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New Beginnings
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Mark 5:21-34

Happy New Year! I was thinking last night about the different ways people approach the New Year.

- Some folks bring in the New Year with a big bang, big party, lots of celebrating.
- Some see it as a time to reflect, make changes, or resolutions.
- Some people approach it with a shrug for them it's just another year.
- Some folks come to the year just hoping that it will be better than the last one.

Our Scripture today is about a woman who began a new year with a new lease on life.

Jesus had been out and about preaching and healing, attracting such a crowd, he and the disciples take a boat trip across the lake looking for a quieter place to rest. When they reach the shore however, more people gather crowding around Jesus.

Mark 5:25-34

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.

²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd 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?"

³¹ "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

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.

³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Much like our New Year, The Jewish New Year Rosh Hashanah is a time for reflection.

I wonder if the woman in our story spent her New Years Eve begging God to make the New Year different, to end her suffering and the nightmare that had become her life.

Twelve Years of a prolonged physical illness of this type would have caused more than just exhaustion and frustration.

The Law & Being Unclean: Levitical Law declared women with an “issue of blood in her flesh “Lev. 15:19” to be unclean.

The book of Leviticus deals with rules and regulations for handling the laws regarding things which defiled a person or made them unclean.

Bleeding that was disordered and prolonged, left this woman in a state of condemnation for 12 years when we meet her in Mark Chapter 5. (Lev. 15:19-33)

In ancient times, when a woman was in a state of being unclean they were to be set apart/isolating themselves so they didn't accidentally touch another person and cause them to be unclean.

Whoever was touched by an unclean person was considered unclean for the rest of the day.

So to prevent that from happening, if the unclean person had to go out into public, they were to shout “unclean-unclean” as they walked so people could move out of the way and avoid touching them.

When the physical condition ended, women went through ritual cleansing and offered a sacrifice at the temple to atone for their uncleanness. But, while the issue continued and they remained unclean, they were not allowed in the temple. So there was no way to be made clean and no way to offer a sacrifice or make atonement.

Imagine what life must have been like for this woman who was considered unclean because of something she had no control over.

The ritual for cleansing and sacrifice for touching an unclean woman was the same as for touching a dead body. So in many ways, this woman was treated as though she were already dead.

If she had a family, she would have had to move away from them, otherwise every time they touched her or something she touched they would have been considered unclean.

Then they would have to go through ritual washing and go to the temple to offer a sacrifice.

Condemned to a shamed existence, she was never far from the rejection and disapproving glances of others.

- 12 years dealing with the same issue that never got any better.
- 12 years of what must have felt like unanswered prayer.
- 12 years of going to bed praying the same prayers, hoping for a miracle.
- 12 years of searching for an answer for a cure.

For her, there would have been no New Years Parties to celebrate Rosh Hashanah,
No dinner invitations; no holiday's with family,
She was excluded from communion with community. Like a forgotten shadow, dying a little bit every day.

She searched everywhere for a cure. She went to many doctors to no avail. She spent all of her money and time searching for a cure and instead of getting better, she actually got worse!

But then...she heard.... (Faith comes by hearing! Thank God there were those around that were talking about Jesus, imagine if she hadn't heard!)

²⁷ *When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,*

Why did she do this?

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of a day (ch61) when the Messiah would come and;

- Preach Good News to the poor
- Heal the sick
- Bind up the broken hearted
- Proclaim freedom for the captives and
- Release from darkness those who are imprisoned
- One who would comfort those who mourn and
- Provide for those who grieve

Ezekiel and Malachi said that the Messiah would come with healing in His wings (Eze. 1:1-11; Mal 4:2)

She touched him, ²⁸ *because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."*

Some translations say she touched the hem or the fringe of his robe.

Did you ever wonder why she wanted to touch his clothes? Others wanted to touch him, or for him to touch them, but she reached for his clothes.

In fact what she touched was his Tallit / his prayer shawl.

The prayer shawl had fringe around the bottom and tassels on the four corners called Tzitzit (tzeet zee). As commanded in Deuteronomy 22:12 and Numbers 15:37-41;

The Lord God commanded Moses to tell the people of Israel that throughout the generations to come, you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments. You will have these tassels to look at so you will remember all the commandments of the Lord.

The Hebrew word for “Wings” is the same word for “Tassel” When the Rabbi raised his arms to give the blessing, the Tzitzit resembled ‘wings. It was prophesied that the Messiah would come with healing in His “wings.”

She believed Jesus to be the Messiah. We can understand then why she thought, “if I just touch his (Tzitzit/Wings) I will be healed.” Numbers 15:37-39

She believed Jesus was the Messiah and pushed her way through the crowd to get to him. Even though she wasn’t supposed to, she touched him.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 (virtue) had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “who touched my clothes?”

There was such a crowd that the disciples can’t understand why Jesus asked “who touched me?”

More so, “who touched my clothes?” “With all these people pushing and shoving, how can you tell someone touched your clothes? They said”

Because this touch was different, it is the touch of faith, someone reached for me as Messiah.

³² And Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 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.

- She heard about Jesus
- She thought about what she heard
- She believed what she heard, and then...
- She acted on her belief

³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

The gift that he gave her was more than the physical healing of her disease.

He gave her his peace. The same peace the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the night Christ was born.

- This peace that heals, peace that makes whole
- That changes things and calms the wind and the waves of threatening storms
- It's the Peace that soothes, & comforts the broken hearted
- That sets captives free
- Sheds light into lives that have grown dark from pain & suffering
- The peace that restores the lost and makes a way where there was none before
- It's the peace that heals shame, forgives sin, cleanses the guilty

It is this Peace that makes a way for a fresh start, for "New Beginnings." The Bible says that we all sin, we all fall short. In our natural state, we are all unclean, born in sin. And that all of our efforts to save ourselves, all our works of righteousness are but filthy rags!

But, law which deemed this woman unclean was fulfilled in Christ. (Mt. 5:17) The law with its curse against us is done away with for those who come to Him through faith. This is why the Apostle Paul said, "There is therefore, now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

Just as the angels promised, the Messiah came with healing in his wings, offering the gift of perfect peace to all who believe.

With the touch of His Tzitzit, His Peace gave her a New Beginning. As we stand on the first day of this New Year, we can have that same peace.

The question then is, when was the last time you touched His Tzitzit?

LET'S PRAY: Lord, all of us have issues, and some of us can identify with the woman and seek your healing peace. Some of us, like the crowd, have heard of your works, we're curious and want to get closer for a better look at who you are. All of us stand today on the first day of a New Year and thank you for being a God, of fresh starts and New Beginnings. I pray that on this New Years Day, you will open our eyes to those around us who may be suffering, who may hang

on the outside edges of community afraid to draw close. Help us to offer a fresh start, a new beginning to someone we know who needs a new beginning. Help us to reach out, to extend your spirit of grace and acceptance to those who seek your help. Lord, increase our faith and our vision for a future full of New Beginnings. In Jesus Name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May God bless you and keep you
throughout this New Year.

May He light your way,
guiding the path you will walk.

May He protect you from all harm,
And keep your foot from slipping.

May this New Year be for you
a Truly New Beginning

Empowered by His Shalom!

Go in His Peace! Amen.