

Making Space for God

Lessons From Mark #9—The Woman of Woe

Opening Prayer

O heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray for you to so guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you but remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Book of Common Prayer



Arrival

Take some times to settle yourself. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last four weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? When have you experienced the Lord's presence? Journal your thoughts and offer these to the Lord.

Scripture—Mark 5:24-34

A large crowd followed and pressed around him.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."¹

Active Imagination Exercise

Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits, encouraged his followers to use their imaginations to explore gospel stories and deepen their devotion to the Lord Jesus. Modern psychologists suggest a similar process for someone trying to connect with the deeper elements of their soul. Take some time to sit with the story of the bleeding woman in Mark's gospel. Put yourself in the scene. Imagine yourself as the woman, one of the disciples, or a village shopkeeper. What do you see, hear, or smell? Consider reading this story every day for a month and see what happens.

In a separate file called *The Touch*, I have written a sample story about the woman and painted a watercolor of the scene as I imagined it. I did a little bit each day for two weeks. In the process I felt I got to know her and I experienced a growing appreciation for her. I also read the commentaries and the version of the story in other gospels. My story is not true but it is realistic and I connect with it at a deep level. That's the point of the process. You could also write a poem or a song if you wanted.

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Reading for Reflection

The spiritual life is not a hobby or a part-time occupation. It is nothing if it does not find expression in everything we do. There is no possibility of moonlighting: using some of our energies for other goals or for ourselves. Taking the spiritual life seriously means that it is not compartmentalized. It is a total obsession. There are no vacations. There are no areas which can be insulated from its guidance. Dabbling in spiritual life is futile; the specific advantages of religious practice follow only when there is unqualified commitment.

Michael Casey in Living in the Truth, page 62

God's will is not found in our doing whatever we want, acting on whim. God does not baptize our silly frivolous choices (though he does still love us). We believe God's will is found in doing what we want at the very best and deepest level of who we understand ourselves to be. This is quite different. The director's role is to help us to be honest and to search until that deepest self is discovered.

Dyckman and Carroll in Inviting the Mystic, supporting the Prophet page 34

Boredom is the bankruptcy of the imagination.

James Hollis

Everyone knows that artists are supposed to suffer, but not everyone knows why. It is the same reason mothers suffer in giving birth. All artists are mothers. To be an artist is to be a creator, whether of a symphony or a supper or a painting or a person. Motherhood is the primary art, the art of creating (procreating) people. Creation involves suffering. Saints suffer the most because they are the greatest artists of all.

Peter Kreeft in Making Sense of Suffering- page 101

"Philosophers and scientists and law professors (my line of work) are not in the best position to understand the Christian story. Musicians and painters and writers of fiction are much better situated--because the Christian story is a story, not a theory or an argument, and definitely not a moral or legal code. Our faith is, to use C.S. Lewis's apt words, the myth that became fact. Our faith is a painting so captivating that you cannot take your eyes off it. Our faith is a love song so achingly beautiful that you weep each time you hear it."

William J. Stuntz, Professor at Harvard Law School

When one reads the Gospels rapidly, one after the other, again and again, one cannot but be struck by the towering figure of Jesus. Though they reflect the church's convictions; they are about Jesus Christ. His excellence, his uniqueness, his authority, his compassion, his love, his wisdom, his holiness – all shine through passage after passage.

D A Carson – The Gagging of God

Benediction

Lord, thank you for the story of the woman who trusted what she had heard about you, pursued you, and reached out to touch you. Fill us with your Spirit that we might do the same. Give us courage to risk embarrassment and the scorn of others. Let us experience your healing presence not only for our sake but for the sake of those we serve in your name. Amen