

*24 He went with him, and a great multitude followed him, and they pressed upon him on all sides. 25 A certain woman, who had an issue of blood for twelve years, 26 and had suffered many things by many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse, 27 having heard the things concerning Jesus, came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his clothes. 28 For she said, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. 30 Immediately Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd, and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 His disciples said to him, "You see the multitude pressing against you, and you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 He looked around to see her who had done this thing. 33 But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be cured of your disease." (WEB)*

Human beings want to be accepted. This is especially true when we are teenagers or pre-teens, but feeling accepted is important throughout our lives. I'd also dare to say that, at one time or another, we all have felt like an outcast or at least an outsider.

When I was young, we moved around a lot. Just simply being the new kid was pretty scary. It seems that there was always one person who wants to test you or even fight you and it is hard to come in and start making friends in a new place even if there isn't a bully around. It is hard being an outsider

After a while, I started having dreams about it and they were bad dreams. In those dreams you couldn't trust anyone or anything to be right or normal.

As I got older, I found out that the new boy had some advantages when it came to the girls—and I didn't worry about it so much.

As hard as it is to be an outsider—how much harder must it be to be an out-CAST.

The way Jesus dealt with the lower parts of society, including the outcasts, was with compassion and physical presence and even physical touch—even then those people were those considered to be unclean.

In the psychological sense, we all need to feel important—to literally feel HUMAN. After being shunned at every turn, having another human being care for them must have been nearly overwhelming.

Although most of them probably didn't really have Hansen's Disease, in theory, the lepers of the Bible were contagious. But it was being religiously and ritually "unclean" that was the worst of it. It made them outcasts—in a real sense, non-humans. They could not come in physical contact with other people—because if they did, that person would become unclean and be unable to perform any of their religious tasks—or do many other things required in life.

Outcasts were without value—but it gets worse. Their culture and their religion believed in a system of divine retribution. In their understanding of how God worked in creation, those who were outcasts were getting what they deserved. So, if I got sick—it was because of sin in my life and if I seemed righteous, then it was hidden sin or sin in my heart. They believed that those outcasts deserved their pain and difficulty and losses. So their physical pain was punctuated by the emotional pain of being rejected by all of society.

The woman we just read about was an outcast. Her issue of blood was such that she was considered ritually unclean. We can't tell for certain if others knew, but if her problem was known to others, she was certainly shunned—an outcast.

Remember that in her religion, she was only getting what she deserved from the hand of God—do not only was she rejected by fellow human beings, she was also rejected by God.

If she had had a husband at one time, it is bear 100% certain that by this time she had lost him at some point in the past 12 years—and in a sense that made her even more of an outcast in her society.

Add to that the fact that she had spent everything she had in search of a cure. She had nothing and she WAS nothing.

So here she is—in physical and emotional distress. Weak and unclean. Then there is the pressure of being taught all her life that she deserved to be this way—that it was a punishment from the hand of God. No money. No husband—in a culture of men, for men, and by men.

She was at the end of the end—but that was all about to change.

At the surface level, this is a great story. It is a story of Jesus meeting physical and emotional need. It is a story of timidity—but action that comes from desperation. It is a story of miraculous healing and physical renewal. It is a story about Jesus' power. After all, in this story we find that not only can HE heal, even the hem of his garment can perform miracles.

Even though it begins as a story of need, this quickly becomes a story of healing. The healing is powerful in itself and the details of the healing are pretty astounding. But I want us to look deeper.

The deeper layer gives us a picture of spiritual need and spiritual desperation and spiritual healing.

She was considered unfit for human company—she was considered polluted and unclean. Her disease was a defiling disease. This one malfunction in her body made the whole thing unclean.

In a sense, this is the way we are when we are separated from God by our sin—before we come to God through the spiritual healing of Jesus. Before a relationship to Christ, we are unfit and unclean under the law. Wholly unclean and unfit for the company of a righteous God.

You know, she had been suffering for 12 years and that must have seemed like a lifetime.

