

## The Healer: The Chronic

*Mark 5:24-34*

We are spending a few weeks this summer in a series called The Healer because we as pastors care about you! And we read your prayer requests and see the desperate need so many of us have for healing. We believe God has the power to heal. Maybe you believe that, maybe you don't. Maybe you'd like to but can't imagine it. Well, we hope you come to see it and to believe it. If this is your first week, I'd encourage you to listen to Pastor Ellis' sermon from last week because he really helped us to see how the power of God to heal is at work now in the world and not yet fully as we wait for God to heal the whole world once and for all.

Throughout this series we see the healing power of a man named Jesus who lived on earth 2,000 years ago and revealed to us God himself. Jesus is God. We believe God can see all of eternity and all our suffering on the scale of eternity *and* not miss how the moments living with intense illness feel. Every passing moment of you hurting matters to God. And we know that because he left eternity in order to come and enter into time and be confined by the passing of each moment just like we are. Our lives matter to God. He sees you. And he wants to save you.

So as a pastor and as a fellow human being, I want to talk today about the compassion of God and the power of God when it comes to chronic illness. Does anyone have this all figured out? No. Me neither. But we have a lot to learn about our God when he see him heal two most desperate cases. We're in a set of two stories that we will unfold this week and next that I'm calling the tale of the two daughters. If you are here today because someone told you about the message of Jesus to heal, and you came curious, you are so like the daughter today. And I pray you might find what she found—a God who sees her and saves her. Let me read this and listen for those two daughters:

Mark 5:24-34

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be well and live." And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I even touch his garments, I will be made well." And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Pray with me.

I am so grateful to be part of a team of leaders in this church. Do you know that we send out our sermons to one another mid-week for feedback and correction? This was one of those weeks where I so grateful for this team. Through their own stories, they reminded me that the story of the desperate daughters is just as real today as it was two thousand years ago when it first happened. Within this crowd are people with both public and private desperations to see something healed in their life. And that desperation crosses age and education and position and into church leadership. I pray we can all get in the crowd today and see the amazing compassion of God to see us and to heal us.

So let's dive in. Who were the two daughters in the story? Jairus'—yes, the named daughter. The daughter of the public figure. Everyone knows this guy's daughter and knows she's dying. Who's the other daughter? The unnamed one, the one who's been suffering for every day that Jairus' little girl has been alive, hemorrhaging, cast out from her town, she once had money but she doesn't have any anymore because she spent it all on every treatment. Someone said, have you tried this? And she did. Have you seen him? Yep. Next week we will come back to the young daughter. But today we're going to hear the story of the unnamed daughter. If you're here and you're suffering from chronic illness or you know someone who is, know that you're not unnamed either. Jesus sees you, and he wants to save you.

In this chunk of Mark, Jesus is demonstrating his power in the most desperate of circumstances—He shows us the power of God in Jesus that comes fully alive in the presence of faith. It's power to heal and, even more, to save. Each of these stories uses a word for healing that in the language this story was originally told in—in Greek—means healing on two levels. It means physical healing and soul healing. It's the word for salvation.

Aren't we glad that physical healing is part of our whole salvation package? Jesus saves wholly and completely. I want you to see that right away. He sees the physical suffering, and it's not okay with him. Jesus intends to heal it. And God also sees so many dynamics beyond the physical—spiritual, emotional, social—Jesus sees those ways that you are suffering, too, and his power to heal extends through all those realms.

The unnamed woman knows she needs salvation on so many levels. There is the physical-- she is constantly hemorrhaging and all the embarrassment that comes with that. It's not like today, though, where she could hide it. And because she's bleeding, there's a host of other ways she needs saving. The social customs and laws mean that she shouldn't be touching *anyone*. She's not allowed out in public. She's shunned from family, can't come to worship, can't keep a job. Her chronic illness has completely isolated her.

For those of you who haven't suffered chronically, you might not immediately think about all the ways that physical suffering impacts someone's entire life. You might consider yourself empathetic. But you do know how you feel when you sit down in an airplane next to someone sneezing? What do you think? Nuh uh. Don't you sneeze your flu into my air vent. There's a lot we who are generally healthy do to increase the pain of those who are chronically ill. I shared about our 8 years of infertility before. There were so many gatherings my non-mon-ness excluded me from. So many callous comments—if you'd just try adoption, you'll get pregnant right away. It happened for so and so. A whole society of “nuh uh's” coming at chronic illness.

Have you been in her shoes? Are you empathetic toward her? This woman is the sneezer who everyone around is saying “nuh uh” to. All the time. For 12 years. She's tried to get well. She's suffered *much* under *many* physicians and spent *all* she had but she's not better. In fact, she's worse. Now she had heard—can someone say she had heard? *She had heard* the reports about Jesus and verse 27 says she came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his garment. Can someone gasp for me? That's right. She came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his garment. How many people did that woman touch that day? So many!

