

# PM Mark 5 "Who Touched My Clothes?"

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Verses 21 to 43 has a parallel in Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, verses 40 to 56. When we first look at it, the question that Jesus asked, who touched my clothes, or even more succinctly, who touched me, given the circumstances, is as bizarre a question today as it was for Jesus' disciples.

Now, given that we're in 2024 and we're all very COVID aware still, and we've got very refined concepts of social distancing, we would notice, I think, if someone sidled inside our personal exclusion zone, and started having a coughing fit and played Tig in our winter jacket, we would know.

And we all do remember that pre-pandemic feeling of concentrated humanity, when, a bit like herring in a barrel, as one old lady called it, my mother actually, the feeling of being on the London tube, or on the airport bus taking us from the plane to the terminal, or leaving a stadium after a football match, all jostling together, or even in the food queue at a social event.

Who touched my clothes seems like a ridiculous question. And in today's reading, it was even more apparently bizarre, because Jesus had just been asked, and had agreed, to urgently attend to Jairus' little daughter, who to all intents and purposes was terminally ill.

If Jesus was to save her, time was of the essence. In modern medical terminology, if this was Holby City, or even DGRI, the arrest call has gone out, and the crash team is on its way.

[ 2 : 1 7 ] Yet in the middle, of a milling crowd, Jesus appears to get distracted, by someone briefly touching his clothes.

And the disciples are a bit like security guards. They were probably trying to usher Jesus safely, through the crowds to Jairus' house, and they felt justified in remonstrating with Jesus, about the impracticalities, and the unreasonableness apparently of his question.

But Jesus had said it, and the question was now irrevocably out there, as we would say. Now, we are not unfamiliar these days, with people in high public office, or in places of public influence, opening their mouths to change feet, so to speak, and then to deny that what they had said, was actually said, to cries of, it was, it was.

Or to claim in their self-defense, I misspoke. What's that when it's at home? Jesus here, however, that you can imagine the disciples' embarrassment, makes it worse by saying it again.

Scripture doesn't say he said it louder the second time, but you cannot believe either that he said it more quietly. Somebody touched me. I know that power has gone out from me.

[ 3 : 4 9 ] Now, we can learn lots from this. First, we can learn that Jesus is very sensitive to our touch. He feels our slightest touch.

Indeed, we could say that no one touched, or touches Jesus, Jesus without his knowledge and awareness. Have you ever touched Jesus?

If you have, he has not forgotten. Have you ever glanced a look of faith at your Redeemer, then maybe averted your gaze?

Oh, he knows you did, as much as you know it, and he has not forgotten. Secondly, this woman's contact with Jesus was not a bear hug, or a rugby tackle, or even a firm handshake, but a trembling, tentative touch.

But that was all that was needed. Jesus doesn't put obstacles in our way unless you count wide open arms of love and forgiveness.

[ 5 : 0 0 ] as obstacles. There's no resistance on his part to that touch. No force field diverting the touch away. The third thing we can learn is that this is intensely personal.

There are no block bookings on the road to salvation. Even when we read in Acts chapter 2 of 3,000 coming to faith in one day, that was 3,000 individuals.

3,000 separate touches. As we thought this morning in Luke 6, 19, all the people tried to touch him because power was coming from him and healing them all.

But that wasn't a generic touch by all the people, but a multitude of individual touches. Each by one person, one soul.

And we have to answer the question whether we have touched Jesus. However we have done it, be it hesitantly or enthusiastically, whether encouraged by those who love us, or entirely alone, whether intentionally and logically, or blindly and in desperation, did you personally, I, me, touch our Jesus in faith?

[ 6 : 32 ] The fourth thing we learn is that it matters to Jesus when we touch him. It cost Jesus to die for us, to suffer what he suffered in that rubbish tip called Golgotha outside the walls of Jerusalem, lifted up on the cross with the world's sin on his shoulders.

That is, every generation's sin, every nation's sin, every family's sin, every person's sin, my sin and your sin.

There's nothing automatic or generic about this. It's deeply, uniquely personal. Not just for you and for me, but for Jesus too.

He knows you by name. You are his. You matter to him. And he knows when you touch him.

And of course it is his power that heals you, that washes away your sin. Nothing, nothing but the blood of Jesus. John Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, the end of the third century AD, wrote beautifully about this.

[ 7 : 49 ] Thinking of Psalm 63 verse 1, O God, you are my God, early will I seek you. He reflects, this personal language, you are my God, teaches us that each individual owes as great a debt of thanks to Christ as if he had come for that individual's sake alone.

He wouldn't have begrudged his stooping down to earth even for a single soul. Thus, the degree of Christ's love for each individual is as great as his love for the human race at large.

