

Over disease

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[0 : 00] Good morning. So if you'd like to follow the reading, it is on page 1013. It's Mark's Gospel, chapter 5, reading verses 24 to 34.

And a great crowd followed Jesus and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years and who had suffered much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and was no better but rather grew worse.

She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.

And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garments?

And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, Who touched me? And he looked round to see who had done it.

[1 : 36] But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease. Well, good morning, everyone.

Thank you very much, Mary, for reading. Let's pray as we come to look at this passage again. Our Father, we pray that you would open our hearts to see the grace that is at the heart of who you are and the grace that is at the heart of the gospel.

And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we've been seeing that Jesus is an infinitely great saviour. That's been the subject of this whole section of Mark's gospel.

He is an infinitely great saviour. What response does he require? Well, that is the subject of our section today.

[2 : 55] The subject today is that we are saved through faith in Jesus alone, just as this woman was.

Just look down with me at verse 34. Jesus said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well. Literally, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace and be healed of your disease. Religion will tell us that you've got to have lived a good life to be made right with God, to make amends.

Christ tells us, come to me in faith, just like this woman did, and you will be saved forever.

Now, that is a massive contrast, isn't it, with what someone's called every man religion, or you could say every man slash woman religion, which pumps through our veins.

[3 : 59] Every man religion, it's the religion that we all naturally follow, right? Is live a good life, live a good enough life, and God will accept you at the end.

And maybe that's what you think Christianity is all about. This event really happened. This woman probably became a well-known member of the early church, and recounted her story, which was also witnessed by the disciples, who were there at the time, but she would have had to tell them things like, how she felt, and when she felt it, and what she'd said to herself.

So, she would have been part of the early church, and early church history says she even had a name, Veronica. We don't know that for sure, though, so the Bible doesn't tell us what she was called.

This miracle really happens. So did lots of miracles, though. So why has this one been recorded for us in such detail? It's been recorded so that we might know what response is required to Jesus, the infinitely great Saviour.

What response does he call for? Faith. And he holds this woman up to say, this is the response I require.

[5 : 30] Daughter, your faith has saved you. This could not be more radical both then and now. It was not the religious law-keeping of the Jews of his day, the Pharisees of chapters 1 and 2.

It's not that by which someone can come into the kingdom of God, Jesus says, but through faith, like this woman.

C.S. Lewis, who wrote the Narnia series, he was once asked in Oxford by a load of other dons, they said, what was his first name, C.S.?

Was it Christopher? Clive. Thank you, yeah. They said, they must have said Clive, I guess. What's the difference between Christianity and every other religion?

And he said, one word, grace. Well, that is what we're seeing here today. We might ask though, what is faith?

[6 : 34] Enter this woman. This woman is held up by Jesus as one of only three, the first of only three examples in Mark's gospel of faith that is held up by Jesus.

Jesus says, you want to know what faith is? This is faith. Look at this woman. Two of the three are women. Well, we've got two points today in a conclusion.

Faith comes to Jesus as saviour. Faith comes, falls before him as Lord and we are saved through thin faith alone. That's where we're going. Number one, faith comes to Jesus as saviour.

That is what she does. This woman, she believes that Jesus has the power to save her in the face of death where all human power has failed and she comes to him.

She's been bleeding for 12 years. Do you see that? In verse 25. She's been bleeding for 12 years. The text preserves her modesty. Doesn't say where, but we can guess.

[7 : 43] All human help has failed. Verse 26. Many physicians or many doctors she has been to see.

She has no more money. She's tried private healthcare and they've rinsed her dry. Many of them have caused her to suffer more rather than less.

Verse 26. She's suffered much under these doctors. Doesn't really bear thinking about what people had tried. she grew worse and not better.

She knew her life was slowly ebbing away. A bit like, I guess, like the cancer patient today who's tried all the grim chemo that the doctors can offer.

And it hasn't worked. And she knows where she's going. Her disease would take her down to the ground. But she had heard reports of someone.

[8 : 50] Verse 27. She had heard the reports of someone who had been saying things like to a paralysed man, get up.

And he got up. And this person had also touched a leper and healed that person immediately of their leprosy. And in fact, had been healing a whole town of anyone who came to him.

She'd heard reports of someone. She thought this man is acting with such power that even if I touch his clothes, I will be healed.

Do you see that in verse 28? Do you see that? And so Jesus, when he came to her part of town, she wrestled and barged her way through the crowd.

Verse 24. It was a great crowd that thronged about him. I don't think we use that word throng very much, but literally pressed all around him.

[9 : 55] If you've ever tried to get to the front of a gig, I don't know for many of us, most of us, that will be remembering maybe quite a few years ago. But as the crowd gets thicker towards the stage, it's something like that and she's barging her way through.

