

Close - But Not Close Enough ?

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[0 : 00] So, good morning. As Stephen said, my name is Andrew McBride, and I can see that most of you are looking going. Who are you? It reminds me of the story about the preacher who found himself exactly in this situation.

He was a last-minute substitute for the pastor who was called away urgently. And the congregation, much like yourself, are looking a bit confused about who this stranger in the pulpit was.

So, he was trying to explain to him about the fact that he was just a last-minute stand-in. And he pointed to a broken window at the side of the church. He says, I'm like that pane of wood that's over there just now.

It's just a temporary replacement for waiting for the pane of glass to be fitted. And he carried on with the sermon.

And at the end of the sermon, he was standing at the door, as ministers still do sometimes. And while the preacher said, Preacher, I enjoyed your message this morning. I just want to say, you weren't wooden at all. You were a real pane. So, with that introduction, this morning we're going to be looking at what is probably one of my favorite stories in the Gospels.

[1 : 17] Which is the story of the woman who, depending on what translation you use, I would say the woman who had the issue of blood. And it's found in Mark chapter 5.

I need to remember and stand still. I made a mistake this morning. Stephen did say, do you want a microphone? Do you want a clip-on mic? Do you wander? And I said, no, no, I'll use the microphone. But I forgot. I wander. So, I'll need to stand still.

So, this morning, Mark chapter 5, verses 21 to 36. And you'll see in a wee second, that's a strange place to stop the story. But I'll explain as I go on why I've stopped where I've stopped.

Maybe I won't. I'll just leave you confused. So, Mark chapter 5, verse 21. It says, When Jesus had again crossed by boats over to the other side of the lake, a very large crowd gathered around him.

And while he was by the lake, then one of the synagogue leaders, a man named Jairus, came. And when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.

[2 : 25] He pleaded earnestly with him, my little daughter is dying. Please, come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.

So, Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years.

She'd suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had. Yet, instead of getting better, she got worse.

When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought, If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.

Immediately, her bleeding stopped. And she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. And at once, Jesus realized that power had gone out from him.

- [3 : 26] He turned around in the crowd and asked, Who touched my clothes? You see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered. And yet, you can ask, who touched me?
- Oh, there we go. But Jesus was looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.
- He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader.
- Your daughter is dead, they said. Why bother the teacher anymore? Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, Don't be afraid. Just believe.
- Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your work. We thank you that it is living and active and powerful.
- [4 : 39] That what we read today is not just things that happened 2,000 years ago, but we thank you that, as we were reminded this morning in Robert's prayer, that Jesus is risen and alive, that he is king over death, over sickness, over disease, over sin, over Satan.
- We thank you that that same Jesus is here this morning in his risen power and in his risen glory. And we thank you that just as he was able to heal the sick, even as he was able to give hope to the suffering and the hopeless, we thank you that he's here this morning.
- So we pray that your word would be powerful in our lives, even today, even right now, as we take this time to look at it. We pray that your words will come out of the page and come into our lives, that you would change us and transform us more into the likeness of Jesus in his name.
- Amen. So as I said this morning, the story I want to focus on is this story of the healing of this woman with this condition, this issue of blood.
- what's interesting about the story is that Matthew, Mark and Luke not only all tell the same story, but they also tell it in the same way, because the story itself, when you look at it, is actually, it's told in exactly the same way.
- [6 : 08] The main story, if you like, is the story about Jairus' daughter. And I used another storytelling device this morning, and that is that I cut the story off early to build suspense.
- So if you don't know the story and you want to know how it ends, you're just going to have to get a Bible and read it for yourself. The one thing I will point out to you, just to see if you can pick up the thread, is that the bit of information we're told at the end of the story is that Jairus' daughter was 12 years old.
- Just hang on to that thought as we go through this story this morning. But, as I said, Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the story the same way.
- The main story, as I said, is the healing of Jairus' daughter. And this woman, her story is, it's a subplot, it's almost like a diversion, it's almost like a detour in the middle of this main story.
- I wouldn't say it's an afterthought, but it's just this idea that it's inserted. And then they get back to the main story and carry on. And the way in which they present the story actually sums up an awful lot about this woman's life.
- [7 : 25] So we know who Jairus is, because, well, we're given his name all the way through the story, and his name actually means God enlightens. But we don't know who she is.
- She is, with one exception, always referred to as the woman. She has no name. She is just anonymous. And we know not only who Jairus is, we know what Jairus is, because we're told that he was one of the synagogue leaders.

