

## 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020 10am – Healing

### ***Transcript only of a retelling of the text, the talk and prayerful response***

Talk by Andrew Attwood, retelling of the text and prayerful response by Karen Mills and Andrew Attwood.

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[The service began with an activity: writing the name or names of people that we wanted to bring to Jesus in a short letter to Him]

### ***Luke 8:42b-48 [NIVUK]***

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. <sup>43</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Who touched me?’ Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.’

<sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.’

<sup>47</sup> 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. <sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.’

### ***A retelling of Luke 8:42b-48***

[Karen Mills:]

Oh, I had a life once...

I had dreams like any other young woman. I remember my wedding day, the joy and the hope.

I lost him. Born still, our first child, and then this: this condition, this curse, this flow of blood sucking every ounce of life from me. Labelled unclean. We tried everything. No one can help. No one can stop it. No one can heal me.

Who wants to be married to an unclean woman, an untouchable?  
His patience exhausted. Divorced. Cast aside, shunned, humiliated, treated no better than the dogs.

Now, I live my life in the shadows. A hovel at the edge of town, creeping out at night to fetch water and firewood. For so long, for so long no life at all. Bitterness creeps through every bone.

Then on the breeze I hear a whisper. There is a man, travelling, working miracles, healing, nothing He cannot heal! Casting out demons they say! I cannot get this man out of my mind. My every waking moment consumed by thoughts of Him. What if? What if I could just touch Him? Could He heal me?

A shout on the streets: "He's coming, He's coming!" There is such a crush but I am determined, pushing through the crowd. My life depends on it. I have to touch this man. He stops. I stumble. I touch. Immediately I know, like fire coursing through my body. Slip away. No one will know. But He calls out "Who touched me?"

"It's such a crowd," the people say, "somebody must have touched You!"

I hold my breath.

"I know someone touched me. Power went from me. I know I have that power."

I know I must confess. I fall at His feet, waiting for the harsh words, the abuse. Who am I, the unclean, that I should dare to touch this Holy Man.

The crowd falls silent.

But there are no harsh words.

This Man stoops down and touches me. Touches me! The untouchable! And lifts me up. He looks straight at me and calls me Daughter. Calls me, who is disowned, a nobody. Daughter.

Such peace.

Oh, I have a life. He has given me life.

[Andrew Attwood:]

Wow. That's powerful stuff, Karen. Thank you, thank you for that reading.

## **Talk**

Let's just pray before I say a few words.

Lord, we come into Your presence with that ordinary level of human-ness, carrying the stuff we carry, coming to the One who is different from everyone else. Would You help us now to hear Your word for us, and maybe even to receive Your touch to connect with You for the things that we need.  
Amen.

Okay, this is one of the most well-known healing stories from the Gospel accounts. And it's set in the context of Luke's Gospel, just after a whole section to do with healing and dealing with demons, and it just leads into Jesus sending out the twelve who also go out and continue His healing ministry. It's almost positioned as a kind of classic example of this healing ministry of Jesus, spilling out in all directions and eventually even through His followers.

So we begin at verse 42. It says,

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.

I can remember as a young lad going to watch Sunderland play in the northeast of England. And this was back in the day before they had seats everywhere in football stadiums and I can remember one dark night, when it was raining and Sunderland were playing a big game. And I must have been about 6 or 7, and being caught up by the crowd, crushed by the crowd and moved forward and back again as the goal was scored. You know my feet were off the ground! I mean it was pretty dangerous stuff back then, before we had seats in stadiums, but I remember the crush. I remember the squeeze and it was all to do with excitement and intensity. In this story, we have 'crushed' probably for a mixture of different

reasons: there's possibly a crush of excitement because this notable person has arrived, there is probably a mixture of desperation, fascination, hopes raised by other people who are looking for some kind of help or healing. It did remind me though, you know when you see photos or videos on the news of refugee camps, when a lorry pulls in with provisions, and there's a kind of a rush, and you'll get young and old, you'll get kids held up to grab hold of a bag of flour or a loaf of bread or a tankard of water or whatever. And there's a kind of, "We really, really need this!" And so the crush happens. And it did make me wonder about how we've been feeling through lockdown, hemmed in, not quite a refugee camp, but certainly with certain constraints around us as to what we can and can't do. And more particularly, I wonder how many of us have actually felt hemmed in longer term by illness? I wonder how many of us have had felt hemmed in because there are conditions we carry, be they mental, psychological or physical, that limit who we are. And it just feels suffocating. And you get fed up with having to keep saying, "Ah, well, this is my lot."

