

Sermon: You are a healing community. Luke 13:31-35 March 16th AGM Holding on Firmly. Mark 5:24-34.

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to Jesus our Redeemer. Amen

Introduction: Jesus uses the powerful maternal image of a hen gathering her chicks. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem teaching and healing, Jesus demonstrates determination and compassion through his prophetic identity. This metaphor speaks of a protective love and is maternal in nature. It helps us to understand the experience of painful rejection and political threats.

Good News: Jesus exercised persistent ministry and Promised to return for all his faithful followers. “Whoever believes in me will inherit eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Lent help us to reflect on our own wilderness journey as a community of faith. Here are a few illustrations to help us remember who we are and whose we are as people of God and the Body of Christ. Think of the Mother Hen metaphor: she spreads her wings and cover her chicks providing warmth, healing, protection, loving care and safety.

Jesus has the power to heal us. Illustrations: Mark 5:24-34.

Who touched me? Jesus asked. For twelve years she was physically bleeding. She was an unnamed woman born under the Old Testament covenant laws and was said to be unclean. The religious authorities had restricted her mobility. The community considered her to be infertile. She thought she would be inconspicuous within the large crowd.

She took the initiative and reached out to Jesus. Jesus then draws her from the margins and placed her into the centre of the crowd?

Imagine her life as one without hugs from friends, family, unable to live and worship within the community. She was certainly a desperate and lonely person. She tried everything over those twelve years and nothing seemed to make her well. Against the restrictions of the culture, community laws and family she took the risk and sought out her healing. She was a woman of resilience and courage.

Jesus changes everything for her. Jesus is filled with compassion and mercy. Jesus has the power of healing for every situation in our lives. Immediately she felt the change in her body and soul. She knew something miraculous happened. The transforming power of God’s love made her well. She was afraid to step forward and say I touched you Jesus. She could have been stoned to death. Jesus has the power to erase and eliminate the restrictions that are placed on us. Jesus bridges the gap between life and death matters.

2. Jesus has the power to reconcile us. Jairus the ruler of the synagogue also came to Jesus and sought healing for his daughter. Jairus had status in the community of faith and was well-known. The woman had no status but both of them came in humility before Jesus. Imagine the ruler of the synagogue and a no-body woman in the same posture, pleading to God for healing.

Again Jesus bridges the gap between life and death and restores Jairus' twelve year old daughter to life. The depth of Jesus compassion demonstrates the deep intimacy of God's love for humanity. Jesus loves everyone within the community and those on the margins, those with status and those who are ostracized.

In 2016 Ken and I visited the Scandinavian capitals. During our visit in Stockholm, Sweden, we visited the garden where Raoul Wallenberg's bust was displayed to honour him for his courage and compassion. Wallenberg disappeared in 1945. He was a Swedish architect, a businessman, diplomat and humanitarian.

He saved approximately 20,000 Jews in German-occupied Hungary during the Holocaust of World War II. While serving as a Swedish envoy in Budapest, he issued protective passports and sheltered Jews in buildings designated as Swedish territory. After many years the people felt the need to be reconciled with his decision-making. The bust was put on display as a symbol of healing between family and the wider community. God is willing to offer us forgiveness even when we cannot understand the complexity of situations between life and death.

Jesus involves the whole community in these healing miracles. Jesus reconciles this woman to her family, religious authorities and between Jairus and the people. It is Jesus who has the power to transform one person's heart to bear witness to the entire community. What is bleeding in our community of faith? What is bleeding in our personal relationships?

The writer of the book of Lamentations describes God's compassion for humanity as a womb in the heart that is life-bearing. "The steadfast love of God never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion says my soul, there I will hope in him." Lamentations 3:22-24.

Jesus has power to restore us. We hear the lament of today's economic war with our neighbour. We are aware of the changing dynamics of political leaders of today in the world. Their threats have created insecurities, fear and difficulty for logical conversations. Many people are feeling the rising cost of living. Holding on firmly to the Word of God offers hope and reassurance that God will not forsake us.

The woman accepted those restrictions imposed upon her by the authorities. She learned how to navigate the system for her survival. Then one day she heard the bustling crowd and she met Jesus face to face. She already had faith in Jesus. Her touch interrupted the healer who stopped and listened to her story. Her touch has impacted our lives too.

Jesus changed everything the religious leader interpreted scripture through different lens. This woman was moved out of her box and elevated to a higher place. Jesus restores all her

relationships. She came with fear and trembling because she feared God. Jesus said, “Daughter your faith has made you well!” Her life was changed.

Have you ever experienced such a powerful touch in your life? I believe you have and I have too. God has called us into a relationship where we can never be the same again. Perhaps we all had those moments when the circumstances of our situation seem inevitable and all we can do is surrender. You have tried everything and nothing seems to be helping. God seems distant and the right words for prayer are lost in the complex situations of grief, need or we find ourselves.

The miracles of healing remind us of human limitations conclusions. This woman refused the community sentenced to social death. She took initiative and sought Jesus in the crowd. Jesus turned from the pressing crowd and engaged her in a public conversation.

Who touched me? These words spoken by a divine voice silenced the critics. Jesus’ acceptance of and response to the woman’s touch was more shocking to the gathered crowd. Hear the Good News; “Your faith has made you well!” God has the final say on your life and on the Body of Christ! Amen.

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