

“Do you believe in miracles?”

Series: Miracle Man

Mark 5:21-36

September 27, 2009

Over the last few months, many of you have asked me, “Do you have a cold?” I have been struggling with this drippy stuff – the “Delaware drip” – for the last year consistently, and really when I think about it, for several years before that, off and on. I tried various over the counter medications for a year or more and nothing seems to help. I use my voice so much in my work and I’m sick and tired of the sniffing and coughing and clearing my throat and always sounding like I have a cold. And I can’t sing certain notes any more. I love to sing! So I finally decided to see an allergist. It’s annoying to deal with a continuing health issue. But I know that many of you are dealing with conditions that are much more serious and painful ongoing than my little allergy problem. [Which still hasn’t been diagnosed, by the way, but we’re working on it.]

It’s much more than just ‘annoying’ to live with chronic pain and disease. Some of you will relate very well to the woman we encounter in today’s miracle story from Mark’s gospel. I imagine that she stood at the back of the crowd that day, hoping no one would notice her, trying not to touch anybody. Jesus was always surrounded by crowds. [Mark 5:21-23](#). I really want you to picture this passage today. See the people in your mind’s eye, see what they see, feel what they feel. Jesus has been traveling around Galilee, preaching, teaching and healing, amazing the people with all that He said and did. He had become rather well-known, especially as a healer. And so Jairus comes to Him. The president of the synagogue. A prominent member of the Jewish community. He is desperate. His daughter is dying, but Jairus believes that if Jesus will just come and touch her, she will live. And he falls face down on the ground, in the midst of this big crowd, begging for Jesus’ help.

Okay, just picture that, for a moment. This distinguished man, this important religious leader. On the ground, begging Jesus desperately to heal his daughter. The doctors had given them no hope. She was going to die. Jesus is his only hope. Can you feel his desperation? Maybe you know that feeling of hopelessness well. [Vv. 24-28](#). When Jesus heads off with Jairus, she quickly tries to follow, pressing through the crowd. She, too, is desperate. She knows she shouldn’t touch anybody, but she has to get to Him. You see, because of her bleeding, she was walking pollution – polluted *and* polluting. Her bleeding – probably some kind of abnormal uterine bleeding – made her ritually unclean, according to Jewish Law. And her impurity is transmissible to anyone who comes into contact with her. Her uncleanness is contagious. Anyone who sits on her bed or a chair she has sat on, anyone who touches her also becomes unclean. Her discharge of blood causes her to be discharged from society. She is contaminated – a social outcast, untouchable and untouched. She is diseased, nameless and, thanks to all the doctors, poor. So she is probably homeless. A street person. Ignored, invisible, isolated. She was beyond all hope and all help.

Can you picture her? Can you feel the pain of her years of isolation? Can you imagine her hopelessness? Maybe you don’t have to imagine it because you’ve been there, or are living there right now. Maybe you or someone you love, is sick to the point of hopelessness. Maybe you, too, feel isolated in your helplessness. Desperate to stop the pain. Or maybe it’s not a physical

disease for you. Maybe it's some other kind of healing you long for. Some other kind of freedom. An addiction, perhaps. An unhealthy relationship you just can't seem to escape. Some kind of emotional anguish. Some unconfessed sin, some guilt that torments you. Is there something in your life today – some situation, some person, some illness – that just seems hopeless, that makes you feel helpless, as she did?

This poor nameless woman and Jairus the synagogue ruler didn't have much in common, but they had this: They were both desperate. They were both facing hopeless situations. They were both helpless. Except for *one little thing*: They had both heard about Jesus. And so she pushes through the crowd, desperately trying to get to Jesus before He gets to Jairus's home and disappears inside. She pushes, she presses, she reaches out and finally, desperately, she touches Jesus' clothes. Vv. 29-31. "Are you crazy?" the disciples say, "Look at all these people. It could have been anybody. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'" V. 32. Can't you just see their eyes rolling? She was hoping not to be noticed, hoping to just slink back into the anonymity of the crowd. But Jesus will not let her go so easily. He looks around, searching the crowd, peering into each face to see the one who had touched Him. Why is He so intent on finding her? He knew she had been healed. But that was not enough – for Jesus. Vv. 33-34. She had received healing power already. Now she receives peace. You know, Jesus did not need to seek her out and speak to her; they both knew that she had already been healed. She is the only one in the gospels whom Jesus calls "daughter." We may not know her name. But we do know this: Jesus calls her 'daughter.' You see, she was just seeking a get-healed-quick touch. Jesus wanted more for her than she even wanted for herself. Jesus offered her a relationship rather than just relief.