Romans 3:23 tells us that we are much like her—except spiritually instead of physically: *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;*

That sin makes us spiritual outcasts and whether we are young or old, when we are separated from God by our own actions and our own hand, that can also seem like a lifetime.

We are told that this woman had suffered at the hands of many physicians. She had been sent from expert to expert—specialist to specialist if you will. She had spent all she had but wasn't cured. Doctors then were the same then as now. You get a warranty from your mechanic and your plumber—but your doctor does the best they can and then takes your money whether you are cured or not.

As natural humans—prior to a relationship to God through Christ—we find ourselves in a similar place. We find ourselves unclean. We find ourselves spiritually sick and separated from God. And we seek a cure. Those cures we seek don't have guarantees either. Alcohol won't cure our pain. Nor will drugs. Nor will any of the things we seek out to make us feel better—from self-help books to counseling—because none of those things will make us right with God.

As we seek cure after cure for our separation from God, we may find ourselves in a similar place as hers—exhausted and desperate and still in pain.

When we are separated from God—when we are unclean and lost—sometimes we try religious cures. We come to the law and try to be good and right so that we will be acceptable.

Will that work? [Wait for answer.] No it won't. Why is that? Because we have been cheated by our understanding of what purpose God's law serves. God's law can't make us righteous—or at least we can't make ourselves righteous under God's law. God's law serves to show us that we need God and HIS righteousness. ONE failure under the law equals TOTAL uncleanness—just as one failure in her body made the whole thing unclean.

The law is not a comfort or a cure—if we really look at the law, it strikes fear in our hearts and souls. Through the law, we find that we are at the end of ourselves and at the end of our world—in need of a spiritual hero.

*...having heard the things concerning Jesus, came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his clothes.*

Ahhhh! JUST when there was nothing left to try and when she found herself at the end of hope and at the end of her world—mentally and physically—HERE was hope! Jesus. She had heard of him. Here was something that might work. His power had worked for others. So, she began to hope in him and desired to meet him and seek out his healing power.

Can you just see the transformation? Can you just picture it? She went from bent and beat and undone to having a spark of hope and the determination that comes from it.

Go with me here and see how this fits with our spiritual need. When we come to the end of ourselves and when we have found that the cures we sought out didn't work—when we are without hope we are at the best place to come to Jesus. Seeking to have our soul healed.

She sought him out timidly and quietly. Maybe because she was unclean. She slipped into the crowd and slipped up behind him. She didn't want a confrontation or to make a big fuss. Just healing. She came in desperation—but we are also told she came in faith. We faith was such that she only sought to come near him—to touch the hem of his robe.

It is often out of that combination of desperation and faith that we sinners come to Jesus. Desperation borne of need for healing and faith that he has healed others—so he may be able to heal us also.

*For she said, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.*

She wanted to be near him so that his power might make her whole. That is how we sinners come to Jesus for spiritual healing. She was not disappointed. Neither will we be. As we come into his presence we are transformed by his righteousness—by his healing. We will not be disappointed.

She knew she was healed, didn't she? Right then and with no doubt. We are the same spiritually aren't we? If you have come to faith in Jesus, that healing is real and powerful and without doubt.

And then Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me?" And the disciples looked at him like he was crazy.

"Touched you?" "EVERYONE is touching you—hundreds of them..."

Be he meant TOUCHED ME touched me.

She was going to slip off—never revealing that he had healed her or that she even needed healing. He wouldn't allow that would he? He stopped her and made her healing—her faith—public. Once that is done, in characteristic gentleness, he calls her an affectionate name and then sends her on her way. Go in peace, he says. In their culture that meant physical and spiritual and emotional peace.

He does expect the same from us doesn't he? He expects you and me to admit that we were imperfect—sinners in need of healing. Unclean and outcast. At the end of our hope and unable to make ourselves whole by our own actions—by our own hands.

Healed by the Lamb of God—by his hand, his work—even the hem of his garment.

And he gives peace to those who are healed. Spiritual peace. Clean-ness. Acceptability before God.

Go in peace! Can we do that today—you and I? We can through him.

