

The Life-Changing Touch of Jesus

Mark 5:21-43

It is always tempting for a preacher to look at a passage of Scripture, written thousands of years ago, and scan it for topics that will pop and sparkle with an audience living in the 21st century. And certainly reading about Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead should get all of our attention. Nevertheless, there is a big issue our passage for this morning deals with that can be easily overlooked. But this has also been the case for our last two texts that have been capably preached. Back in Mark 4:36-37, Jesus told His disciples that He wanted to go to the Gentile side of the lake, called the Sea of Galilee. Here is what we read,

“Leaving the crowd behind, they took Jesus along, just as he was, in the boat [it was evening, no dilly dallying]. There were other boats with him.
³⁷ And a furious storm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat.”

Why did Mark mention there were other boats? One of the reasons is because it reminds us there were other people on the lake besides the disciples – who were greatly helped by Jesus calming that storm. This has always been true of Christianity. It helps many people who are not in the boat with Jesus. For example, it is the Biblical worldview of Christianity that helped to spawn great advances in science. Isaac Newton, who is considered by many to be the father of modern science, clearly testified that it was his faith in Christ and his study of the Bible that gave him his best insights into science. The great technological advance of the printing press came about because a follower of Christ wanted to get the Bible into the hands of as many people as possible. Hospitals, orphanages,

democracies with limited civil governments, the free market – have all been birthed by the Christian worldview – and have benefitted countless people – who are not followers of Christ.

Our passage last week ended with a detail that is also easily overlooked. The demon-possessed man healed by Jesus, was told to go back to his people and tell them how much the Lord had done for him. Mark 5:20 informs us that he spread this news in the Decapolis, which were ten Greek cities – south/east of the Sea of Galilee. What is significant about that fact? One of those cities was Pella, which in A.D. 66 provided refuge for Christian Jews fleeing for their lives from the wrath of Rome. Why did Christians find refuge in Pella? I believe one of the reasons was because the residents of Pella had learned about Jesus from that healed demoniac.

This morning we are going to learn what Jesus did for two women – which foreshadows a very significant change Jesus has brought to the world in which we live. Let’s begin reading from Mark 5:21-33,

“When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake [back to the Jewish side], a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there [not all the religious leaders of Israel were against Jesus]. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying [literally she has reached the final stage before death. When my mother reached that stage, she had to labor for every breath. It is hard to watch. And so Jairus pleads with Jesus]. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live’ [Jairus believed that Jesus was the King of the Kingdom of God – a kingdom whose blessings were breaking out on the earth at that time].²⁴ So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him [the large crowd showed

that Jesus was popular, but it also made it difficult for individuals to get close to Jesus. Because Jairus had an urgent need, he likely elbowed his way through the crowd to get close to Jesus. But he was not the only one in that crowd with an urgent need].

²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse [She was beyond ordinary human help]. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus [most likely from those who believed in Jesus], she came up behind him in the crowd [undoubtedly pushing and shoving] and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.’ ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. ³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ [Christ’s disciples were bewildered by that question because as Jesus was moving through the crowd to get to the house of Jairus, all kinds of people were pressing against Him. And so there was probably irritation in their voices when they said] ³¹ ‘You see the people crowding against you . . . and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?”’ ³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it [Jesus knew that divine power had left His body]. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.”

I am pretty sure that when she touched Jesus and knew she was healed, there was fear in knowing that she was in the presence of someone who was more than just a man. But there was another reason for her fear. Her bleeding, which was probably a menstrual issue, made her ceremonially unclean. What does that mean? Let’s listen to **Leviticus 15:25-27**,

“When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as [she is] in the days of her period. ²⁶ Any bed she lies on . . . and anything she sits on will be unclean . . . ²⁷ Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till

evening.”

The large crowd of people, combined with the woman’s efforts to get close enough to Jesus to touch Him, had undoubtedly caused many people in that crowd to become ceremonially unclean. One commentary said she was walking pollution. According to Leviticus 15:19, even Jesus was to be considered ceremonially unclean because she touched Him. And so the woman did not know what to expect when she told Jesus about her condition. Would He be upset with her? A load of care was lifted when she heard the words of Jesus recorded in verse 34, “He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’”

Let’s be careful here – because it was not her faith that healed her. It was her **faith in Christ** that made her whole. If she had put her trust in Buddha – she would have remained unclean. Yes, we need to have faith, but if our faith is in the wrong object, it will do us no good. It is faith in Christ alone that saves.

The next person who was going to be healed by Christ’s touch, was a dead girl. Yes, she too was ceremonially unclean. And it was not her faith that healed her. It was the faith of her father Jairus. Let’s begin reading at verse 35,

“While Jesus was still speaking [to the woman], some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they said. ‘Why bother the teacher any more?’ [those men needed some lessons in tact] ³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’ ³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of

the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.”