The story continues. It says,

A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.

I don't know about you, but the experience of repeated disappointment is bound to have an effect. It's like when you repeatedly fail at something, you know, when people have to do exams again and again; or maybe people who are struggling to find employment and they fill in yet another CV, yet another application and it comes back with a reject letter; or more specifically for today, when you go to a doctor who treats you in this way, and it doesn't happen any better or he treats you in that way, and you just get strange side-effects, and you go round and round and round. Well, this woman had 12 years of this. She had tried hard to fix it. Now, from what Karen was reading indicated, there was a whole heap of emotional baggage that goes with that. But she was there in this crowd. Why was she there, given that no-one else had been able to heal her? Well it's interesting, because you do get a parallel account in Matthew's Gospel<sup>1</sup> where it says this, it gives a little bit of insight into what she's thinking it says

She said to herself, 'If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.'

That's what it says in Matthew's account. "If I only took His cloak, I will be healed." So she must have heard. She must have heard about Jesus. Now she may have even seen other people healed before. But certainly, she knew that this was someone who was carrying around an experience or an expectation of healing wherever He went. And she knew that that was going to be possibly something relevant to her or sufficient for her. The Israelites all have the stories of Exodus embedded in their head and they knew about the presence of God that travelled with the people: the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire, and God was with His people and things happened. And so she probably put two and two together and thought, "It's like the presence of God, if I can only get close." Maybe Jesus reputation had really stirred her heart, and there had been so many stories of healing that this woman had heard, that she thought to herself, "I want some of that! I need some of that!"

There's an interesting reference earlier on in Luke's account, Luke 6 verse 19. And it says this (because it's a clue as to what's to come in this story). It says,

And the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

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1 Matthew 9:20-22

The people all tried to touch Him. Because power was coming from Him and healing them all. In other words, wherever He went, even if they just touched Him in expectation, something happened. Maybe she'd heard that. So you get this interesting sense of her speaking to herself. I don't know if you're the kind of person who talks to yourself: that's entirely normal, all of us talk to ourselves at some times, and sometimes we need to speak to ourselves. She's telling herself, she's persuading herself, "If only I touch His garment, I will be healed." Maybe she was having to counter years of doubt, years of regret, experience and failure kind of pulling her back, but she's counselling herself, "Press through all of your doubts, do something!" We sometimes have to press through bad experience and point ourselves in the direction of Jesus Christ.

So what does she do? She comes up behind Him. This is not something she wants to do publicly. She's wanting to be hidden, perhaps for the reasons that Karen intimated in her retelling of the story, perhaps there's a sense of social uncleanness or embarrassment. She comes up behind Him. And she doesn't even touch His hand or His foot, just the hem of His garment. And immediately, her bleeding is stopped. She knows it.

She knows it. You or I may have spoken to other people who have experienced healing, and they will sometimes tell you, "I just knew! I just felt it. Something was felt in my body," and they'll talk about it like heat or power, like electricity. Think about it in those electrical terms. You know when a wire touches something that is live and immediately power flows through it. That's automatic, but it's simply what happens - that's what electricity does. So even outside of Jesus' own sight, He's looking this-a-way, but behind Him there's someone who reaches out and touches Him and power goes that-a-way.

