

Our passage this morning is very familiar.

It is a favourite of some friends. And some of you may recall Carol and doing a talk on the whole bigger passage including the healing of Jairus's daughter, three years ago.

But the real push for me to focus on this story, is the chance to share with you all, the magnificent and moving painting in a chapel at the church in Magdala Israel.

I don't think any of us on that trip would fail to remember the impact of this powerful depiction.

Jesus had just stepped out of the boat at Capernaum and as Jesus stepped onto the shore a Jewish leader fell at his feet begging him to save his dying little girl of 12yrs of age.

A woman followed the crowd and joined it. She shouldn't have. It was very risky.

She was seen as an 'untouchable'.

She was seen as unclean from her persistent gynaecological bleeding.

Women were unclean every month till the bleeding stopped. Everything and anyone she touched became unclean. She was not allowed to handle money or food or attend the synagogue. If she had been married her husband probably abandoned her or she had to leave, if single she stayed single.

Basically, she was isolated, ill and probably weak from the bleeding and possibly, the lack of food.

Depressed and so very desperate.

She was treated as though she had a contagious disease. Her bleeding was seen as a result of a great sin she had committed.

To risk being amongst others, pressed up against them, making them ceremonially unclean was punishable, unthinkable and the bravest thing she could do. She had nothing else to lose.

This desperate woman who had suffered for 12 yrs, penniless and broken, felt Jesus was worth the risk.

He could heal her if she could just reach out and touch his clothes.

This way of thinking is mentioned in Luke 6 where crowds just want to touch his clothes to be healed.

Jesus was seen as a symbol of good fortune, a lucky charm, a magician. People sought only physical healing or a chance to see spectacular events. They wanted an immediate fix. Jesus wanted to heal and save and restore, not simply cure. He came 'To set the captives free.' Isaiah 61

Even though her faith was imperfect, belief that touching his clothes would heal. This woman still believed. She trusted God's power, She went against the rules to reach for healing; And she persisted through the suffocating crowds, utterly determined. Even though she could have been crushed to death.

She touched the edge of his cloak. We believe she touched Jesus's prayer shawl.

Jewish men wore prayer shawls known as a Tallit which had tassels on each of its 4 corners.

These tassels signified God's commandments and promises. They were of blue and white thread.

The blue thread was a hallmark of nobility. A reminder that the wearer was a member of God's kingdom of Priests.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word for fringe or border can also mean wing.

Malachi 4v2 'healing in his wings.'

The word healed in verse 28, in Greek is 'sozo', and means so much more than is interpreted. It means, safe, sound, healed, delivered, made whole, rescued, restored, saved.

As she pushed through the crushing crowds (as described in Luke's account), He felt someone touch him!!

Well, he was in a crowd. A suffocating crowd. Lots of people were touching him. It sounds a bit supernatural. It is. Jesus is supernatural. He is God's son in human form.

His disciples think Jesus is being ridiculous.

In the Passion translation verse 30 reads,

'Jesus knew at once that someone had touched him, for he felt the power that always surged around him had passed through him for someone to be healed.'

This was a glorious power that kept going out around Jesus, drawing others to him and healing those he touched.

In this case, healing a woman who touched him in faith.

The word touch comes from the root word 'hpto' which means to fasten to or cling to.
Jesus asked, ' who touched me?'
Even though it was not him but his shawl she touched.
What he really asked was ' who clung to me with their whole being in unwavering faith?'

We have already noted her desperation, but her faith was so powerful and desperate that it reached God more deeply than anyone else in that crowd.
Jesus knew the power had gone from him through this woman's touch because her faith connected with the heavenly power that cannot but honour authentic faith.

It is so touching and reassuring to read that Jesus wanted to hear her story. He listened as she described her loneliness, exclusion, separation from family, friends and the community.
He focused his attention on her, even though a Jewish leader's daughter was dying. He did not need to hurry. He has life and death in his hands.
In this moment his daughter needed him and he was fully present for her.

I love how Jesus gently states how it's her faith that has healed her, not his clothes.
Jesus doesn't just cure her of her ailment. He heals her life. He restores herSOZO,
To her community, to her family, to her friends.
We need to remind ourselves that God has a bigger picture. Not always to cure, as we all are aware, but to heal sometimes elsewhere in our lives.

Jesus calls her daughter. She belongs to him. She had been invisible and shunned, now Jesus claims her.
'GO IN PEACE' really translates to 'go into peace'. She received physical healing AND salvation.
When God heals, your entire life is affected because faith spans all aspects of our being.

There are several points to remember,as we come to a close.....

*God sees us...Everything and all of us

*His attention is not divided for those who trust in him

*Absolutely Everyone is able to ask for his attention and his rescuing. Let's not exclude or ignore some people. Let us really model the greater law of love.

*God is interested in the bigger picture. We often ask for a specific remedy, but he wants to heal us in a bigger way.

What is making you want to reach out and touch the prayer shawl of Jesus?
What is making you feel desperate? Isolated? Alone?
What makes you want to stretch out your hand in hope?

So many of us have big things going on. Big, heavy and consuming stuff.
Remember that Jesus knows,Jesus understands and Jesus loves us and wants to save us.

During communion Carol and I will be offering anointing of hands, with oil from the Holy Land.
Not because we have the answers but because it's a relief to recognise and acknowledge how much we need God.It is not magical but a time to offer it up, quietly and reflectively.

It can be a sign of our faith; a sign of our trust; a sign of our hope, for the situations we are in.