

Introduction: Christ's power to find us when we are sinking in temptation, despair and sin is relentlessly successful. His arm is *always long enough* to reach us, as He reached down and rescued Peter from sinking in the water. This week, we will discover that it is not just *His arm* which has the power to save us – even His cloak when touched by the sick multitudes has healing power! May our eyes of faith be opened to the glorious “edges of His ways” – even as the crowds were healed when merely touched by Jesus' coat.

Monday: read Matthew 14:32-33 and Mark 6:50-52. It is perplexing to see how divided the minds and hearts of the disciples can be when they should have had stronger faith in their Savior. For example, while we rejoice at their amazed worship of Jesus as the Son of God in Matthew 14:33, (after beholding the miraculous saving of Peter from the water), we note that the very same moment is described as evidence of their “hardness of heart” in Mark 6:52. Evidently, they should not have been so surprised at Jesus' power, (as if they hadn't seen that power in earlier miracles!)

Meditate and Pray: Oh, let us confess that, like the 12, we are so easily “hard-hearted” when it comes to what we expect Jesus to do in our lives. As William Still wrote about their amazement at Jesus' walking on the water:

“Their amazement is the measure of their unbelief! Isn't that awful? Yet Mark specifically tells us it was because their hearts were hard. Had you ever realized that your amazement at the miraculous mercies of God can arise from your hardness of heart? Apparently it can. Our Lord Jesus would not want us to be casual with Him, or with anyone, but there is a kind of surprise which does not expect our blessed Lord ever to do anything out of the ordinary! Do we realize who He is? He is God's Son! Let us be careful how we respond to Him!”

Tuesday: read Matthew 14:34-36. This is an amazing description of the excitement of the crowds for healing, when Jesus had returned to the West side of the Sea of Galilee in the area of Gennesaret. There appears to be, according to both Mark's and Matthew's description, almost no one left who would be sick or afflicted in this area, since a system of transporting sick ones appears to have been organized by those who witnessed Jesus' landing on the beach. In the words of Matthew 14:35-36: “They brought all their sick to Jesus, and begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed”. Amazing. What patient endurance do we see here from Jesus, when each healing could only occur by an expenditure of faith and power from this truly human, as well as Divine Savior. Jesus never cut corners! These miracles cost Him, as we see from Jesus' groans while healing in Mark 7:33-34!

Meditate and Pray: *“Oh Lord Jesus, please walk among us in these dark days of unbelief and the many afflictions which arise from our miserable and fallen condition. We desperately need your healing touch. Do not forget to send your Holy Spirit ahead of you, to convict sinners of their sin, so that answers to our prayers would not focus on mere alleviation of physical trials – but would result in sound conversions among the needy souls with whom we come into contact. Lord Jesus, hear our prayer for those sin-tossed and suffering ones we bring to you right now. Amen.*

Wednesday: read Matthew 14:34-36, Matthew 9:20-22 and Mark 5:25-26. Though there no doubt were many superstitious folk among these thronging crowds – who would attribute the healing power of the mere edge of Jesus’ cloak to some kind of magic – we must not forget that it was faith which prompted the first person who touched Jesus’ cloak for healing to find relief. Do you remember the “woman with an issue of blood” in Matthew 9? Jesus seeks out this newly-healed woman (Matthew 9:22), and declares to her that it was “her faith” which caused the touch of His garments to bring her healing! As we wrote in 2014 Bible notes, note the amazing access to Jesus which this woman’s faith was able to find:

“We see the woman with an issue of blood in Matthew 9:20-21, unnamed and forgotten by everyone except Jesus, by faith pressing through the crowd and touching the hem of our Lord’s garment. Is this not a miracle that a woman weakened by 12 years of bleeding would have the strength to press through a crowd to get to Jesus? I mean, consider the stark description of her wasted condition in Mark 5:25-26:

25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

How would such blood loss affect this woman’s strength, especially since, as Luke points out, the crowds were almost “crushing Jesus”, (Luke 8:42)? Have you ever been in a crowd like that? It takes all your strength to keep from being trampled! Yet by a miraculous strength, this woman finds access to touch Jesus. It is marvelous to see how God can open up all the doors when it is true faith which seeks to access His saving, healing mercy!”

Meditate and Pray: Let us pray as follows: *“Oh Lord Jesus. You are the Way, Truth and Life. Please open for us the gates of glory that we may enter into the throne-room of your grace, to find the timely, urgent help which we need so desperately. We are beset by discouragement, depression, failure, as well as bondage to besetting sins, and sorely tempted to give up. O, Thou who parted the Red Sea and the river Jordan! O Thou who makes His footsteps in the sea! We see how you parted the crowds of unbelief in Capernaum – so that this one daughter of faith could reach you. Please part the doubts and unbelief which crush our lives, that we might reach the robe of your Son’s glorious, saving power! Make us clean! Answer our cries, and assure us of your salvation! Amen.”*

(The rest of this week’s notes, written about the meaning of touching the hem of Jesus’ cloak, were first written near the end of 2014 – and form a fitting meditation on the healings from the touch of Jesus’ garment in Matthew 14:34-36).