That would kind of be, in a synagogue, that would be a cross between almost the church secretary and a worship leader. You know, his job was to make sure that the rabbis, a bit like the church secretary this morning, to make sure that there is somebody there to be able to read the scrolls and to teach.

His job was to make sure that there is someone there to lead the worship, usually called a canter. And his job was to make sure the building was open for all these people to be able to get in. But, what this means is that everybody knows who Jairus is.

He's a pillar of his community. He's respected. But, this woman is just called a sick woman. She's called the woman with severe bleeding, the woman with the issue of blood, depending on, depending on what translation you use.

[8 : 51] So, she's not defined by her place in the community. She's defined by her illness. Her illness has defined her for the past 12 years. Jairus, he comes up to Jesus and asks for help in front of the whole crowd, not in an arrogant way.

This idea that he's a pillar of the community hasn't gone to his head. He comes to, he comes to Jesus not full of his own importance in any way, but he comes to Jesus as a desperate dad, wanting Jesus to come and heal his daughter and stop her from dying.

She creeps up behind Jesus, fighting her way through the crowd, and in some respects even hiding in it. She is so used to being ignored, not seen an afterthought, that even she now starts to believe that she's invisible.

And so for her, the idea of going up to Jesus and asking, it's just, it's just not in her head because people don't see her, people don't listen to her. So why would Jesus be any different?

But the one thing that Jairus and this woman have in common is that both are desperate. She has been ill for 12 years and we don't get a real description of what it is, but just this idea that this woman has been losing blood for 12 years.

[10 : 21] That's 12 years of suffering and misery. We're told that she had spent all that she had looking for a cure. Actually, it's quite interesting because when you, Mark says that she had spent all she had on doctors and yet instead of getting better, it says that she got worse.

Which is really interesting because when you read Luke, remember Luke's a doctor, so he's a little more circumspect. He says that she'd seen many doctors and none of them could help her. Mark's much more blunt.

They were useless. All he did was take her money and made things worse instead of better. So she's got this 12 years of suffering, 12 years of complete disappointment that no matter who she goes to see, no matter the promises they make, nothing happens.

It doesn't get better. If anything, it gets worse. Now on top of all that, she's now got this financial worry that she spent all she had and therefore, I don't know if she was wealthy to begin with, but now she is pretty much financially broke.

And so now she's got all these financial worries on top of this as well. 12 years, I said, of disappointment and failure.

[11 : 33] And not only has, and sometimes we miss this, but not only has this illness created physical and emotional and financial problems for this woman, it's actually causing 12 years of spiritual problems for this woman.

We read this in the Old Testament. It says that when a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, we'll try 12 years, that's many days, times many days, times many days.

When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period, or as a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just in the days of her period.

But any bed she lies on with her discharge, while her discharge continues, will be unclean, as is her bed during a monthly period.

Anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. Anyone who touches her, sorry, anyone who touches them will be unclean.

[12 : 39] They must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. But what happens after evening? A new day starts, she's still bleeding, she's still unclean, anything she touches is unclean, anyone she touches becomes unclean.

And this has gone on day after day after day, as I said, for 12 years. This woman has been unclean, that spiritual condition that it talks about, for 12 years.

So that means that she can't go to the synagogue. Jesus can go any time he likes. Most of the people round about her can go to the synagogue any time they like.

