love and grace. I pray for those who suffer with physical ailments and disease. I pray for every person who dwells in loneliness and isolation. Bring them into relationships that will bless them and restore them to the fellowship of Christian community. Amen.