She came up behind him, but this stage, by this stage, the people must have been densely packed together around him. Somehow, she manages to squeeze through, I guess, quite a lot of strength, pushing through men, pushing men out of the way.

But she's desperate. She'll stop at nothing just to get her hands on that cloak. She flings out her hands and for the briefest moment, she touches his cloak.

And verse 29, she feels in her body this flow of blood that has been going for 12 years suddenly stops. Well, this is the faith that Jesus wants.

The faith that Jesus wants is the faith that comes to him in the face of death where human power is helpless. some observations on her.

[11 : 28] Number one, do you see that she stops at nothing? There is a single-mindedness, isn't there? She doesn't care what people think of her.

Get out my way. She just makes a beeline. She's desperate to be saved. You know, it's that kind of attitude of I'm going to go to Jesus regardless of what others think.

Now, of course, that can hold many back from Jesus. What will my friends think? What will my family think? Well, there was none of that with her.

She stopped at nothing to get to Jesus. The second thing we can see is that she comes to a person and not to a set of ideas or a set of doctrines or to religion.

So, perhaps for some of us looking into Christianity, faith, it's not to come to a religion. It's to come to a person, Jesus, as this woman did.

[12 : 38] It's not to come to a set of ideas or doctrines, helpful as some of those can be. It's to come to a person. Well, that's what she did.

And thirdly, she comes to him based on what she has heard and not on what she's seen. Do you see that in verse 27? She had heard the reports about Jesus.

She hadn't seen him. Now, this is really important. Just think about this for a minute. Her faith was no different from someone today hearing the reports of Jesus risen from the dead and coming to him in faith that he can help us as we too face death.

This is the Bible's presentation. What is faith? faith? It's not sight. It is faith. Faith is based on hearing the reports of Jesus and coming to him.

Many people say today, don't they, they say, I won't believe unless I see. Have you heard that? Perhaps that's you here today. I won't believe unless I see with my eyes.

[13 : 54] But this woman didn't doubt the reports when she had no reason to doubt them. Was she more gullible than we are today?

Was she the fool to believe them? Or are we the fool not to believe these reports that we have in front of us? Well, she was healed.

And so this is the faith that Jesus calls us all to have. We have the reports of a saviour whose power to save is infinite. death is not a problem for Jesus.

Sin is dealt with at the cross. Satan defeated. We have the reports. We too have heard. Will we come to him like this woman if we haven't already?

Well, we're nearly finished with our definition of faith. Faith is very simple and we're going to get to that in just a moment. But Jesus doesn't quite leave her there. So secondly, true faith falls before him as Lord.

[15 : 06] I take it that's the point of verse 33. The woman knowing what had happened to her came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

You see, I've been thinking this week, why do we get this next bit? why does Jesus turn around and ask the question, who touched my clothes? He could have just walked on, right?

She's been healed, he's on his way to Jairus' daughter, but he turns around in verse 30 and asks, who touched me? Now, he doesn't have to do that.

He knows perfectly well who touched him, the one who rules the wind and the waves, the one who knows what people are thinking in their hearts. He doesn't ask that question to sate his curiosity, he asks that question for her sake, because there is one more thing he wants her to do before he commends her faith.

And that is that true faith in him is not a matter of grab and run faith. it must mean coming to him as Lord.

[16 : 21] She comes to him twice, first as saviour, but then she must come to him publicly as Lord. So to have faith in Jesus, it's not to grab and run, but to come into a permanent relationship with him as Lord, and he wants her as a daughter.

You see, when Jesus called her, she had a choice. She could melt away into the crowd, it was big enough, and she had what she'd come for.

She'd been healed. She had a choice. She could either do that, or she could come forward into the open and fall down before him.

She came forward in fear and trembling. She'd begun to realise who she was dealing with, and fell down before him as Lord, which is who he is, God.

Only then does he say, your faith has saved you. What is the point? I think the point is this. The point is that Jesus is not a ticket to heaven.

[17 : 36] Have you heard of that, come across that kind of Christianity, Jesus, the ticket to heaven? It's grab and run faith. But Jesus doesn't allow us simply to reach out and grab salvation and then kind of melt away back into the crowd to live our lives unchanged.

No, there's no such thing as ticket to heaven Christianity. True faith must come to Jesus as saviour and fall down before him as Lord.

Thirdly, save through thin faith alone. Just look what Jesus says to her in verse 34. He said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace and be healed of your disease. See the gentle welcome of Jesus. She comes to him in fear and trembling.

Is she expecting a scolding for her presumption? He says to her, no, in effect he says don't be afraid. Quite the opposite. What a gentle welcome.

[18 : 48] That gentle welcome is open to anyone who comes to him in faith. Secondly, do you see that she gets much more than she came for?

She came for healing, she gets eternal salvation. This statement in verse 34 is a rich statement, every word counts. So he could have just said go and be healed, but he says three things before he gets to that.