This is not the way it is in our current world. You may have observed this, whether it's in the healthcare system, of banking system, even shopping in Tesco, or getting a new tyre for your car. It's all become impersonal, a matter of almost calculated indifference, who you are, what you are, and what your need is.

You are a number, rather than a name or a person. Not so with our Saviour. He knows you by name.

[ 9 : 31 ] Let's just read this verse to give ourselves assurance and great blessing and encouragement. John chapter 10.

Jesus says in verse 2, But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

And when he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. I thank God that in my Saviour, I have someone who knows me.

Even as I, even if it's only a little, know him. And this is, don't forget this, my friends.

It is just so precious. You're not a number, a digit, a cipher somewhere. You are a person created in the image of God.

[ 10 : 56 ] For whom the Son of God gave his life for you personally alone. You know, we have a saying in common use today, that if someone's done something special, for instance, let's think of an amazing performance of a concerto on the piano, or someone having sat a difficult exam, or performed brilliantly on stage, we say afterwards, you could see it, fear took it out of them.

Every time our Lord healed, it took it out of him. Personal, unique, power, and tangible effort to heal that particular person.

Now, there's a whole background to all of this if we're going to fully appreciate what happened that day when Jairus' daughter was healed.

The first thing is there's an interesting difference in the accounts of the events in Mark's and Luke's Gospels. You're familiar with the phrase synoptic Gospels.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke's synoptic means looking at the same things. There are three parallel and very similar accounts. Mark's Gospel being the first committed to Papyrus, and as it's usually understood, the Gospel according to Peter, written down by John Mark as Peter spoke and preached, and indeed fulfilled Jesus' instruction to remember him, his life, and death, and resurrection.

[12:44] Accounts in those three Gospels are often very similar. However, the difference to note is that in Mark 5, 27, it talks of the woman touching Jesus' cloak, or Jesus' robe, while Luke's account describes touching the edge, or the hem, of his robe.

This may be telling us something really important about this woman. I'd like to read you a short passage from the book of Numbers, chapter 15, chapter 15, chapter 15, chapter 15, and in that, in verses 37 to 41, it says this, Numbers 15, 37 to 41, the Lord said to Moses, speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner, and it shall be a tassel for you to look at, and remember all the commandments of the

Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart, and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God. That astonishing bit of numbers gives us such a beautiful description of what to us would seem an extraordinarily strange thing to ask the children of Israel to do.

But God asked them to put these tassels on the edge of their cloaks as a constant reminder to obey God's commands and be consecrated to him.

[15:15] And Jesus, like all Jewish men of his age, would have worn such a cloak with such tassels. We sometimes fail to acknowledge as much as we should.

Jesus dressed Jewish, looked Jewish with beard and so on and lived in a Jewish way because he was Jewish. The woman in touching the edge of his cloak in her despair and shame was wittingly, deliberately grasping on to remembrance of God's commands and promises.

What else do we know about the woman? One thing we don't know is her name. We know Jairus' name and we'll come to him later. But we don't know hers and we don't know the name of the blind man in John 9 either.

So two of my favourite characters from scripture, I don't know their names. But that's because this is not primarily about them. It's about Jesus.

And what encouragement for us that it is whether we are in Jesus that matters. Not our worldly status, who we may or may not be.

[16:30] It's about Jesus. What we do know is that this woman had suffered ever so much. As a medic, even if I'm a retired one now, I can't help pondering diagnosis and treatment in the Bible.

She had had a gynae problem, this woman, for 12 years, possibly fibroids. But because of constant bleeding, she would have been anemic. Iron deficiency anemia, possibly with heart failure too, with swollen legs, dropsy as it used to be called in the King James version, and constant low grade ill health as a result.

She spent all her savings, all the money she had on doctors who'd taken the money but had failed her. Nothing to be proud of there. But there was more than that because she was ceremonially unclean.

If we read Leviticus 15, 19 to 31, the religious and legal consequences of her bleeding were that she couldn't live normally in her own home.

She couldn't touch people. She was likely divorced as a result. She was ostracised from society. She couldn't contact friends.

[17:51] She was excommunicated from services at the synagogue. She was shut out from the women's court at the temple. She personally redefines the phrase at a loss.

So surreptitiously at the end of her rope illegally, silently, she touched the hem of Jesus' cloak and instantly she was healed.

How did she know? Well, if you've ever been really unwell yourself and then have recovered, you will have no need to ask how she knew. It's night and day difference and in an instant as well.

But here she is. I'm sure she can scarcely believe it, but she feels well for the first time in 12 long years as she draws back into the shadows.

As the private, the very private person she maybe always had been, but if not so certainly had become over the 12 years of her ill health.

[19:02] who touched my clothes? Jesus said. Who touched me? I know power has gone out from me. Imagine the consternation.

