

Who Touched Me?
By Rev. Todd Farnsworth
Mark 5: 21-30



21 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. **22** Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. **23** 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.” **24** So Jesus went with him. 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?”

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.”

35 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?” **36** Overhearing^[c] what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” **37** He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. **38** When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. **39** He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” **40** But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. **41** He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). **42** Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. **43** He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.]

Jairus was a member of the establishment. As a ruler of the synagogue, he had privileges that mere mortals dare not dream. He had access to people’s lives. He had access to the Holiest of Holies. He was compensated well for his duties. It was understood that because of his position in the synagogue, he and his family were blessed. And then his world turned upside down. His daughter became very ill. He became scared. His daughter was dying and despite his station in life, as someone

"in the know", he sought out the rabbi who had a reputation for healing people. Jairus approached Jesus and described his daughter's plight. Jesus, being Jesus, agrees to help Jairus (of course!) and they are off!

Along the way word spreads of Jesus' presence, his mission, and the unwashed crowds gather around him. They're all looking for healing of one kind or another and Jesus obliges: laying his hands on this one, offering a prayer for that one. In other words, "Tuesday" for Jesus.

When suddenly--Jesus feels something, somebody, touch the hem of his robe.

He feels the Spirit shift in his soul.

The crowds are still surrounding him but he stops and holds up a hand. He asks, "Who touched me?"

Was it you? Was it you? Or you?

We can imagine Jesus looking around in the masses, searching for...

The multitude parts and a weary-looking woman meekly raises her hand.

Her name is America and she has been bleeding for over 400 years. She has been living with the shame of her illness, with the pain of being denied, with the sorrow of having her dis-ease exacerbated by parts of her body that would argue against the apostle Paul's assertion that "every part of the body is precious!"

America has tried to grab a little healing from Jesus, but now she is with him, face to face. She is overwhelmed by being seen by him and,. 3she

falls at his feet in self-reproach. She is crying. She is humble. Trembling with fear she tells him her story.

America says, “ I am afflicted with ‘racism’ and I’ve been bleeding for 400 years. Hear my diary as recorded in The Crisis Magazine...”

BLACK RESISTANCE CREATED CHANGE. BLACK RESILIENCE CHANGED THE NATION.



ROM THE TIME BLACKS ARRIVED on the shores of what has become America, there has always been resistance. It may have been Harriet Tubman leading enslaved people to freedom through the Underground Railroad or John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Resistance may have been Ida B. Wells working with the NAACP to launch an anti-lynching campaign or the thousands of Blacks who left the South during the Great Migration.

Resistance looked like Diane Nash leading Freedom Rides through the Deep South, Rosa Parks in the front of the bus, Fannie Lou Hamer at the 1964 Democratic National Convention and Angela Davis on the steps of the courthouse with a raised fist.

Resistance looked like Medgar, Martin and Malcolm. It looked like Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois. Resistance was Thurgood Marshall arguing a case before the U.S. Supreme Court or the Black Panthers serving breakfast to children in Oakland.

Resistance was students registering Black voters in Mississippi or integrating lunch counters in North Carolina.

Resistance was a Toni Morrison novel and an Aretha Franklin song. Resistance was Romare Bearden's art and Judith Jamison's dance moves.

Resistance looked like Muhammad Ali, Tommy Smith and John Carlos. Resistance was Madam C.J. Walker and Black Pullman Porters.

Today resistance looks like Colin Kaepernick kneeling. Resistance looks like Bree Newsome removing the Confederate flag at the South Carolina statehouse. Resistance is young people marching for Trayvon and Michael and Eric, Philando and Sandra Bland.

Our resistance has led to resilience for it is because of our resistance that we've had to be resilient — whether in Little Rock or Birmingham or Baton Rouge. We endured and overcame and rose above the brutal atrocities set upon the Black citizens of the United States.

Living while Black requires a sense of resilience. It's in our blood. We've had to be resilient while being attacked — at work, at school, at the gym, on college campuses, in Starbucks, on sidewalks selling water or at a park for a family gathering.

This resistance against Blackness has led to our resilience as a people. This is our legacy.

Meanwhile, Jairus is waiting on his daughter. He is getting anxious because he is the establishment and he is blessed and he should get first dibs on the healing action Jesus has to offer.

But Jesus attends to the Body before him. He offers deep healing for the woman. The healing he offers happens like this:

She recounts her long, ugly, story of resistance and resilience in the face of her dis-ease.

Jesus listens with compassion to all that she has been through. He does not judge, blame, or punish the woman. He seeks wholeness for her.

As the Body of Christ incarnate, we are called to do likewise:

- She can use a listening ear willing to hear about how racism has affected her.
- She can use some compassion as the Body of Christ admits its complicity in her condition. As the Body of Christ notes that it did not come together to drive out the disease in the past.
- She can use some justice in the form of repairing the parts of her that have broken down under the disease.
- She can use some allies who are willing to walk with her as she battles this illness and see her through to wholeness.
- She can use some people willing to take action with their words, with their votes, with their lives, to battle this disorder that afflicts her.
- She can use partners who work to get her equal access to education and healthcare and work opportunities so that she can maintain her health.

- She can use the assurance that the rest of the body is committed to driving out the sickness and healing the beloved who has been bleeding, suffering, under the burden of the infection.

Jesus is *all* of those things for her and in that biblical moment recorded in Mark, he makes her whole. *He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”*

Racism is cured!

Oh happy days! Hip Hip Hooray!

Beyond that biblical moment, we know that despite her sweet sweet relief, the virus mutated and continues today. Infecting and affecting the body as it struggles to be free. *America* is still bleeding. Still suffering from racism.

As America’s diary concludes, “Living while Black requires a sense of resilience. It’s in our blood. We’ve had to be resilient while being attacked--at work, at school, at the gym, on college campuses, in Starbucks, on sidewalks, selling water or at the park for a family gathering.”

Jairus’ daughter will get *her* new life.

America still has time for new life, too. She’s been bleeding from racism for 400 years.

There is work to be done to make her whole...as the Body of Christ...in his holy name. I hope you will join me in working toward the day when we will

hear Jesus say, “ *“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”* I believe our communion table calls us to this work. Let’s get busy. Amen.