Sneezing on everybody. According to everything in that custom, Jesus has now caught her uncleanness, and so did everyone around her.

What makes her risk a moment of public shaming, publicly getting another “nuh uh”? She had heard the reports about Jesus, and she was absolutely desperate for him.

I wonder when was the last time we felt so desperate about anything? I was in the kitchen just a couple weeks ago and suddenly I couldn't find my son. I started out calmly enough—Reed? Reed? Where are you? Then I got more and more desperate until I was out on the street in front of my house screaming for him. My neighbor, 5 houses down, came running to help. Reed was hiding in the side yard and was shy to come out because I'd gotten so frighteningly desperate. Desperate—**Are we desperate for Jesus?**

We aren't often desperate, generally speaking, in 2019 in Gig Harbor, because we have another doctor, another counselor we can go to. We have another diet to try, a bit more we can spend. But even folks here find their end. I know you do. You're just quiet about it, just like this woman. Did you notice she didn't say anything out-loud? After 12 years, it's all in her head. So, too, many of you are suffering in silence. Desperate, but don't let it show. These stories of healing are of people who show up publicly desperate, desperate and believing beyond hope that *Jesus* might have something no one else did.

This unnamed, shunned, desperate woman becomes a follower of Jesus in the truest sense. She had heard about Jesus, came to find him, and reaches out to him in faith, hoping beyond hope that he might be able to heal her. I find that the desperate are often the deepest of Jesus-followers because of the depth of their faith—their hope in what we can't see. That's been a trait of people who love God from the very beginning. Read Hebrews 11 if you need some encouragement in that faith today.

I get the privilege of seeing people follow Jesus this way. Just a few weeks ago on Pentecost, I was up here inviting all of us to receive the Holy Spirit. And at 10:45, I felt so compelled to go and pray over a man I know named Brian who's been sick for so long. Plagued with debilitating headaches. Here he was, top row, praying for the Holy Spirit, *again*. I felt compelled in my Spirit to pray for him to not give up. To keep persevering. I didn't want to make a scene and single him out, but I felt like Jesus was saying, don't be ridiculous. I've singled him out. Go pray for him.

I believe in miraculous healing. But God didn't free Brian from his headaches that day. It's such a frustrating mystery to me to live by faith and not by sight. I don't understand why desperate people reaching out to Jesus don't always get immediate physical healing. I still hope Brian does! What happens next in the story, though, reminds me that God isn't merely transactional. He's after more than Brian's physical healing. He's promised an eternity to Brian and to you of a fully restored body. That's coming. I want it to come now, but until he does, I'm going to trust that God really cares about that, that that moment of God singling out Brian was real and God really does want a full, body and soul salvation for him and that Brian's faith matters.

I love that image Judson Taylor found from artist, James Tissot, in the 1800's of Jesus healing the woman in the crowd. But now look and see how it was portrayed in the Roman catacombs. Where are the crowds? I initially didn't want to use this painting because it isn't accurate to the story. People were everywhere. But even in the second century, someone heard this story of Jesus with this unnamed woman and thought—I know this moment. I live this moment. Everyone's around, but it's just me and Jesus. He sees me. He can save me. And from the moment this really happened around 30AD all through the ages to right now, this moment remains true. We the chronically ill have a God who sees and who saves us.

And so we still wait for that miracle. There may be crowds of people here, but God sees Brian. He sees you. Now Jesus had Jairus standing right there, and he had the disciples frustrated that he'd taken the time on the

way to the important guy's house to stop and find some unnamed woman. He's going to take care of that daughter, too. But our God hasn't lost sight of the long-suffering one. He's not lost sight of you.

So the woman touches Jesus' robe, and immediately she knows the blood has stopped. She's been physically healed. But God doesn't just want to heal her, he wants to save her. God could give you full physical healing, and it wouldn't be enough. You need God himself. The Good News is that God is seeking you out! And with or without the physical miracle, God is offering us all the rest of the full salvation this woman gets until we get the physical, too. Watch Jesus.

Verse 30 says, **"Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?"** The disciples question Jesus—are you kidding me? There's an entire crowd pressing in and you want to know who this one person is who touched you? But Jesus stays where he is and looks harder. Verse 32, **"And he looked around to see who had done it."**

This woman knows God is looking for her. So she comes out of hiding, approaches Jesus in fear and trembling, and tells him "the whole truth." In the midst of that crowd, she speaks. Luke 8 adds to this and says that she shared, "why she touched him and how she was healed."