She can't go up to the temple, which means that she can't join in the great and important Jewish festivals, like Passover, Pentecost, Purim, that we read about in the book of Esther, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

All of these are big important occasions in the eyes of the Jewish people, and she can't be a part of that. Imagine that for 12 years you have not been able to come to church.

[13 : 56] That you can't come on a Sunday. That you can't come to church and celebrate Christmas. You can't come to church and celebrate Easter. You can't come to church and celebrate Pentecost.

You can't come to church and enjoy a baptism. Imagine that's what this woman is going through. She's unclean. Anything she touches becomes unclean.

Anyone who touches her becomes unclean. So just think for a wee minute that if people realised who it is that's actually elbowing them to get through the crowd to get to Jesus, if they realise who she is and the fact that her touch makes them unclean, there is going to be a riot.

Because people are generally not that understanding. but despite all her suffering, all her disappointment, all her rejection, the one thing this woman has in bucket loads is faith.

So she says, if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed. Stephen, could you move me on? And again. Thank you. Let's see if it picks up this time.

[15 : 09] No, I'm still dead in the water. Carry on for me, please. I'll give you a nod from this point on. Okay, thank you. So she says, if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.

I want you to stop for a minute and think, how does that actually work? You know, people came to Jesus as Jesus has just done. They come up to Jesus and they say, you know, I've got this problem, I've got this condition, Jesus, can you heal me?

Or, Jesus, as he is going through life, sees people who are blind, who have got leprosy. And one occasion, he went up to a coffin in the middle of a funeral and tapped it and the boy rose from the dead.

So people come to Jesus and they tell Jesus what their problem is and they ask Jesus for help. Or Jesus sees the need and out of his love and compassion, Jesus responds to that need.

But this woman kept up behind Jesus. He never saw her coming. She didn't tap him on the shoulder and say, excuse me, Jesus, have you got a minute? Not a word.

[16 : 14] She just came up, touched him, in and out like a one-woman SES regiment and away again. Or at least that was her plan. Didn't quite work out like that.

There are a few things that this passage can teach us this morning. Stephen, could you move me on to a number you'll get number one? There we go. The first thing is no one is invisible to God.

That not only means that you cannot hide from God, that you might think this morning that nobody else sees you or nobody else cares about you but God knows that you're there. You can't creep up in God and you can't surprise him.

The Bible says that every single one of us matters to God. You know, just some scriptures just to give you examples of that. The Bible says that God knows the number of hairs on our head.

In my case, it's not taking God so long to do that census these days. But more seriously, the Bible says in one of the Psalms, where can I go to flee from your presence?

[17 : 21] And the same Psalm says that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. every single one of us this morning is a work of God. And God does not make rubbish.

So I don't care what you have been told today, whether it's by parents, whether it's by teachers, whether it's by so-called friends or family or anything else.

You know, if you have been told that you're thick, that you're useless, that you're ugly, that you're this, that you're that, that you'll never amount to anything, you will be a failure. Well, that's not what God thinks about you this morning.

God, there's a fantastic verse, I don't know if that's written down, but I'm just going with it anyway. There's a fantastic verse, it's Zechariah chapter 3 and verse 17 if I remember correctly.

And although it's God speaking about the nation of Israel, it's true about every one of us as his people. It says that God rejoices over us with shouts of singing.

[18 : 20] Now, you might have felt awkward this morning doing some actions for the kids for a chorus, but can you imagine God shouting and rejoicing over you this morning? Sometimes I love the Bible because it says things that human beings we would not possibly say about God, that God gets excited about us.

That's how God sees us this morning. That's how important, that's how valuable, that's how much we mean to God, let alone the fact that the Bible says that God loved us so much that he gave his son for us so that we could be saved, so that we could be forgiven, so that we could have an eternity with him.

Every single one of us this morning matters to God. None of us are invisible, none of us are ignored by God. The second thing is that God not only knows who we are as people, but it says that God knows what we need.

like I said, this woman didn't even come up and ask Jesus for the healing. She didn't have to explain her problem. She just came up, got touched, got healed, and her bleeding stopped immediately, and she was freed from her suffering.

it says, again, as I said, I can give you numerous examples from scripture that says that God knows what we need.