Thursday: read Matthew 9:20-22 and Numbers 15:37-41. In the Old Testament, the hem of the high priest’s garment was to be embroidered with bells and pomegranates, (Exodus 28:33-35), which would form an alternating yarn pattern of fruit in blue, purple and scarlet, and bells that would ring as the high priest ministered in the Holy Place. Such a tinkling sound would function as proof that the high priest was properly dressed to appear before the Lord without dying.

But what exactly did such a priestly hem with bells represent? Well, scholars point to Numbers 15:38-39, which speak of a similar “fringe” or “tassel” of blue thread which every Israelite was to sew into their clothes, in order to be reminded of the commands and precepts of God’s Law. God’s intention was that, through such a reminder of God’s Word, sewn into the very fringe of all their garments, God’s people would be reminded of their consecration to the Lord, thereby resisting the sinful lusts of their hearts and eyes. Thus the Israelite’s robes, like the high priest’s robe, were to be hemmed in such a way that the Word of God would constantly cover them as they went about their daily tasks.

Meditate and Pray: Lord, give us such a hunger for your Word that we cover our minutes, hours and days under its protective influence. Thank you especially for your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who made your Word His daily delight, so that He could faithfully live an obedient life as our Savior, in our place. Please make your Word, O God, as fruitful in our lives as it was in Jesus’.

Friday: read Matthew 9:20-22, Exodus 28:33-35 and Proverbs 25:11. We continue to muse on the significance of the hem of the garments of the high priest, as an explanation of the power of Jesus’ hem when the woman touched Him. Just as the Word, symbolized by tassels, was to regularly cover the Israelite’s clothing in their daily tasks, so the clothing of the high priest was to be a symbol of the *fruitfulness* of God’s Word as it came from the priesthood to God’s people. That may explain the symbolism of the pomegranate as the type of yarn fruit on the high priest’s garments. The Word was to be as nourishing as the fruit of the pomegranate tree! This is the idea in Proverbs 25:11, which compares godly, wise words with the fruit of an apple! In the same way, all through the Old Testament, the Word of God is spoken of with the qualities of refreshing fruit which the godly never want removed from their mouths. Take Psalm 119:25; 43 & 103 as examples:

*My soul clings to the dust;
give me life according to your word ...
And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your rules ...
This is my comfort in my affliction,
that your promise gives me life ...
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

Now, does this not fit Jesus’ ministry to this desperate woman in Matthew 9? She had found no refreshment from the many doctors to whom she resorted to heal her issue of blood. *But now* she finds refreshment from Jesus. Even the fringes of Jesus’ clothing have power, since every “corner” of Jesus life is saturated with the Word of God. By virtue of the Word dwelling richly in Jesus, He becomes a reservoir of refreshing, life-giving, healing power!

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank Jesus that He has fulfilled the words of Isaiah 50:4. He is the faithful Servant of the Lord who “has the word to sustain the weary”, even as His words refreshed and assured this woman of her salvation: “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.”

Saturday: read Matthew 9:20-22 and Exodus 28:33-35. What then, was the significance of the bells on the fringes of the garment of the high priest? Well, according to the Old Testament commentators Keil and Delitzsch, the priesthood were not only to *wear* symbols of God's Word – they were to proclaim that Word at all times, and in every place. According to Malachi 2:7, it was from the priests that Israel was to get her instruction in God's Word. The fruit of God's Word as it was proclaimed by the priests was to nourish all God's people. The priests were to be the source of instruction in God's Word, and from their lips the sound of God's Word was to make beautiful music, even as the bells on the High Priest's robe!

Meditate and Pray: *Lord, you have given your Word to be proclaimed with persuasive, life-saving power. Help us as your church to hold to **this definition of your church, and to this Word-centered purpose of our gathering in worship.** We are here as a church in order to proclaim to sinners the Good News that they can have living fellowship with God because of His Word!*

Sunday: read Matthew 9:20-22; Ephesians 5:25-26 and Revelation 1:12-15. If the woman with the issue of blood was to be truly cleansed – not only of her physical bleeding, but of the spiritual uncleanness of sin, it would be only because Jesus Christ had the power to apply His Word to her life as His cleansing agent, just as effectively as He could wash the church with the water of the Word according to Ephesians 5:26.

Does Jesus still have that cleansing, renewing power? Yes! For just as the high priest of old wore bells as a constant reminder of the Word of God's influence over his priestly ministry, so the Son, standing now before God on our behalf in Heaven, lives a life full of the sound of God's Word – but not the gentle rustling tinkling of priestly garments! It is the “sound of many rushing waters”, (Revelation 1:15)! There is a fountain of cleansing for our daily, life-destroying and bloody sins. Now Jesus merely speaks in Heaven, and the waters flow into our lives, providing cleansing anew from our uncleanness! How wonderful it must be in Heaven to hear the Word of God on the lips of our Savior as He prays *with that Word* for us in this unclean, sinful world!