That whole crowd who's waiting for Jesus to go and heal the beloved daughter of Jairus, stands there to hear this unnamed woman explain why she touched him. Her story matters, your story matters. It matters to Jesus, and it matters to all the rest of us, too. So she shares, "Jesus, I had heard that you healed others who just touched you. I have been bleeding for twelve years, and I have spent all my money on treatments. I've suffered so much. I thought if I just... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you unclean. I know I wasn't supposed to touch you or anyone else... I just thought.. just maybe.. that's why I touched you. And immediately, I barely touched your garment and the bleeding stopped! I'm not unclean anymore! It just happened!" And Jesus takes the time right then to hear out the whole truth.

The crowd waits. What will Jesus do next? Verse 34: **And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."** There is no rebuke from Jesus. He's not rushed. Instead, there's a beautiful proclamation: I see you, and I've saved you.

Jesus speaks healing in that full sense of salvation both the body and soul when he says, "Your faith has made you well"—that well-ness is the salvation of body and soul. In the moment that this woman recognizes that ONLY Jesus can make her well and she presses in, desperate to get to Jesus—in that moment she is physically and spiritually saved. That "risk of faith" as Eugene Peterson calls it —faith not as a mental exercise but put into practice by leaving the outskirts of the city and pressing through the crowd because she dared to believe that Jesus could heal her—that moment made her truly well. That physical healing was the sign that what was happening in her soul was real. She is healed *and* restored to God. And *her* physical healing is also the sign for you today that if you press into Jesus, desperately sure of the hope that HE might have rescue for your soul, rescue for the cycles of sin you can't break free from, for your eternal life with God forever!—if you press in with faith sure of what you hope for, that JESUS has the power to save you now, you will find this too. **Salvation, well-ness, true healing.**

Jesus says **"go in peace."** Even now, Jesus is offering you *peace*, a wholeness that comes with his presence even without the change in circumstances. I've seen followers of Jesus endure incredible suffering with an inexplicable peace—a peace that comes from the presence of Jesus.

Jesus says to her, **Go in peace and be healed of your disease.** She already is healed. What is he offering now? He's offering healing of all the suffering, of all the twelve years of agony. She can be brought back in with her family and friends. She can be healed of the bitterness of 12 years of rejection. That salvation, that healing, is

available to you today as well! It's soul. Emotional. Healing. Jesus offers that to you! He does have the power to heal! And even if he does not now, or until he does, he has real gifts to offer you as you reach out for him in faith- salvation. Peace. The undoing of all the realms of suffering.

Jesus doesn't say all this to her privately. He says it to her publicly. Don't miss this—what did he call her publicly? Daughter. Daughter. The one being compared to the young daughter acutely ill that everyone else cares about. She's doesn't have an earthly father seeking out Jesus for her. Yet. It's Jesus who goes looking for her. Who seeks her out. Who won't move toward that important person until he's made a connection with her. Daughter. Jesus, the Good Father in the flesh, restores his daughter to the family. He gives her salvation. He gives her peace. He promises her the healing will continue.

Do you want Jesus to save you? Are you desperate? Press in. Ask for the faith to be sure of what you hope for. I believe Jesus can and will save you forever and until he does, there is still a lot of salvation and peace that is ours in Jesus. Let's reflect on that as we listen to this song that Esther-Jane has written about trusting in God's power to save...

If you need someone to help you to reach out and ask Jesus for healing, please come forward after the service. You will find a prayer team here eager to pray with you. We want to see you and ask God to save you as he is saving us. We're all in the same boat here. We all need Jesus.

Next week we're going to see what happens with Jairus and his daughter. There is a card in your bulletin. If you know someone that needs to know God's power to heal, please take this and invite them.

I think, though, that many of you today are going to resonate with this daughter's story, the story of the one chronically suffering. I want to ask you something boldly. Will you consider telling our story? Would you share why you would come to Jesus for healing and if this has happened to you – how it was that Jesus came to heal you? We have a video booth set up in the lobby. I'm hoping that next week we might be able to show some clips of some public professions of healing just like this woman in this story. The crowd needed to hear of the power of Jesus to heal and the woman needed her moment to testify to Jesus' power. And I think we need that testimony today. So if it is your story that you have sought Jesus or are seeking Jesus for healing from chronic illness, please consider telling your story to the camera that we might share some of those stories with this crowd gathered here. Take talking to the camera as a practice run for telling the story of your healing to those around you. Share your stories this week around dinner tables and walks. People need to know! Jesus can save you now. God still heals today. He has not yet done all the work of healing that he will one day do. Yet I still believe and have seen him heal today that we might know that Jesus is God and that he is the only one with the power to save, forever.