[19 : 46] So we're told in Philippians that to be anxious about nothing, that's one of those things we struggle with. The Bible says that we shouldn't be anxious about anything.

Why? Because it says we know that God loves us and trusts us. It says, be anxious about nothing, but therefore with prayer and thanksgiving, make your request known to God. And then further on it says, and my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus.

Again, elsewhere in the Bible it says that the steadfast, the faithful love of God never ceases, it never comes to an end. His blessings are new every day.

Thanked to you, O Lord. We're taught the Lord's Prayer. I don't know, many of you might be in the same situation as me, where the Lord's Prayer was something that we were almost taught to recite in school.

And so from children we've been taught up to make this prayer that says give us our daily bread. That we're taught to come to God and to ask God, you know what I need today. Sometimes I don't even know what I need today, but you know what I need today.

[20 : 56] So what I need for today, whether it's physical, whether it's spiritual, whether it's wisdom, understanding, patience, whatever, you know I need God. So give that to me this morning.

Give that to me today so that I can serve you. So when we come to God in prayer and we tell him what's going on in our lives, it's not that we are telling God things that he doesn't need or that he doesn't know, sorry, but we're telling God that we recognize that the only place that we can get that is from him.

We're coming like the woman to someone, the only person that can help is, the only person who will actually help is instead of making things worse. The third thing this morning is that God has given you a voice.

This is really important this morning. I really want you to hear this. This woman's days of being anonymous were now over. I said to you that she came in, she touched Jesus, she got healed, she tried to sneak out again, the same way she came in.

And Jesus was having none of it. Jesus immediately turns around and says, who touched me? It says Jesus immediately felt power going out of him. And I'm pretty sure that Jesus knew exactly who had touched them.

[22 : 13] I think that Jesus probably had the spiritual equivalent of the eyes in the back of his head and knew exactly who and what had happened. But he stood in that crowd and he went, not so fast, come back, back here.

Not because he wanted to be thanked, although that is in itself a correct response when Jesus does something for you. But I think he stood there and asked this and demanded that this woman come back to give her a voice.

People listen to Jairus all the time because he is this important person in the community. He had authority, he had position, he was respected. But who wanted to hear her?

You know, like I said, we don't even know this woman's name. What makes her so important? What did she have to say that was so important that was worth listening to?

Well, something amazing had happened to her. So she now had something to say that only she could say. She had something that people needed to say, that people needed to hear.

[23 : 24] her and no one else. No one else could give this woman's testimony of, I came to Jesus, I touched him and I was healed. Only she could give that testimony. I want to say to everybody here this morning that knows the Lord, that he has given you a voice and you need to use it.

You know, there are people we've heard them and don't misunderstand what I'm about to see here this morning. We hear testimonies of God doing the most amazing things in people's lives.

People who have struggled with addiction to drugs or alcohol. People who have either been the perpetrators of violence or the victims of violence.

People who have gone through horrendous things. And God has come in and done amazing things in those people's lives. And they have been able to give that testimony. They've been able to, in many cases, serve God and minister to people out of their own experience.

And those testimonies are important. But sometimes the danger is that when we hear those testimonies, you might think to yourself, well, you know, I've not got that kind of testimony. For me personally, I became a Christian when I was 14, which wasn't yesterday.

[24 : 41] So how does my story of how I became a Christian relate to somebody today? And maybe for some of you, when not just thinking about what God is doing in your life today, but how you became a Christian, maybe you were brought up in a Christian home and so you can't actually, I can tell you the day and the time and the place where I became a Christian, it was a specific moment, a specific point in time.

Maybe for some of you, if you're brought up in a Christian home, you don't actually know. It just, there was like you just knew one day when you stopped and thought about your life that you realised you'd made this transition somewhere, that you were no longer living the faith of your mum and dad, but you were now living your own faith, that you had a relationship with God, you personally, and not just the faith of your mum and dad.

