

Second Sunday After Pentecost
June 7, 2015 – Marley United Methodist Church

2 Samuel 1: 1, 17-27

Psalm 130

2 Corinthians 8: 7-15

Mark 5: 21-34

Just a Little Touch

Grace and Peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

She had plenty of reasons to be terrified
And plenty of people to be terrified of.
She wasn't supposed to be there
 but she was desperate
 desperate for help,
 desperate for healing

But she wasn't supposed to be there
 in the crowd
 sneaking through
 trying to touch just the hem of his coat
Surely if she could just touch that,
 she would be healed
 Surely?

But she wasn't supposed to be there
 and if she got found out she was in trouble
Culture and custom said
 she wasn't supposed to be there
Social courtesy said
 she wasn't supposed to be there
The law said
 she wasn't supposed to be there—

Leviticus 15.25-28 (*NET paraphrased*)

“If a woman has a flow of blood for several days outside her monthly period, or if her flow continues beyond her regular period, she remains unclean as long as the flow continues, and for seven days after it stops. Anyone who touches her is unclean until evening. Anyone who touches anything she has touched will be unclean until evening.”

It is the LAW!!

She wasn't supposed to be there
She's been bleeding for twelve years
She has been unclean for twelve years
For twelve years anyone she touches has been made unclean
And if she does touch someone,
 they are prohibited from having social contact with anyone else
 for the rest of the day
For twelve years she has been persona non grata
 Shunned
Alienated even from the comfort of a human touch
She was supposed to stay home
and avoid contact with everyone
It's been twelve years.

She wasn't supposed to be out in public
pushing her way through a crowd
 trying to touch Jesus
 or even just the hem of his garment
She had plenty of reasons to be terrified
 and plenty of people to be terrified of
 including Jesus when she made him unclean

How many of us are like her?

Sneaking around with our heads down
desperately hiding the truth about ourselves
afraid we might be recognized for what we are
afraid of being shunned and isolated
afraid of being looked on as filth
desperate to find some cure,
some relief
terrified of what it would take
to lay hold of it.

So, she pushed her way through the crowd
face hidden

name unknown
taking her chances

It was only a fleeting opportunity
Jesus was in a hurry
This was no time to interrupt him
He was on a mission of mercy
dealing with an emergency
A little girl was dying
there was not a moment to lose

The little girl was twelve years old
For twelve years she had been healthy and happy
For twelve years she had been the precious daughter
of one of the most important men in the town
For twelve years she had had everything
But now her life was hanging by a thread
This was no time to interrupt Jesus
He had more important business to attend to
He had a little girl's life to save
"If I can just touch the edge of his coat
as he hurries past,
surely that will be enough. ----Surely that will make me better."

So she did it
She pushed through the crowd
 and touched his coat
 as he hurried by
And she immediately felt the bleeding stop
 She had been right!
 She was healed
 The disease was gone!
 No more feeling anemic and lethargic
 No more hiding in the shadows,
 avoiding everyone

She pulled the scarf around her face
 and slipped back into the crowd
She had what she'd come for
 and so she was off
No harm done
 No one had recognized her
 No one knew who she was
She'd just melt back into the crowd
 and slip off home

"Who touched my clothes?"
Jesus has stopped
Stopped!
Like an ambulance driver
 stopping for lunch
 on the way to an accident,
Jesus stopped!
"Who touched me?"
Jairus is pulling on his arm, "Who cares, come and save my daughter.
Quickly, before it's too late."
Jesus shrugged him off
"Who touched me?"

She froze in fear
She'd been found out
Busted
She had meant no harm
She was just desperate
She'd been careful not to interrupt,
 not to get in the way
But now she was going to be exposed
Now the game was up
She had plenty of reasons to be terrified
And plenty of people to be terrified of
She wasn't supposed to be there

She fell to her knees at Jesus' feet
 shaking like a leaf
 and 'fessed up
She knew she was in for it
 but there was nowhere to hide
They might even stone her for this
Because---she wasn't supposed to be there
but he knew
Somehow he knew

He reached out his hand
"Daughter, you took a risk of faith
and it has paid off for you.
Welcome back to the world of the healthy!
Shalom!
May peace, health and happiness be yours,
and may your illness be gone for good."

(gasp)
They weren't going to stone her
She wasn't going to be shunned
She has been touched
 by one who knew why she was untouchable
She has been lifted to her feet

and patted on the back
She has been commended-- in public
She has been given his blessing
She has been offered healing
 beyond her wildest dreams
Social healing
Emotional healing
Public acceptance
Oh, what a wonderful, glorious day.

How often are we just like her?
How often can we not see beyond
 the little bit of something
 that will make life more bearable
 for a little while?

How often
 are we only too willing
 to settle for the need of the moment
and then slip back into the crowd
 without daring to imagine
 what more there could be?

How often do we look for nothing more-- than that-- from Jesus
and from his body, the church?
Just a little bit of something
 to make us feel a little bit better
 A little touch
 to get us through the week.
Oh, we settle for so little.

How often do we think
that we don't deserve any more
than that little bit?
Surely God has got more important things to do?
more important people to attend to?
Surely there is a twelve year old girl somewhere,
dying of hunger or malaria or disease,
who warrants God's attention
much more than we do?

Who are we to expect Jesus to stop and take notice?

So we slip through the crowd
for a just little touch
Just enough to make life bearable
and then slip off again
unnoticed
unimportant
unchallenged
unblessed
our masks still in place
fear and shame and loneliness
still wrapped tightly around us.

News flash!!
Jesus thinks you're worth more than that
Nothing is more important to him than you
There is nothing else that matters so much
that Jesus would pass you by
and leave you to fend for yourself
It is not OK with Jesus for you to just get a little touch
to make you feel better
He wants more
He wants to see you healed and whole
strong and confident
accepted and loved.

He wants to do more than just
close your wounds
and stop the bleeding
He wants to lead you into a wholeness you can't imagine
and a fullness of life beyond your wildest dreams

If, -- if you slip off into the crowd
he will be left standing here
with a tear in his eye
still asking, "Who touched me?"
He waits because he reckons you are worth waiting for
and he's got so much more he wants to give you.

He wants you to follow him
to dance with him
to learn from him
to share life and love
and joy and suffering with him

He wants you to lay aside your fears
lay aside your shame
lay aside your isolation,
lay aside the only self you may have ever known
(You know, the self that is such a burden sometimes)
Lay it aside
and follow him
into the wide open spaces
of God's love and mercy.

Christ won't force you
You can reach out your hand
Get a little touch
And slip back into the crowd
Strengthened enough to get through another week.
You can do that

You don't have to stay to find out

What Jesus may be asking of you
And what he might be offering you
And if you do slip away
 no one else will notice
You won't be punished or exposed
But Jesus will still be standing here
 asking
 "Who touched me?"
And he will still be standing here
 longing to give you what he wants you to have
Standing here
 longing for you to accept
 the gift of his very self.
You can just slip quietly back to your seat
 hoping no one will notice
You can do that

But,
But if you stop
If you fall to your knees before him
 and offer him yourself
 in trembling truthfulness
Then he will offer himself to you
 and open himself to you
 so that you might be healed--by his brokenness
 and drawn into his wholeness
 and raised to new life
 to fullness of life
 and be reconciled to him
 and be reconciled in him
 to the glory of God
 and to the joy of
 all creation.

You can do that.
 Just a little touch? Or a whole lot more? Amen