So often, we come to Jesus and we just want physical healing, or a solution to our problem. But Jesus wants more than that for us: He wants a relationship of love and trust. Her faith – Jesus says – her desperate, persistent, pressing-through-the-crowd faith – had healed her. Faith opens the door to the power of God to work in our lives. When you pray, asking God for healing, asking God to move that mountain of pain or disease or dysfunction or brokenness or addiction in your life or someone else's life, do you really *believe* He can do it? Do you believe in miracles? Do you not only believe in miracles in general, but that God can do the impossible *for you, for your loved one*? Do you believe a miracle is possible *for you, in your situation*, no matter how hopeless it may seem to you? Because Jesus is still in the miracle business, even today. Jesus is still a Miracle Man, even today. Do *you* believe in miracles?

We tend to think – I'll believe it when I see it. But some things have to be believed to be seen. Hebrews 11:1. Listen: If you don't believe in miracles, you'll probably never see one. The Bible frequently connects faith with healing. To blind Bartimaeus sitting by the road to Jericho, Jesus says, "Your faith has healed you." To the centurion who comes asking Jesus to heal his servant, Jesus says, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And there are many others, including our nameless woman. [If this subject of healing interests you, Dr. Chuck Miller is going to be leading a Sunday Morning Adult Ed class on healing prayer when he returns from Africa, beginning October 25 @ 11 o'clock.]

Now, let me be clear: If you pray for somebody and they are *not* healed, it's not your fault. It's not that you didn't have enough faith. Please hear me today: Jesus is *not* saying that our faith *requires* God to heal. We don't hold God hostage by our faith. But we must acknowledge that

the accounts of healing in the Bible very often indicate that faith and healing *are* related. Does that mean we can keep God from healing someone by our *lack* of faith? No – God is sovereign, God is in control. God gets to decide what kind of healing is best for a person, and when. Sometimes what’s best is what I often call “the ultimate healing,” which is death. But I think that faith is so often a prerequisite for healing because *we* need to know that God *does act* in response to our faith. Heb. 11:6. This nameless woman was earnestly seeking Jesus. She pushed, she pressed, she desperately pursued even the slightest contact with Jesus.

But sometimes, no matter how much faith we have, no matter how hard we pray, no matter how hard we press, no matter how many people pray, physical healing does not come. I prayed for my father who had pancreatic cancer, and he died. Can God heal someone with pancreatic cancer? I believe he can. But he doesn’t seem to do that very often. Pancreatic cancer has pretty much a 100% mortality rate. But does this mean the person with pancreatic cancer cannot experience healing? Absolutely not. The trouble, you see, is in our understanding of healing. The word Jesus uses here and elsewhere for ‘healing’ means to save, make whole, rescue, heal. “Your faith has made you whole.” “Your faith has saved you.” There are many conditions from which we need to be saved. Many ways in which our lives are broken and need to be made whole. Sometimes that wholeness is physical healing, whether through “natural” medical means or through more miraculous means. But sometimes, there’s a deeper wholeness that’s needed. Forgiveness of sin. Reconciliation with a family member. A closer relationship with God. Stronger faith. You see, Father knows best. Father God is the only One who knows what kind of healing we truly need.

What needs healing in your life today? Is it your marriage or some other relationship? Maybe even your relationship with God? Your finances? Do you struggle with an addiction of some kind? Maybe it is physical healing that you need. What kind of healing do you need this morning? In what areas of your life do you long for God’s healing, God’s wholeness? Let’s go back to our story for a moment. Vv. 35-36. “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” Sometimes, I think we are afraid to ask God to heal us because we’re afraid He won’t. If this is true for you, hear Jesus say to you today, “Don’t be afraid; just believe. Just trust Me. Trust that I love you and know exactly what kind of healing and wholeness you need.”

I’m going to ask members of the Prayer Team to come. They are here to pray for you. As the Worship Team leads us, as we sing, we invite you to come and receive prayer for healing: whatever kind of healing you may need. Physical, emotional, relational, spiritual. Healing for your broken body, or your broken heart, or your messed up life. You may come and kneel and pray by yourself, or allow a member of the Team to pray for you. You may say what you would like prayer for or you may simply come and allow them to pray. God knows what you need. You may even come representing someone else – standing in for someone else – asking for prayer for *their* healing, *their* wholeness, *their* restoration. The one thing I ask is that you come. That you come in faith. That you come *in spite of* your doubts. That you come *in spite of* your fears. That you come as the desperate, nameless woman came: Believing that God loves you and knows what is best for you and is able to help you. Believing that Jesus *can* and *will* heal you.

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”