Maybe some of you, maybe many of you this morning are thinking, you know, I'm not saying this the wrong way, but you know, I've been a good person, you know, I've not been in trouble with the law, I've maybe not even had so much as a speeding ticket.

Some of you are blushing. You know, I've been a good mum, a good dad, a good brother, a good sister, good grandparents, you know, I could say a bit like Jairus, that I'm a, you know, I'm a respectable person, I'm a pillar of the community.

Well, do you know, that testimony is still important, because there will be many people who will hear the testimony of someone who has been through those really horrendous things, those real painful struggles in their life, and instead of saying thank God, you know, that's what God can do, they think, well, thank God I'm not like them, you know, thank you, I've never been so much as drunk in my life, I've never taken anything more than an aspirin, you know, I'm not like them.

[26 : 32] They certainly need God because their life was a mess, but me, I'm, you know, I'm fine, you know, I've got a good job, I've got a good house, I've got a nice, quiet, respectable family and kids. And they need to hear the quiet, the undramatic testimony that reminds people that the Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

That they need to be told, that to think when you ask someone, are you going to heaven and they say, well, I think so or I hope so because I'm a good person, well, I'm sorry, the Bible says there are no good people.

You know, the Bible says that all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. You know, you can be a good person and it's not a bad thing to aspire to, but at the end of the day, being a good person in the presence of a holy God is like comparing the light of a candle to the sun.

There is no comparison and folk need to hear that. It's great that you strive to be a good person and you should, but you also have to recognise being a good person will not get you into heaven.

That the only way that we get into heaven is when we touch Jesus. When we recognise that he does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. That he gives us what we cannot pay for ourselves.

[27 : 55] And he gives it to us freely as a gift. And people need to hear those testimonies that say, yeah, I have been a good person like you, but my trust is not in the things that I've done.

God doesn't treat me in a certain way because I am a good person. God treats me the way he is because he is God. And he treats me not as I deserve, but God treats me according to grace and mercy, despite what I deserve.

So your testimony, your voice of how you became a Christian and what God is doing in your life is important. And never be ashamed of it and never be afraid to share it because someone needs to hear what you have to say, what only you can say.

I can't bring my testimony of how I became a Christian and the things that God has done in my life to your family or to your friends or the people that you work with or the people in your street.

But God has placed you in a family, in a work situation, in a street, in a neighborhood, specifically so that you can share what God has done in your life.

[29 : 10] People will listen to you who will never listen to me because as much as the situation we're in this morning, they have no idea who I am. But they'll listen to you because they've seen you, they've watched your life, and the life that you live to honor God speaks to people.

And therefore, you have earned the right to be heard and the right to be listened to. God has given you a voice this morning. Please make sure that you use it.

The fourth thing this morning. I don't know how you define church, but here's my definition of the church this morning.

Church is a crowd with Jesus in the middle. You see, here is Jesus in this crowd, and I hope I maybe tried to convey the sort of either sense of confusion or even to some extent sarcasm.

The disciples treated Jesus' response with, who touched me? You know, have you ever tried being, you imagine yourself on Salky Hall Street on Christmas Eve, right?

[30 : 22] You do not get through that street in one piece without being bumped from pillar to post as folk are frantically looking for their Christmas presents, as you're probably looking that's why you're on Salky Hall Street on Christmas Eve.

You're frantically looking for your Christmas presents. You know, and so you're bumping people, people are bumping into you. If you're my height, people are trying to take your eye out with umbrellas and things like this. So the disciples say, who touched you?

Come on, I mean, look, you know, they've got, you know, a couple of hundred people round about us. You know, we're getting banged about here like eggs in a basket, and you want to know who touched you, Jesus. This woman had to fight to get close enough to Jesus, and yet all these people are already around Jesus.

All these people are already bumping into Jesus, touching Jesus' clothes, and yet nothing happened to any of them except her. A whole crowd of people close to Jesus, but apart from one person, none of them were close or not close enough.

