

Julies sermon on Mark 5: 23-34

So as I said earlier this morning we are continuing our sermon series on men and women in the bible and today we are thinking about the woman with the haemorrhage. She is not someone we think of as a great or well-known character but she was important in helping the disciples and us to see what it means to never give up and have faith!

How often do we hear people say “I can't do it”? We hear it from children who feel they can't build the lego like the picture on the box or ride a bicycle without stabilisers, we hear it from teenagers frustrated with not being as good as their friends at school and we hear it from adults who are challenged by new jobs or family commitments, I can't do it. But that old adage of try, try and try again is so important because we often surprise ourselves and others when we keep trying and discover that we can do it.

I am sure you can all recall times when this is true.

And it is true of the woman in our reading this morning!

The story about the woman with the haemorrhage is a story within a story because in the verses before and after the ones we heard today we hear about Jairus and his sick daughter.

Jairus needs Jesus to heal his daughter who is dying and Jesus agrees to go with him. But as they set off something happens, something that stops Jesus in his tracks. He feels his power being tapped into and he asks “Who touched me?”

Don't you just love the reaction of the disciples – so human. What do you mean who touched you; we are surrounded by all these people; being pushed on every side and you ask who touched you – you are joking right!

The people in the crowd had heard about Jesus and they wanted to touch him. He was a celebrity. It would be a bit like oh I don't know let's say George Clooney or Meryl Streep walking down the street and everyone wanting to touch them. No-one quite knows why – they just follow the crowd.

And it would have been the same in this story, most of the people had no real reason to touch Jesus they just followed the crowd. But when the woman who needed to be healed touched his cloak Jesus knew it was different.

This unnamed woman who must have thought that her life was never going to change because she had tried everything available to her to find a cure, came to Jesus in another attempt to be healed; but this time was different because she believed that he would be able to help her. She was so sure that she risked her life to come to him.

Because of her condition she was not allowed to be in contact with other people as she would make them unclean too. She knew that at best she would be insulted for being there but at worst she would be beaten to death because the people would be afraid of her. And so she had to come to Jesus in secret, hoping that no one would notice and Jesus would be unaware of her touch.

Can you imagine how long she must have thought about how to get to Jesus without anyone knowing and how she must have weighed up what it was she needed to do before deciding that she would just touch the hem of his cloak because that would be enough.

What tremendous faith, she didn't even need him to touch her or to know that she was there; she just knew that he had the power to heal her. But of course Jesus knew what had happened the moment she touched his cloak. He could have let it go and moved on but he knew it was not enough for this woman to be healed, she also needed to be accepted back into society and so he asks, "Who touched me". Once the woman realises that she has been found out she comes forward and confesses all.

You can just hear the sharp intake of breath (ahhh) as all those around her realise that she has touched them and that they are now unclean.

Can you imagine her fear as she tells the whole truth? What if she was wrong about Jesus and he humiliates her in front of all these people. What if he takes back the healing because she didn't ask him for permission? But of course Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He looked at her with compassion and said "My Daughter" how wonderful, how affirming to be called daughter after being an outcast all these years.

"My Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your trouble". In affect what he did was not only restore this woman's health but also her place in society and give her back her self esteem!

It is a wonderful story and one that reminds us that we need to have faith and trust Jesus when we need help.

Sometimes that is hard because like the woman we are struggling with life. Sometimes it's hard because we have tried everything else and nothing has worked! But just like that woman we have to give it one more try and ask Jesus to help us.

I have been asked several times in the last few weeks if this virus has been sent by God to purge the world! My answer is always no – the God I believe in loves us and would never do anything to hurt us; his heart is breaking at the devastation it is causing and he is right there with those who are suffering and dying.

We can't always explain why things happen but can trust that God is right there for those who are in pain.

I have also been asked if God and Jesus have time for them because there is so much else that they have to deal with. If we think about the story this morning – Jesus stopped right in the middle of going to heal a sick child to give time to that woman because he knew it was important – that she was important – he could have let her touch his cloak and not acknowledge her real need but he didn't he made time for her. He then goes on and heals Jairus' daughter too because he makes time for us all so never be afraid to ask for help and never think he doesn't have time for you because he does!

So the next time you are feeling that you can't do it or the things in life are just too much remember this woman and her faith and ask Jesus to help – he will!

Amen