

Introduction: In last week's notes, we sympathized with a grief-stricken father, Jairus, whose only daughter dies before Jesus can get to her home. What a loss: an only daughter, just twelve years of age! But what a contrast between the despair of the mourners, and Jesus, who alone insists that this girl is simply asleep! Christ's power is such that it can reach into the grave with life! So also, we see this week Christ's power further revealed as we linger on His healing of the woman with the issue of blood. Let us celebrate the mighty power of our Savior over sin, sickness and death, as He does His most powerful work in private, where only the eyes of faith can see and believe in His power to save!

Monday: read Matthew 9:18-21. It is important to notice that, as Jesus walked to the house of Jairus, His power was not reserved just for this prominent man. We also see the woman with an issue of blood in Matthew 9:20-21, unnamed and forgotten by everyone except Jesus, who by faith presses through the crowd and touches the hem of our Lord's garment. Let us focus our attention on these two acts of faith. Today, we will focus on her pressing through the crowd. Tomorrow, on her simple yet bold act of touching the hem of Christ's garment.

First, is it not a miracle that this 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 the strength that the strongest members of the crowd possess to keep from being trampled! Yet by a miracle of grace, this woman finds Jesus to touch Him. Marvelous how God can open up all the doors when it is true faith which seeks to access His saving, healing mercy!

Meditate and Pray: *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 unbelieving Capernaum – so that this one daughter of faith could reach you. Please part the doubts, fears and thoughts of 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.* Sing about the joy of such access to the throne of Grace in hymn # 376:

*Open now thy gates of beauty,
Zion, let me enter there,
Where my soul in joyful duty
Waits for Him Who answers prayer.
Oh, how blessèd is this place,
Filled with solace, light and grace!*

*Lord, my God, I come before Thee,
Come Thou also unto me;
Where we find Thee and adore Thee,
There a heav'n on earth must be.
To my heart, oh, enter Thou,
Let it be Thy temple now!*

Tuesday: read Matthew 9:20-22. Yesterday we marveled at how this desperately sick woman could reach Jesus. She reasoned within herself, "If I can just touch his garments, I will be made whole". Now, we must grant that there may have been a degree of superstition on her part in believing that she had to touch His garments to be made well. Her faith was not perfectly formed, and we must guard ourselves from any error of attributing magic to Jesus' healing mercy. Nevertheless, Jesus clearly confirms her in what she did, declaring that, in the action of touching the hem of His robe, she had indeed been saved as well as healed! There was

something very powerful in the hem of Jesus' garment, and very gracious in His willingness to forgive this woman's superstition and instead strengthen her weak faith!

Meditate and Pray: Sing hymn # 181, using its verses to ask the Lord Jesus to make every contact you have with His power to be a fruitful, life-changing event:

*We come, O Christ, to you,
true Son of God and man,
by whom all things consist,
in whom all life began.
In you alone we live and move
and have our being in your love.
2 You are the way to God,
your blood our ransom paid;
in you we face our Judge
and Maker unafraid.
Before the throne absolved we stand;
your love has met your law's demand.*

*3 You are the living truth;
all wisdom dwells in you,
the source of every skill,
the one eternal True!
O great I AM! in you we rest,
sure answer to our every quest.
4 You only are true life
to know you is to live
the more abundant life
that earth can never give.
O risen Lord! we live in you:
in us each day your life renew!*

Wednesday: read Matthew 9:20-22 and Numbers 15:37-41. We resume our study of the woman in Matthew 9:20-22, and her desire to touch the hem of Jesus' clothing. Is there some symbolism here for us to study? Well, 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 pattern of yarn fruits of 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'.* Use the remaining stanzas of hymn # 376 to sing about such fruit from God's Word in your life:

*Here Thy praise is gladly chanted,
Here Thy seed is duly sown;
Let my soul, where it is planted,
Bring forth precious sheaves alone,
So that all I hear may be
Fruitful unto life in me.
Speak, O God, and I will hear Thee,
Let Thy will be done indeed;*

*Thou my faith increase and quicken,
Let me keep Thy gift divine,
Howsoe'er temptations thicken;
May Thy Word still o'er me shine
As my guiding star through life,
As my comfort in my strife.*

*May I undisturbed draw near Thee
While Thou dost Thy people feed.
Here of life the fountain flows,
Here is balm for all our woes.*

Thursday: 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 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 fringe 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."*

Friday: 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 were to literally *live* by that Word as their protection before the holy presence of God!

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

Sat/Sun: 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 water through 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 protective and empowering influence over his priestly ministry, so the Son of God's life lived before God on our behalf in Heaven is a life full of the sound of God's Word. But now that Word is not simply the gentle rustling and 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 deep 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!

Sing about the Word of God one more time this week, using hymn #

*Thy Word is like a garden, Lord, with flowers bright and fair;
And every one who seeks may pluck a lovely cluster there.
Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine; and jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths for every searcher there.*

*Thy Word is like a starry host: a thousand rays of light
Are seen to guide the traveler and make his pathway bright.
Thy Word is like an armory, where soldiers may repair;
And find, for life's long battle day, all needful weapons there.*

*O may I love Thy precious Word, may I explore the mine,
May I its fragrant flowers glean, may light upon me shine!
O may I find my armor there! Thy Word my trusty sword,
I'll learn to fight with every foe the battle of the Lord.*