And the same thing can be when we come to church. We can, you know, Jesus made this promise that we're two or three this morning, but I can tell you that we've got more two or three this morning. We've met that threshold.

[31 : 36] Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am. Where? Outside in the street. Sitting in the front pew. No, he says, I am in the midst, I am in the middle.

That's why I'm saying to you this morning, church is a crowd with Jesus in the middle. That's where Jesus wants to be. Right, slap, bang, in the middle. So the church is a crowd gathering around Jesus.

And yes, I don't know you're a congregation, but I can tell you from my own experience of being in churches over the years. People go out of a church service and you hear the most interesting conversations happening.

So one person says, I loved the worship this morning. And somebody else says, ah, the songs were too fast. Someone says, the sermon really spoke to me this morning.

And somebody else says, I see the pastor was on his soapbox this morning. Someone says, there were lovely prayers this morning. And somebody else says, Mrs. Smith prays such long-winded prayers.

[32 : 39] I hope there's not a Mrs. Smith in here this morning. There is. I'm sure your prayers are lovely, okay? Just an illustration.

I picked the name at random, honest. It's not a word of knowledge. It's not a word of knowledge. It's always a sign if you're a good preacher, if you get asked back, it's not going to happen, is it?

But you understand the point. How come people can come out of the same service, listen to the same worship, hear the same preaching, and have two completely different reactions?

You know, it's like one person was there, but didn't actually touch Jesus. And somebody else did. You can be in a crowd with Jesus in the middle and still not actually touch him.

So that's your challenge to you this morning. What do you want when you come to church? Heaven forbid that you are here simply out of a sense of habit or a sense of duty.

[33 : 49] But I hope that you've come here this morning with that sense, well, I'm going to church because Jesus is going to be there. And I want you to meet him. Now, it may be you've come this morning with needs.

Maybe you need to actually, first of all, get to know Jesus in a way that you haven't before. Maybe you've come this morning, despite your circumstances, and thank you for that, if that's the case. Maybe this morning, you know, we're getting told today about, you know, the cost of living crisis and everything that's going on.

People are worried about their finances. For two years, we've been absolutely terrified about our health. And many people have had the real hurt of losing someone and not been able to be with them, to comfort them, to say their goodbyes in the way that you want.

And maybe this morning, you know, that you are coming to church despite your worries, despite your hurts. Perhaps getting here this morning was difficult for you physically because of ill health.

I've heard this morning about David, who is taking a service tomorrow, taking a funeral tomorrow, and the poor man is having to guard his health for, to be able to give that service and that respect to that family.

[35 : 05] You know, so maybe this morning you're actually here in spite of your situation and your circumstances, in which case I really hope that you do get touched by Jesus this morning. But when we come to church, are we making the effort to not just be in the crowd, but to get close enough to Jesus to touch him and be touched by him?

That when we come out of here this morning, in some way we will be different. That we will have that sense that even if, you know, if we've not received a healing, that healing is coming.

If we've got financial problems to believe that God's going to give us wisdom, we may not rain a thousand pounds on us, but God is going to show us how do we deal with that situation and get ourselves out of that situation.

If we're in a difficult relationship or different situation, that God will give us wisdom to know how to deal with it. Or God will do something and change the circumstances and enable us to find a way through it.

But do we have that belief that Jesus is here and Jesus can make a difference to me? into my life? So that brings us to my last point and perhaps the most personal point.

[36 : 16] How close are you to Jesus this morning? How close am I to Jesus this morning? This woman spent 12 years and everything she had looking in the wrong place, looking to the wrong people.

But when she came to Jesus, she got exactly what she needed and it didn't cost her a penny. So what are you looking for this morning? Are you looking for love?

Are you looking for acceptance? Are you looking for forgiveness? Are you looking for peace? Are you looking for a purpose? Where have you been looking for these things?

Who have you been looking to for these things? And how much does that search cost you? Whether that's physically or emotionally or financially or spiritually.