People looking round at each other. It wasn't me. Was it you? No, no, no. It wasn't me. Who was it then? The disciples embarrassed. There's a crowd, Jesus.

and Jairus. Please, please, my daughter, my daughter. And in the midst of all this melee, this woman of unsurpassed courage comes forward.

She owns up. I touched, I did it. And she falls at Jesus' feet. Well, does Jesus report her to the authorities and have her stoned for wittingly in her unclean state touching a man?

No, no, no. This was Jesus. Counterculturally the champion of women and women's rights. After all, male and female, he created them.

[ 20 : 12 ] In the midst of this melee, in the midst of this crowd and confusion, the Lord of Glory pauses and he has what we might call a quiet time with this prostrate, broken women.

You know, friends, we talk about having our quiet time with God. Have we ever contemplated that the God who created us shares this quiet time with us?

It's why we were created, for communion with God. This is two-way and in this quiet time, she pours out her heart, her pain, her weariness, her guilt, her faith and her love.

And Jesus, her healer, well, he thrills her soul.

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. Now, we're in a small crowd here today, but if you can still have that quiet time with the Lord, pour out your heart to him.

[ 21 : 30 ] Know his forgiveness and his peace. But you know, there was one other motive that made the Lord Jesus call this woman out of the crowd.

Something so caring and thoughtful and sensitive and insightful, it quite takes your breath away. if this woman had been permitted to shrink and slink back into the shadows, who just, who would have believed her?

That she was cured. Aye, right, 12 years and now you say everything's okay. Sure. But with her situation brought out into the open, and Jesus' declaration that she was healed, there was then no bar to her reintegration into society.

Would she have chosen to be healed publicly? Clearly she hadn't. But Jesus knows best. God's ways are higher than our ways. His way is best. His timing is immaculate.

Well, how can I say that when the end result was that Jairus' daughter died? With all that palaver going on, the child passed away.

[ 22 : 50 ] Let's rewind a little. Just before these incidents, as we read in Mark's Gospel, Jesus had returned from the Gentile territory of the Gerizines.

And there he had healed Legion, the demon possessed Gentile man, and where the demons had entered a herd of pigs who had perished in the lake. This would not have happened in a vacuum. It even says that in Mark's Gospel. There were people there. They were watching. They were telling each other. This was big news. People would have heard.

But here the synagogue ruler, the synagogue ruler, Mark here, when Jesus returns to the other side of the lake, swallows his prejudice against Jesus after Jesus' dealings with Gentiles, pigs, and mental illness, as they would perceive it.

Others would have thought Jesus an outsider and a heretic. Geriz swallows his dignity by falling at Jesus' feet in supplication. Remember, as a synagogue ruler, though he didn't necessarily preach himself, like a good church secretary, he would have organized the preachers in the synagogue and allocated all the duties, but he swallows his pride and wittingly humbles himself before Jesus and puts himself in Jesus' debt.

[ 24 : 19 ] But you see, by not having sent a messenger or a servant to Jesus in his place, on his behalf, but instead coming in person suggests that those around him were less than happy with approaching Jesus for help.

They were certainly very quick to try to dismiss Jesus when it seemed the child had died, in verse 35. But Geriz so loved his only child, he forgot everything except that he needed Jesus' help.

Help that was readily given, had it not been for that impoverished, desperate, chronically ill woman, as Jesus appeared to get sidetracked.

Perhaps if you've had a child who's been very ill, I have, and their survival threatened, you may have an inkling of what Geriz was going through.

That delay must have been tearing him apart, because he assumed that Jesus could only help his dear girl if she was alive for him to do the helping. We know he was wrong of course, but at that point he didn't.

[ 25 : 34 ] Now if we read on from verse 49, like some Shakespearean actor addressing an audience in resonating tones, for this is a wonderful script full of drama and passion, we may miss

the point altogether.

You see, at the news of his daughter's death, I don't think Geriz would have been capable of saying anything. He'd be groaning, gasping, aghast, devastated.

would our Lord not have spoken ever so quietly to Jairus, his voice crackling with the intensity of his emotion and compassion, but with power and authority.

Don't be afraid, just believe, and she will be healed. This for sure is a different type of quiet time from the woman with the issue of blood.

But again, despair is met with grace and where the ruler who bowed before Jesus is lifted up as the Saviour confides in his ear the music of divine love.

[ 26 : 54 ] I wonder if Charles Wesley was thinking about this when he penned that hymn over a thousand tongues to sing. Verse 3, Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease, tis music in the sinner's ears, tis life and health and peace.

But the music that met Jesus and Jairus' ears as they reached the house was of professional mourners, keening and wailing and flute players. No, no funeral rites cut the mustard without these two components.

And the reaction to Jesus' declaration that this girl was not dead, but sleeping was not just that they laughed at Jesus and dismissed him as some crackpot.