This is remarkable stuff. She knew it. She was very sensitive to her symptoms, and they dramatically changed inside of her. She knew that she was suddenly well. It reminded me when I was young that I had my first use of an inhaler to help me with mild asthma. I used to have kind of asthma attacks when I was about 10, 11 or 12. And it used to inhibit me from long-distance running at school, that kind of stuff, and it would be panicky to feel my throat and tubes all constraining, because it feels like you're going to choke and die. And I can still remember the moment a doctor gave me a reliever inhaler and said, "Just breathe in and see how that feels when your throat is tight," and again it was an instantaneous experience of sudden relief. It felt miraculous. Inhalers properly applied can feel like that. It also reminded me, some of you will know I'm a big fan of *Lord of the Rings*, there's a moment towards the very end of the story, where Frodo finally gets rid of the Ring of Power in the mountain - throws it away. And the ring goes, and he's been carrying it like a heavy burden for a long, long time, and he says "It's gone! It's done!" And the relief is palpable.

Around Jesus Christ, there was so much relief, so much joy, because the things that they were carrying were taken away. Let me talk to you about who this is, who provides this kind of healing. Jesus is the fountain of all healing. The Bible says He was so filled with the Holy Spirit that power flowed from Him continuously, through His words and actions and through His love. Don't just presume you know this, think about the idea of a human being walking around so full that it just naturally flows out of Him. One of my favourite passages in John's Gospel says this, this is John 1 verses 32 to 34.

<sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit." <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.'

That's early on with John the Baptist saying, "The Spirit remains on this one."

Let me explain to you a tiny Greek word. The Greek word is *menon*. And it means 'to enjoy continuously', 'to never fade', 'to always be active', 'taking place repeatedly', like 'continuously'. *Menon* means that, and it's describing the presence of the Holy Spirit in Jesus automatically, continuously flowing, like a fountain of life and a fountain of healing, and that is what was happening in His healing ministry everywhere He went. He didn't have to work it up. He didn't have to try hard. It simply was in Him and flowed through Him continuously all the time.

So you get this bit of, what I would consider humour, now, in this Gospel story. Jesus stops. He looks around. And He says, "Who touched me?" He's been looking this-a-way, remember, and the healing happened that-a-way. "Who touched me?"

When they all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.'

It's almost like Peter's going, "Are You stupid, Jesus? Come on, everybody's touching You! Everybody's crushing in on You!" And it's almost like Jesus winks at Peter and goes, "Somebody touched me, Peter. Someone touched me, because I know, something went out of me." So Jesus Himself felt in His own body power moving from Him to an unknown person. The release of power was automatic. It was automatic though, in response to the woman's faith. And Jesus felt it too.

It's interesting to review: the woman was the only one at that particular time, who was touching Jesus with faith, which means it's possible to be close to Jesus, to be really in close proximity to Jesus, without faith. You're just travelling alongside Him. And you might even know Him, and you might even have exchanges with Him. But this woman, she was touching Jesus with faith.

Does this story change your perception of Whom you travel with? If you're a Christian. Have you forgotten this dimension of Jesus ministry? If you're not a Christian and you're just listening, were you aware that this was available? You see, some sometimes people are just here to observe. Some people have expectations for others but never themselves. What if Jesus is passing by, with us today? Is He passing by with us today?

Let me read on with the story. It says this,

<sup>47</sup> 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.

It is clear that through the ministry of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit has His own agenda. And on this occasion the Holy Spirit who is moving through Jesus, even when He wasn't really consciously aware of it at first, the Holy Spirit had a plan for this woman. He wanted to honour her and publicly put her back into community. Though she was fearful, though she was hiding, though she wanted to be invisible, the Holy Spirit caused Jesus to stop and to turn around and to find the one who had expressed really good faith. This is profound: the Holy Spirit has an agenda for your and my good, that is higher than our expectations and even higher than our best dreams. The woman didn't expect this. This was beyond what she was looking for. And Jesus turns to her and He speaks to her. And He says,

'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.'

'Daughter'. This is important: 'daughter of Abraham', 'daughter of God'. He's giving her a very, very high status in the sight and hearing of a crowd. And He says, "Your faith has healed you. What you believed was good and true. Your faith was the wire through which the healing flowed." He's basically saying,

"Well done for believing in me. Well done!"

