

“Reconnecting With Reality”

(Mark 5:24-34)

Grant Bullen

Introduction

Two healing stories form today’s Gospel...

From what we can see, the Jesus of history did have a reputation as a healer... and so it’s not surprising such stories are front and centre in our gospel records.

But as with all Scripture, the stories are kept and retold for a deeper meaning than their surface interest.

The Spirit of God is calling us to look deeper... calling us to walk ‘The Way’ with deeper insight and understanding.

That’s where we’ll travel today... focusing on the story of the woman suffering from 12 years of continuous bleeding.

The Woman – Bleeding and Faith

The physical suffering of the woman is real and terrible. But there’s more happening here...

In the Jewish law of the day, a woman is unclean when she’s bleeding – she is unacceptable in God’s presence.

And because her state will defile others, she must keep herself away from people... until the bleeding stops.

She’s been bleeding for 12 years... and so we imagine a woman cut-off from society, from human company; unable to share any of her life... isolated... alienated... alone. She is separated from the touch of another.

When Jesus says, “your *faith* has made you well,” he’s speaking of her courage... of the risk she takes this day...

“If only I can touch him... even the hem of his robe... I’ll be healed.”

And so she risks entering/joining the crowd – somewhere she shouldn’t be.

She risks their condemnation, their violence, if she’s recognised... because she’s defiling them as she pushes her way through.

She's even willing to risk defiling the rabbi himself...

On this day, in her desperation, she won't accept that she has no place there. She defies both law and popular perception.

She pushes her way into the throng of people.

And she touches the holy man... the Christ... the living embodiment of the Lord.

She will not give-in to the tarnish of her unacceptability.

She touches him! This is significant. In every other healing story, *Jesus* touches the afflicted person, but here, *he* is touched. And she doesn't ask his permission.

This is her risk of faith. *'I will not be excluded from the grace of God. I will not be excluded from the touch of this holy man.'*

Immediately her bleeding stops.

She is healed of her physical condition.

But there is more... way, way more!

Jesus says to her, *"Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed! Be healed of your disease."* (34 MSG)

She is now a woman restored to her true status... as a child of God... as an indispensable member of human society.

The Deeper Meaning

The woman goes to Jesus wanting him to stop the bleeding. Fair enough!

But what *he* wants for her is much bigger.

He reconnects her to her true nature as a beloved daughter of God... and as one with the human community of all people.

We go to God wanting God to stop *our* bleeding. Fair enough!

But God's desire for us is much bigger.

God wants to reconnect us with reality... with the knowledge of our true identity.

We could use this story to reflect on social injustice... on the many ways we exclude others we deem unacceptable for all manner of reasons. (And that would be a perfectly fine sermon.) But I want to travel deeper...

For at the foundation of so much of our human suffering, is the illusion, the falsehood, that we are separate, independent beings... separate from each other... separate from God.

So much of our struggle, our dysfunction, our disconnection and loneliness, derives from this fundamental misconception.

Simply, separation is **not** true... that's not reality.

We are not separate independent beings.

And yet this perception is so ingrained... in our culture as well as ourselves... we are so habituated and attached to the idea, that we almost never even question it.

Faith tells us, we are **not** separate independent beings.

The true reality is... we are manifestations of Divine Love. We are created in and from LOVE – it is our life essence.

In our essence, we are one with God. We come from God; we return to God – there is no life apart from this identity. If God stopped breathing in us, we would vanish in an instant.

We are one with God... and we are one with each other. For we ALL come from God, and we all share this one identity.

Separateness is illusion.

Separateness is us sleep-walking through life.

Disconnection is unnecessary suffering.

Rejection of others, conflict, is the madness of us turning against our very selves.

For we all share the one identity... no matter where or how we're bleeding.

We don't need to *achieve* connection... with God... or with each other... for one-ness simply **is**.

All we need do is wake up to it.

Maturing Faith

And so, maturing, deepening faith, involves a movement of mind... perception... imagination... and investment... from the individual to the 'transpersonal'.

This means recognising our identity beyond the individual self.

It means daring to leave the small world of *I, me, mine...* to explore the luminous vastness of the sea of Divine Love... where all creation, (including you and me), is one.

It means leaving this obsession with self... to imagine... to open to... the world of GOD...

Allowing the illusion of self to fade and disappear into the nothingness it is.

This is the WAY modelled and taught by Christ Jesus.

'If you want to know true/abundant life, you need to forget yourself; letting that illusion die as surely as if it was hung on a cross... And then follow me... walk my way.'

This is at the heart of what he says to the woman in today's Gospel...

'Daughter, you've taken a great risk in faith. You've left behind that bitter world of disconnection, of separateness, and been healed in touching and being touched. Never go back to that old prison.

Live well! Live blessed!'

Maturing, deepening faith, involves a movement of mind... perception... imagination... and investment... from the individual to the 'transpersonal'.

Stepping away from that old illusion of separateness, of self, into the luminous vastness of unity and love.

It takes courage... It takes faith. And because it's a new world, it requires exploration...

Conclusion

We go to GOD wanting GOD to stop the bleeding – so we can more successfully, more happily traverse this individualised, consumerist existence of ours.

But GOD has a bigger agenda.

God wants to reconnect us with REALITY.

For God wants us to live... Truly live!

Christ Jesus is a healer.

But he's not interested in patching up our old, imprisoned life.

He's waking us up to the truth... to a life beyond the narrow constricted boundaries of our current perception.