

The message today is about the woman with the issue of blood. I have chosen to call her Judith.

Obviously, some of what I will say today is reading between the lines of the gospel account, but it is probably very close to what happened in her life.

## Judith.....Mark 5:25-34

Judith was lonely. So desperately lonely. It had been 12 years since she had been hugged by her mother or caressed by her father. She had not realized how much she needed the comfort of human touch till it had been taken away from her. O how she ached to touch others and to be touched by them! Her deep brown eyes which used to be so lustrous and alive were hollow and dull. Her beautiful features were haggard and drawn. The hemorrhaging had begun shortly after her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had developed into womanhood with grace and beauty. It had not been hard for her to attract a godly young man as a suitor. An arrangement had been made between the two families and Judith and her intended were betrothed. A marriage date was set. She busied herself with the chores of preparing for the wedding and marriage. Her betrothed began the arduous task of building a room on the family insula, or extended household, for them to live in. Everything seemed to be perfect. Then one unforgettable night, the course of Judith's life was changed completely.

Just weeks before her wedding as she prepared for bed, she felt a strange sensation as an unexpected flow of blood issued from her body.

The law clearly stipulated the requirement for cleansing when a woman had a passage of blood. Leviticus said, "<sup>28</sup>But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. <sup>29</sup>And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. <sup>30</sup>And the

priest shall offer the one *for* a sin offering, and the other *for* a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the LORD for the issue of her uncleanness.<sup>1</sup>"

Judith waited hopefully for that eighth day, but it never came. She continued to bleed. In fact it worsened. Days became weeks as the continual loss of blood drained the strength and beauty from the innocent young victim. Her beauty faded. Her shapely frame was now a frail torso with scrawny arms and legs.

Worst of all was her social status. She was an outcast. Anyone who touched her, or anything she sat or lay upon, was unclean and had to go to the priest to offer sacrifice and wait till evening to be clean again.

Her betrothed had stoically endured her illness for a whole year but finally he had asked to be released from his vow. Judith sadly watched him marry another girl and begin a family.

Her family had been loving and patient, but finally her presence in the family home proved too burdensome. The family had scraped together enough money to build her a small house appo. ½ mile from the family insula. There she lived alone.

Her mother, Hadassah, faithfully visited her every week. She would bring a small package of coins and goodies and shout for Judith. When Judith came out, they would meet by a rock in front of the house. Hadassah would lay the package on the rock and then withdraw a few steps while Judith opened it. Hadassah longed to embrace her, but she could not touch her. After visiting a while, the older woman would sadly wend her way back to the family insula. Judith would go into the lonely room and prepare for bed.

She had spent so much money on physicians. For years, every time someone told her of a new one she would go to see if she could obtain help. Now her money was almost gone and her strength had deteriorated to the point that she could only travel short distances without stopping to rest. She had endured this agony for 12 long years, but remarkably, she had not lost her faith in Jehovah. She still

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<sup>1</sup>*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

clung stubbornly to the belief that God would heal her and she would be restored to fellowship with her people.

As she lay musing one day she heard a shout outside. Going to investigate, she found it was an unexpected visit from her mother. She was alarmed. "Mother, what is it? Is it father?"

"No darling, he is fine. Give me just a moment to catch my breath." She caught her breath and proceeded. "Judith, there is hope. I've heard of a man who can help you."

"Another one," said Judith absently. "O mother, I've tried so many doctors. None of them have helped. Why do you think this man can help? Mother, I know you mean well."

"Judith, I would not have come to you this urgently for nothing." Judith was drawn by the intensity and love of Hadassah's entreaties.

"Tell me about this man, mother."

"He is a Jew, a Nazarene, a rabbi. He heals truly, completely. I've seen it with my own eyes. Do you remember the old blind man Jacob, in our village?"

"The one born blind?"

"Yes. He too like you spent everything on doctors. But nothing worked. And now—" Pausing, she looked at Judith. "His eyesight is as perfect as a child. He sees! This man heals! Some say he is the Messiah come at last. You must go to him. He can heal you." And with that, she reached out and clasped both cheeks of her daughter in her hands.

Then, realizing what she had done, she recoiled in horror.

"If I be unclean, then let me be unclean," she said. "You must get help from this man."

Turning, she fled down the path to her house, leaving Judith standing alone.

Next morning, Judith arose determined to find this rabbi. The two-mile trip was grueling. She was so tired. She had to stop and rest so many times. Finally she came to the place where he was talking and healing.

She witnessed miracle after miracle. Her faith grew to the point that she knew she had to reach him. Struggling to keep going, Judith inched her way through the crowd till she saw the rabbi directly in front of her. Desperately lunging forward, she grasped the tassel of his prayer shawl, and as she did, she joyfully felt power and healing flowing through her body. New strength coursed through her limbs. She felt so happy and alive.