In Israel there were professional mourners. We first hear about them in **Jeremiah 9:17**, which was written over 500 years before Christ came to earth. At that time the people of Judah were about to be driven out of their land by the Babylonians, and so Jeremiah declares, “Call for the wailing women to come; send for the most skillful of them.” The Mishnah also says, “Even the poorest in Israel do not hire less than two flute players and one wailing woman.” And so a number of the people who were weeping at the house of Jairus, were professional mourners. They had often been around dead people and knew what death looked like. What Jesus tells them in verse 39, was a slap in the face to their professionalism,

“He went in and said to them, ‘Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.’⁴⁰ But they laughed at him [I am pretty sure the words “idiot” and “goof-ball” were mumbled under their breath]. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.⁴¹ He took her by the hand [that was a no-no under the Ceremonial Law] and said to her, ‘*Talitha koum!*’ (which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’).⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.”

Jesus had the power to raise this girl from the dead, and He also had the tender concern to make sure she got something to eat. I would love to have seen the look on the faces’ of those professional mourners when that girl walked out of the house. If they stuck to their guns and maintained that she had truly died, then they had to accept the fact that Jesus raised her

from the dead. If they could not admit that Jesus had actually raised her from the dead, then they had to acknowledge that Jesus was right – when He said she was just asleep. Either scenario meant that the words “idiot” and “goof-ball” described them and not Christ.

Here is where we need to think carefully. After Jesus touched that dead girl, there are no indications that He went outside the city, bathed, put on clean clothes and then waited until evening to come back. He did not need to. His touch made her alive and clean. By doing this, Jesus showed His authority over the Ceremonial Law of Israel.

This truth alerts Christians that we need a clear understanding of the threefold division of God’s Law. One of the historic documents of Congregational Christians is called “The Savoy Declaration of Faith.” It was written in 1658 and spends a number of pages explaining the Moral Law, the Ceremonial Law and the Civil Law. The Moral Law is the standard of right and wrong for all peoples of all ages. However, the Ceremonial Law was specifically given to Israel to point them to the person and work of Christ. However, most of the Ceremonial Laws were fulfilled in Christ and made obsolete by Christ. The other division of God’s Law is the Civil Law. It laid down just penalties for those who violated God’s Moral Law or Ceremonial Law. But when the Ceremonial Law was made obsolete by Christ, so were the Civil Laws that applied to them. Is your head spinning yet? Let me add that the Civil Laws attached to God’s Moral Law are still just and beneficial – as Jesus testifies in Mark 7:10, along with the testimony of Hebrews 2:2.

What does all this mean? The Bible says Jesus never sinned, which tells us He never violated God's Moral Law, summarized by the Ten Commandments. This also means Jesus never deserved any of the penalties laid out in the Civil Law. Here is the truth that Christians understood hundreds of years ago. It is only the Ceremonial division of God's Law that Christ made obsolete. That is the part of God's Law we are not under. If we just make a blanket statement that we are not under God's Law, it can cause people to conclude that God's Moral Law is no longer relevant – and that is a seriously wrong notion.

After we have read this passage about Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead, does it cause you to ask why aren't we regularly seeing or hearing about these kind of miracles today? Hasn't God's Kingdom broken out upon the earth? And isn't His Kingdom spreading all over the world? Yes – to both of those questions. But remember, there were many people who were not healed in Jesus' day and there are many people who have and will experience divine physical healing today.

Let me also remind you that millions of people who would have died young when the New Testament was written – are living today because of the care of doctors using modern medicines and technology – which a Biblical worldview helped to create. People not in the boat with Jesus, are still being helped by Jesus today.

Let's also talk about the physical resurrection that little girl experienced. All the people in the Bible, who were bodily raised from the dead [and there were a number of them], had to die again. This 12 year

old girl eventually died again. Jesus is the only One thus far in history who has risen from the dead, never to die again. There will be billions of people who will experience this when Jesus comes to raise the dead. If that little girl became a follower of Christ, then she experienced another kind of resurrection that is greater than the physical resurrection she experienced. Jesus speaks about this resurrection in **John 11:21-27**,

“‘Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if you had been here, my brother [Lazarus] would not have died.’²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.’²³ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’²⁴ Martha answered, ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day’ [along with everyone else].²⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’²⁷ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him, ‘I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’”

The Bible says that apart from Christ we are all spiritually dead – separated from fellowship with God. But through faith in Christ, we become spiritually alive and restored to fellowship with God. And the spiritual life we enter into never ends. Not even physical death can end the spiritual life we gained in Christ. For Christians – to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Of all the Apostles, only John recorded Christ’s conversation with Martha, when He told her that a person who believes in Him will live, even though he dies. And it was John who was privileged to see the reality of those words – and he wrote about it in **Revelation 20:4**. When John was penning these words, multitudes of Christians had been put to death because of their faith in Christ. John had escaped death but was

banished to the island of Patmos. And there on that desolate island, God pulled back the curtains of heaven and allowed John to see what was taking place. And this is what John saw in heaven,

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls [the spirits] of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God [the Apostle Paul may have been one of the souls that John saw. And in amazement John writes] . . . They lived and reigned with Christ” . . . [Just as Jesus said].

If Jairus and his wife and daughter were killed because of their faith in Christ, then they too were among those people John saw – who lived even though they had died. But because Jairus and his wife and daughter were Jewish – they may have avoided death by fleeing to the city of Pella, which became a refuge for Christians – possibly due to the testimony of the healed demoniac, who told them what the Lord had done for him – and they marveled. Let’s pray.