And because of that He says, "Go in *shalom*." Go in complete peace, including health, including community restoration. He wants to completely heal her. Now that He can see her, He's completely in step with what the Holy Spirit intended, and He's saying, physical healing, community healing, honoured as a daughter of God. Healing is not just physical. Healing is everything.

So what about you? What about you this morning? Is there any sense in which you've ever felt locked into a refugee camp full of illness? Do you ever feel hemmed in by repeated problems, problems that you've tried to fix and you can't. Has everybody else, despite a sincere effort, failed you? Have you given up? Maybe in lockdown you felt despairing because you can't get access to what you need. Have you despaired of the possibility of change?

But have you heard this morning that Jesus is passing by? Have you reheard the stories of His power? The reason why we wanted to do a healing service this morning is because I sensed God prompt me, saying, "It's my day, Andrew, I'm passing by." I do believe that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is here. And He is here for those who believe. He's wanting you to see who He is. He's present in His body, the Church. And He's in His presence, just by His Holy Spirit, even now, as you listen online [or read this]. We know that the apostles carried His presence and continued healing. And so do we now.

### ***Prayerful Response***

So we're going to move into a time of praying. We're going to move into a time of praying for the sick now. And I just want you to be completely open, and in receiving mode. So myself and Karen will chip in now - we're going to pray. We're going to have some times of quiet as well. So there's no rush. So let's have a time of responsiveness. Let's have a time of being open to God and let's pray.

Lord Jesus, You may well have been knocking on our door this morning, maybe there's some hearts racing, maybe there's some people with raised hopes. Lord Jesus maybe there are some people who are wrestling with their doubts but trying to press through. Holy Spirit, would You help us now to draw near, and to draw near with the same faith that that woman had. Come Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we pray now for courage for individuals who know what they need, who are carrying conditions. We begin to name them before You, Lord. Say what they need. We come Holy Spirit with courage to say (even out loud if you're on your own, or write it down on a piece of paper if you need to, or put a hand on a part of the body that needs it now). Come Holy Spirit. Give us courage to name it.

[Karen:]

Father God, I just pray for those who feel that they are unworthy, that You would remind them that they are a daughter, that they are a son of the Most High, and the Father wants the best for His children. So, Father, would You just lift off any spirit of unworthiness, and that is about today.

[Andrew:]

And, Lord, would You begin to prepare us, so that we can receive what You want to do this.

[Karen:]

Yes, Father God, give us a spirit of expectation.

[Andrew:]

If it helps you, open your hands. You may want to stand or whatever, but just get ready. Get ready for what Jesus wants to do.

He's drawing near.

Maybe it's a skin disease. Maybe it's a heart condition. Maybe it's a liver complaint. Maybe it's joints.

Come, Holy Spirit. Begin to help us to see that Jesus is drawing near.

And we do pray now, Lord Jesus, that we would be in that close proximity where the power of God flows through You to us. Jesus, the Spirit remains on You, like no one else. So we want to get as close to You as we can. Draw us close to us as You will. Begin to release and reveal Your power, Lord, in Jesus' name.

[Karen:]

So it may be that you're feeling prompted to pray for somebody who is with you this morning. Or it may be that the people that you wrote on your letter [that you wrote at the start of the service (not in this transcription)] are really on your heart at the moment and maybe you might like to just grab that [letter] and really pray with faith for those people that you have written in that letter.

[Andrew:]

Jesus in all directions, behind and before and [on either] side, would You pour out healing now in all directions. Lord, for those who just still can't believe that it's for them, or for those that care for them, Lord, show them this is 360 degree healing, in all directions. Just pour out Your healing in all directions, Jesus, like You did in the crowds.

And I pray Lord that people would know in their spirit, in their bodies that something is happening. Come Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' Name receive healing. In Jesus' Name, receive His healing.  
Amen.

[The service concluded with intercessory prayer for the health of the nation, for homes, families and those on their own, for schools and local communities, and finally with a blessing.]

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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