Jesus wants you to stop looking to the wrong people and looking in the wrong places and to come to him so that you can find that love and that acceptance, that healing, that whole new life.

[37 : 26] So this morning, this story wants to remind you that God knows who you are. You might feel invisible this morning but not to the God that made you.

This story wants to remind you that you are important to God. I said to you at the beginning that this person is called the woman all the way through this story except once.

That is when the woman came back to Jesus and told, it says trembling with fear, she told what had happened to her. And Jesus said, daughter, not woman, daughter, your faith has made you whole, go in peace.

Think about that for a minute. Daughter. That's something a father says to his daughter. That's a word that means family.

Acceptance. Part of something other than yourself. This woman had never had that in 12 years. That was the gentlest, most compassionate way Jesus could possibly have spoken to that woman.

[38 : 39] To show her that she was loved. That she was no longer on her own. That she was no longer rejected. Daughter. And God wants to address you that way this morning.

God wants to be able to speak to you and say daughter or son. So that we might know that we are accepted by him. That we are part of God's family.

And that once we are part of God's family, that can never be taken away from us. God not only knows about you. He knows about your worries, your struggles.

As I said, whether that's health, finance or relationships. Whether it's work. And I'm not going to suggest to you this morning that you will come to Jesus and suddenly everything will be absolutely miraculous and wonderful.

This woman waited 12 years to get that healing. But I want to encourage you this morning. I can tell you right now if you don't come to Jesus, I absolutely guarantee things are not going to get better.

[39 : 41] God wants to do something to do something in your life.

Keep coming to church. Keep surrounding yourself with God's people. Keep believing. Keep trusting. Keep fighting through that crowd, whether that is a crowd of doubt or unbelief.

faith. And don't give up until you get close enough to touch Jesus and be touched by him. And you know, if you have already been touched by Jesus this morning, you need to share that with people.

I've already said to you, first of all, because only you can tell your story. But because there will be people this morning who are struggling with what's going on in their lives.

And they need the encouragement of hearing someone saying, I've been in that situation. This happened to me. And this is what God did to change it and turn it around. People need to hear not just how you became a Christian so many years ago, but they need to hear that that same God, as I said at the beginning of our prayer this morning, is still alive.

[40 : 51] He's still here. He's still moving. He's still touching and changing people's lives. And people need to hear that. and be encouraged by that.

And that's one of the reasons why people come to church. They need to be told that God is here, that God is still touching lives, and not to give up. That we need to fight to push aside the obstacles of fear, loneliness, pain, rejection, until we get to Jesus.

And here's this final challenge this morning, for me as well as for yourself. When we come to church, are we just going to be part of the crowd?

We're going to be near Jesus, but not close enough? Or are we going to be people who will push through, some people who will make the effort to get close enough to Jesus, to touch him, and to know that something has happened, to know that something has changed in us, that we can then share with other people.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning, again, for this truth that Jesus Christ is alive today. We thank you that he is in this place, but we thank you that he is not confined to this place.

[42 : 12] And so we thank you that when we leave here on a Sunday, we don't just lock the doors and lock God in, but we thank you that you have promised in your word that you will be with us, that you will never forsake us.

That, again, as I mentioned, that psalm that says no matter where we go, whether we go up to heaven, whether we go to hell, whether we go into the depths of the sea, whether we go to the highest heavens, you're there.

And so we pray that you would help us to realize that when we're struggling in situations, we're not struggling alone, that you are with us. We thank you that we are reminded in your word that we have a God who is not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, that he has been tempted in every way that we are but without sin.

We thank you that we come to this unbelievable God who himself suffered rejection, accusation, that people physically attacked him, that people told lies about him, that people made all kinds of accusations and innuendo about him.

And so he knows what it's like this morning to be us. And so we thank you this morning that you make your power available to us. Help us to experience that this morning.

[43 : 39] Help us to not leave this place untouched, but help us to come to you in Jesus' name. Amen.