And each of those three things shows us that he's talking about a much greater, bigger salvation that she's got. Firstly, he says daughter, do you see that word?

Daughter, not woman, but daughter. He declares her to be a child of God. She's no longer a dying woman without hope, but she's a precious and treasured child of God.

A daughter will never not be a daughter, a son will never not be a son. Can you see the permanence of what Jesus is saying here? You're now a child of God.

[20 : 01] Well, that's true of anyone who comes to Jesus in faith. We get more than we'd ever asked or imagined. So often people come to Jesus with a felt need.

You know, what actually prompts people to go to him is, I need help. And what they find when they come to him is a glorious eternal salvation as a child of God.

More than we ever asked or imagined. Secondly, he says, your faith has saved you. It's slightly annoying the way this is translated, I think, in the original.

It is that word salvation that is used everywhere else as saved you. So Jesus, and Mark is pointing out, Jesus is saying, this is bigger than just healing.

Your faith has saved you. There are other perfectly good words to describe healing. By the way, it is possible to get the wrong end of the stick with miracles like this, and to think, you know, what we do with this is that if people have enough faith, they can be healed of whatever terminal disease it is.

[21 : 20] Now, I hope you can see in verse 34, that helps us to see that what Jesus is talking about here is the whole thing, the great salvation, the eternal salvation that he's bringing.

That's the point. Those who come to him in faith receive that. And then those words, go in peace, go in peace.

peace. Now, this speaks of a far greater peace that she has, peace that can never be taken away from her as a child of God, saved forever, not just from her disease.

And this is true of anyone who would come to Jesus in faith. Go in peace forever. Paul puts the same thing like this in his letter to the Romans.

he says, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God forever. Go in peace.

[22 : 27] Here then is justification by faith alone in Mark's gospel. But as we draw this all together, we need to pause finally on how thin her faith is.

Can you see how empty her hands are as she comes? Nothing but desperation and belief. Sometimes I think we think that we need to get everything right, all our ducks in a row, and that's what faith is.

Even theologically, we need to understand everything. How much did this woman actually understand? she's not saved through her theological understanding.

She understands no more than a child might understand. Simply, Jesus is really powerful, and I need him, and I know he can save me.

There's nothing much that she understands beyond that he is an infinitely great saviour and Lord. Saving faith, therefore, is theologically thin. It is the hand that reaches to Jesus, and the knee that falls down before him, and that is it.

[23 : 40] See how thin faith is, and how willing Jesus is to give it to all and any who come to him, like this woman did. And it could not stand in greater contrast to the religious law-keeping of the Pharisees and the Jews of the day.

Jesus holds this woman up and says, you want to know who my salvation is for? She's who my salvation is for. This is the response.

Thin, simple faith. Notice what he does not say to her. He does not say your life's record has saved you.

He does not say your commandment keeping has saved you. he does not say your prayer routine, well done, your prayer routine has saved you. She has not been to a priest.

She has not been to church. She has not had time to start doing quiet times and reading her Bible. She's not told anyone about her faith in Jesus.

[24 : 51] She's done no evangelism. She's done no ministry. Faith is simply the hand that reaches to Jesus and the knee that falls before him.

And we need to be reminded of that all the time. The thinness of saving faith. Not your church attendance, not your church denomination, not your church tribe.

In fact, this woman's bleeding made her ritually unclean, permanently, according to the law of Moses. Symbolically, she was not fit to be in God's presence.

Why this particular illness does Jesus lift up this woman in particular and say this is faith? I take it to show us categorically that saving faith is the reaching out of the outsider, the unholy, the unclean, the sinner towards Jesus Christ.

Any sinner, Jesus says, who comes to me in faith can be saved. See how freely the grace of Jesus is given.

[26 : 05] He doesn't even turn around. To any and to all who would come to him as saviour and fall before him as Lord. If you're here today and you're not yet a Christian.

Can you see we all need him? Only he can help us. We can all come to him. You have heard the reports.

What's stopping you? Take a leaf out of this woman's book. And a word for those of us who have already come to Jesus in faith like this woman.

well I think let these words sink into our ears again from verse 34. Daughter, son, Jesus says to you each and every one of us, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. We may be troubled by many things, but the Lord Jesus has spoken this same declaration over you and over me.

[27 : 11] Permanent peace. rejoice. The peace of knowing that we are children of God and the future is bright. Go in peace.

Well let's pause there. We'll just have a couple of moments of silence as we respond personally to what the Lord has been saying to us and then I'll close us in prayer.

And so Father we thank you for the glory and the wonder and the goodness of Christ. Thank you for how freely the grace, the salvation of God is available to all who come to him like this woman in faith.

We want to praise and thank you again for that peace that we now have with you. And we want to thank you for the glorious future that awaits us as your forgiven children.

And we thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.