The Greek says they kept on laughing at him. The melee had truly come to the house of mourning as mockery and ridicule and contempt for the sinless son of God.

It was defeated Satan's attempt to undermine the king of kings. And he uses the same tactics against his followers. So, my friends, when people ridicule you and mock you because of what you believe, be so encouraged that you're counted worthy to suffer ridicule for his name and to become more like Jesus, as Paul says in Philippians 3.10.

[ 28 : 26 ] I want to know Christ. Yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings. Jesus, the walls reversed.

He was pushed out. Go on, out, out, out, out, and the doors shut behind them. And then in the quiet and the sanctity of the inner chamber, Jesus, the roles reversed, instead of being touched by the woman, he touches the girl and takes her by the hand and he speaks resurrection and life to her. He speaks in Aramaic and the tenderness and the appropriateness of that resurrection greeting so sears Peter's memory that Mark's gospel records the very words, one of the rare places in scripture, New Testament scripture, where Aramaic is written down.

And then two things, two amazing things happen. First of all, the Lord of compassion and understanding, who knew so well personally what fasting meant, gives us his first instruction to the astonished parents, an instruction so loving and practical and important, give the lassies something to eat.

And secondly, he tells them, he orders them not to tell anyone about it. We have learned it, about it from the gospel writers, not from the parents.

[ 30 : 11 ] Jesus knew the fickleness of human character and his time had not yet come. The gospel Calvary denouement was still some time away.

And does not the Holy Spirit do his great work in the quiet of our hearts when we are born again, when new life, new birth is breathed into us.

If that disappoints you and you would rather have something with a bit more fanfare, don't despair because Jesus is coming again. And when that happens, it will be with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.

Meantime, you have just to content yourself with some time in the book of Revelation. So, this utterly amazing passage of scripture gives us two interwoven and contrasting accounts of Jairus and his daughter and the impoverished woman with the issue of blood.

And here are some of the contrasts. Twelve years of agony and ill health against twelve years of normal growth and loving acceptance. The words used in the original indicate this girl was just turned or turning twelve.

[ 31 : 34 ] Jewish culture declared that at twelve years and one day a child became a young woman. A time which ironically modern demographics suggest is the fittest and healthiest time of your life with the best survival statistics.

Jairus was important. The woman was a nobody. An unnamed nobody. He was wealthy. She was poor.

She came secretly. He came very publicly. She thought Jesus didn't need to know. He thought his daughter had still to be alive.

She was healed instantly. He had an agonising delay. She was healed publicly. Jairus' daughter was healed very privately.

Both were in desperate need. Both Jairus and the woman fell at Jesus' feet. Both came to the right person. Both believed. Both received beyond their wildest dreams.

[ 32 : 43 ] love. And what do we learn about Jesus? How do we begin to contemplate his love, his sensitivity, his giving, his power, his strength of character, his wisdom, his healing, his closeness, his intimacy, his time for individuals, his grace, his touch.

I quoted an old gather hymn this morning where the chorus goes. He touched me, oh he touched me, and oh the joy that floods my soul.

Something happened, now I know he touched me and made me whole. So this evening's scripture helps us to get to know our Lord and Saviour a little better, and in so doing get to understand if even a little the character and the heart of God, heart of compassion.

As Lamentations 3 to 32 33 it says there, though the Lord brings grief, he will show compassion. compassion. So great is his unfailing love, for he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone. That gather chorus encourages us in the wholeness we receive when Jesus touches us. And let's never claim that this is all too complicated, too hard for us to understand.

[ 34 : 23 ] Here are five short statements whose sentiments are drawn are drawn from Mark's account that go to the heart of the gospel. If in faith we ask for Jesus to be with us, he will.

We have need to be utterly honest with our Saviour in all our sin and need. When we are, he encourages us, peace and he speaks peace and healing to our souls.

But don't you just love it that Jesus not only provides for our souls salvation by his death on the cross, he cares for our practical daily living, too.

He really does have a fellow feeling with our infirmities. This is the Saviour who by his Spirit makes his home with us and lives with us.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word. How amazing is your grace towards us.

[ 35 : 35 ] We thank you that Jesus takes time to be touched by us and to have a quiet time with us.

we thank you that Jesus touches us and has time to have a quiet time with us. Heavenly Father, help us just to understand a little of the riches of your grace, the abundance of your goodness. Help us to be overwhelmed and overjoyed when we think of who you are and what you have done and what you have promised and Father, we know that there is a time coming as we trust in Jesus, when we will be like him, when we will see him as he is and we praise and thank you for the promises for an eternity with our Lord and Saviour.

We praise you and we thank you for Jesus in his name. Amen. Amen. our final song of praise tonight, Thank you.