Then the rabbi stopped and said, "Who touched me? I felt power flow from me."

Fearing and trembling, she fell at his feet in gratitude and thanksgiving. She did not have to fear for long. Lovingly, Jesus said to her, "Daughter, don't be afraid. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

She was so captivated by his eyes. They were so loving and kind. And then he did the unthinkable. He touched her! Helping her to her feet, he hugged her and assured her of forgiveness and healing.

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Judith rose early on the morning of the eighth day. She was still overwhelmed by the touch and presence of Jesus. She was amazed at the newfound strength that graced her body. She had recovered completely. She joyfully entered the market to purchase two turtledoves. Then she went to the temple for the cleansing sacrifice and offering. Then she joyfully headed for the family insula. Excitedly she burst into the room and took her shocked mother in her arms. In unrestrained joy, both women wept uncontrollably in their happiness. Judith had been touched and healed by the Messiah of Israel— the Christ.

As she looked toward heaven, Judith knew that the excruciatingly long years of bondage and sorrow— not only her own, but that of her people, and in fact of all who would embrace him— had at last come to an end.

Let's look at some lessons from the story.

First: We see the power of human touch.

These are the days of sexual harassment cases. There surely are inappropriate ways we can touch each other, but you and I hold the tremendous power of human touch in our two hands.

There is something incredible about human touch. Human touch conveys...

healing...

compassion...

love...

concern...

empathy...

sympathy...

affirmation...

encouragement...

...and so many other messages.

To place a hand on a person's shoulder or arm and say, "I'm so sorry" conveys that message in a powerful way that words alone cannot do.

To say "What a great job you did" or "I really appreciate that" is so much more powerful when the words are accompanied by human touch. Studies have shown that babies will shrivel and die or be emotionally crippled if they are not held and cuddled. The power of human touch will help them emotionally and physically.

Over the years, when I could place a hand on a person's shoulder, look deeply into their eyes and say "I appreciate that. Great job. Thanks," the impact of the commendation was highlighted by the human touch. Parents should use touch often with their children. Touching, holding, hugging conveys love and emotional wellness to them. Little Josh, our grandchild, says, "hold

you?" He wants to be held, touched, loved. He loves to sit on our laps and listen to a story. He gives hugs and kisses.

All through the gospels we see Jesus touching people. His healing power and love flowed through His touch.

In Mark's gospel we see Him touching people or being troubled at least ten times.

Mark 1:30...Jesus touched, healed Peter's mother-in-law.

Mark 1:41... Jesus touched, healed a leper.

Mark 3:10...We are told that when He had healed many, they pressed about Him so they could touch Him.

Mark 5:27...The woman with the issue of blood (Judith) touched His garment.

Mark 5:41...Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand and raised her to life.

Mark 6:56...The sick touched the hem of His garment.

Mark 7:33...Jesus touched, healed the blind man who had an impediment in his speech.

Mark 8:23...Jesus touched and healed a blind man.

Mark 9:27...Jesus touched and healed the convulsive boy.

Mark 9:36...Jesus took a little child and held it in His lap.

Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

Jesus touched the servant's ear that Peter cut off in the garden.

The women touched His feet at the resurrection.

At least twelve times in the gospels we see Jesus touching someone.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is still touching us...

Heb. 4:15:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus knew the tremendous power of human touch.

Spouses know the tremendous power of human touch. The fingers brushing the spouse's cheek, the loving hug, the arm around the waist, the hand in the other's hand— all convey love to our spouses.

Married people know the power of the romantic touch. The moments shared together in the most intimate way cement the love and unity of the married couple.

I talked recently to a lovely young woman who is married to a man who doesn't understand her need for touch. Because of this, she struggles with feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. What a tragedy when the awesome power of her husband's touch could release her and make her whole!

I know of another woman who has been married for 30 years, but who feels desperately lonely because her husband is self-centered and selfish. His touching is only to get and not to give. She feels cheapened and used.

Of course, just like all good gifts, the gift of human touch can be perverted and misused.

The Christian must be very careful to only touch someone, other than his/her spouse, in a non-sexual way. We all know there are inappropriate ways we can touch and we must guard against them.

All of us, married or single, can touch in a selfish way— to get instead of to give— to hurt, not to heal. We need to be sure we are using God's gift of touch in ways that are appropriate and healing.

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<sup>2</sup>*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Second: God can heal.

James 5 gives us instructions for the anointing service. God has the power to heal our physical illnesses if it is within his holy will.

Judith received healing and there is healing in Jesus' touch today for you and me if it is in his will for us to be healed.

I read an account of how the missionary C.T. Studd while in Africa became deathly ill. He was alone with only one 20-year-old native co-worker. In his darkest hour he recalled the promise of James 5. He writes:

There was but one "elder" and he was in his twentieth year; no matter, "One day is as a thousand years." But where was the oil? Neither salad, olive or even linseed oil did we possess! What's the matter with lamp oil? What, kerosene? Why not? It is oil, and that is all the Book says, and we cannot afford to be narrow-minded. The "elder" brought in the lamp oil, dipped his finger, anointed my forehead, and then knelt down and prayed. How God did it I don't know, nor do I care; but this I knew next morning, that whereas I was sick, nigh unto death, now I was healed. We can trust Him too little, but we cannot trust God too much.

(C.T. Studd, by Norman P. Grubb, pp. 152-3)

Many of you could give testimony to the healing power of God through the anointing service. God can heal! Today!

Third: Judith held on to faith.

Twelve years...How many of us would have given up hope? Judith continued to believe she could be healed. She remained faithful to Jehovah and the Jewish religion.

What a challenge for us today. Sometimes God allows us to go through times of great heartache and testing. Sometimes we are tempted to give up on God, but our faith must sustain us. God can deliver us from our heartache and testing. He can change our tragedy into joy. But if he doesn't, he can and will give us the strength and courage to endure it. If he does not deliver us from it, he will go through it with us. His comforting presence will sustain us. Never give up your faith because of heartache. Your faith is the only thing that will carry you through the troubles of life triumphantly.

We need to anchor our faith deep in the eternal rock Christ Jesus. The One who said to the waves "...**Peace, be still.**"<sup>3</sup> is in the boat with us.

He will never leave us or forsake us.

Fourth: Judith followed the Scriptures.

It would have been so easy for her to bend the commands— to overlook the rules given by Moses. Instead she was obedient. It caused her pain. It caused her loneliness. It caused separation from her loved ones, but she obeyed.

What a challenge for each of us today.

Sometimes the things God asks us to do aren't crystal-clear to us. God doesn't ask for our understanding— He asks for our obedience. It is so important when we read the sharp cutting words of Scripture or when God's Spirit clearly deals with us— for us to obey.

It is so easy to rationalize, to figure it doesn't apply to us, to figure it's not so bad in our life. Maybe no one will know.

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<sup>3</sup>*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

We need to stop rationalizing and start obeying.

I heard an evangelist say many years ago:

"God's tired of people admitting,  
God wants people quitting."

In 1 Samuel 15, we read about the disobedience of King Saul.

Samuel had instructed Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites.

Saul defeated the Amalekites, but he kept the king and some of the best animals alive.

Then, when Samuel came, Saul began to make excuses. He tried to pass the blame off on the people.

Samuel told Saul in vv. 22 and 23 (NASB),

...Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup>For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king. 4

Let's purpose to obey.

Fifth: Judith humbled herself.

The Jewish people were a proud people. They were fiercely proud of the fact that they were God's chosen people. Judith was able to swallow her pride. She was willing to fall at Jesus' feet and grasp the hem of his garment. This wasn't a very dignified position. She gave up her pride in order to find healing.

How you and I need humility today. Every one of us, even the most talented, are utterly helpless without God the Holy Spirit's help. When we try

to do God's work in our own strength, we will fail. When we yield to him and allow him to work through us, he will do amazing things which we cannot even imagine. Pride is so destructive to our spiritual lives. When we are proud, we often become arrogant. Many times we will not listen to the advice or counsel of our brothers/sisters and leaders who are trying to help us.

Pride affects our judgement. So often we fail to do the right thing when we have a prideful attitude. Often we do the wrong thing when our pride gets in the way.

The cure for a "proud heart" is a humble, servant-like attitude. Phil. 2:3-8 should be our pattern:

- 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- 4 do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>5</sup>

Judith received healing because she was willing to humble herself. How we need to imitate Christ, who humbled himself even to the point of death on a cross.

We will never receive healing for our spiritual illnesses if we refuse to give up our spirit of pride:

Jesus gave us the example of servanthood in John chapter 13.

How we need to pray for, and work at, having a genuine spirit of humility and servanthood.

Someone has said:

"Humility is the hallmark of holiness."

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<sup>4</sup>The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

<sup>5</sup>The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

Sixth: Judith received physical healing. You can receive spiritual healing.

Judith's illness was temporary. Our sickness of sin is permanent. It is only through the saving touch of salvation through Christ that our deadly illness of sin can be cured.

Jesus died on a cruel cross 2,000 years ago in order to provide salvation for us.

The salvation is complete/perfect, but it is not effective in our lives until we receive it by faith.

Today Jesus can touch your life and give you salvation if you will accept his offer of salvation by faith.

As we sing an invitation hymn, please stand or come forward if you have never accepted Christ as your savior.

New Freedom 6/01  
Shrewsbury 6/01  
Mummerts