

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 262

Sunday 30th June 2024

'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Mark 5: 24-34

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹ Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'"

³² He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Reflection

Modern medicine is always advancing. We can be grateful for this. However, in the process of medical advance we can overlook older insights into the nature of health. And perhaps these need to be rediscovered.

So, in mainstream medicine today, there is a movement towards recognising that we have tended to focus far too much on physical symptoms and have treated these in isolation from the rest of someone's life. This is a move towards a much more holistic understanding and practice of medicine where, alongside treating physical symptoms, the broader spectrum of emotional, spiritual, social and mental health and wellbeing is taken into account. Alternative medicine has highlighted this for a while but now this insight seems to be moving into the mainstream.

However, as followers of Jesus, we can see that this recognition of the vital connection between physical and spiritual healing is one of the foundations of Jesus' healing ministry.

As we look at the account of the healing of the woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years, this becomes very clear.

As this story begins, we cannot be sure whether the woman recognises this connection for herself. Not surprisingly, her overwhelming preoccupation is with healing and freedom from physical pain. But this is combined with great faith. As she has learnt about Jesus through the reports of other people, she has come to realise that she can find healing through Jesus.

But does she need to meet Jesus in person? This could be difficult because her physical condition as well as being very painful was also a source of shame and embarrassment. Indeed, it would have resulted in her being looked at, in religious terms, as 'unclean'. So, she would have been very socially isolated.

Dare she approach Jesus directly and openly? What might His response be if she had done so? And dare she step out of the comforting anonymity of the crowd? As these thoughts no doubt go through her head, she thinks of a very practical plan. Such is her faith in Jesus that she believes that if she was only to touch His clothes, then she would experience the physical healing that she desperately needs. However, because of her social and religious status she does not want to meet Him face to face. So, she plans simply to approach Jesus from behind, touch His cloak and then disappear again into the protection and anonymity of the crowd which surrounds Him.

And the woman is successful in her plan. Miraculously and instantaneously, the haemorrhage stops when she has touched Jesus' clothes and she feels in her body that she has been healed from her disease. Surely then there is nothing more for her to do after that than to go away and disappear again, grateful no doubt for the physical healing that she has received. But, for all her gratitude towards Jesus for the relief from physical pain, is she aware that there is so much more that Jesus can offer her?

Jesus Himself certainly knows this. He is not content for this woman's healing to remain at this purely physical level. No, she needs a deeper, broader and indeed eternal level of healing. Jesus certainly knows that something profound has happened because He knows that someone has touched His clothes and that spiritual power has flowed through and out of Him.

He also knows that the person who has touched Him needs further ministry, that it is not enough simply to stop at this first level of purely physical healing. He needs to find this person. He asks the crowd who has touched Him and when told by His disciples that this is an impossible task, He goes on nevertheless looking around to see who has done this.

And so, the woman comes to Him, but very much in fear and trembling. She falls down at Jesus' feet and tells Him the whole truth. In response,

Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well and commands her to go in peace, healed of her illness.

So, although the woman had been physically healed when she touched Jesus' clothes, now this healing has been affirmed and indeed broadened by the affirmation that her faith has made her well.

It is worth comparing and contrasting the Greek words which underlie the English translations at the two different points in the narrative when healing is mentioned. When the woman touches Jesus' clothes, the main meaning of the Greek word used at this point is indeed physical healing.

But when the woman comes before Jesus and tells Him the whole truth about herself, Jesus says that her faith has made her well and that she is healed from her disease. Different Greek words are used at this point which have a much broader and holistic cluster of meanings. These include being balanced and sound in the entirety of one's life as well as being rescued from sin and being brought to salvation.

As we look at the story of the woman healed by Jesus of her haemorrhages, two other points stand out.

First, the woman tells Jesus the whole truth. What was that? And why was this necessary?

Something of this truth must have been the intense suffering she had endured, including but not limited to physical suffering. There was also the shame, fear, embarrassment and social isolation that she had endured. And the desperation of spending her entire resources looking for medical solutions which far from healing her made her condition even worse.

And yes, although we are not told about this, there might have been specific sins that she needed to confess to Jesus. The important point, however,

was that even though she came to Jesus in fear and trembling, she overcame these emotions in order to be able to tell Him everything about herself, to be completely open as a person before Him. She told Him the whole truth.

And then, it is striking how Jesus gives this woman who is shunned and ignored by the mainstream of society, who is considered to be of little or no importance, the time and space to tell Him the whole truth.

It illustrates, as so often is the case in the gospel accounts, how Jesus cares about each individual, particularly those who are considered to be unimportant by others. We see this dynamic at work, for instance, in the way that Jesus corrects His disciples' assumption that the little children who are brought to Him are not worth His time and attention. Rather He tells His disciples that it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

So, He notices that spiritual power has gone out of Him when the woman touches His clothes. This sparks off a search for her. Even though the disciples try to dissuade Him by telling Him how impractical it is to look for one person in the middle of a great crowd, nevertheless He persists. And when this persistence is rewarded by the woman coming forward and identifying Himself, He takes the time to listen to her without interruption while she tells Him the whole truth.

As we think about this encounter between Jesus and the woman suffering from haemorrhages, it will no doubt bring to our mind our own experiences of healing and also the experiences of those who are close to us. Have we ever seen a connection between our physical restoration to health and spiritual and emotional changes which have taken place in our lives? Sometimes, such a change might consist of a renewed sense of hope in God which replaces a prolonged sense of hopelessness and despair.

And as we learn more deeply about the ways in which God has worked in our lives, we may also be struck by how Jesus knows and cares for us on an individual level. Jesus does not see any of us as just a face in the crowd or as an insignificant number hidden in the vastness of statistical analysis. Rather each one of us is important, each one of us matters to God.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Looking to Jesus for both physical and spiritual healing and knowing that we are not just a face in the crowd
- General Election
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Iran
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers and children of North Cadbury church school

Hymn

One hymn set for this Sunday is 'Just as I am, without one plea.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 30 th June	9.30 am Family Service, North Cheriton
Sunday 30 th June	11.00 am Communion, Maperton
Sunday 30 th June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Bratton Seymour
Sunday 30 th June	6.30 pm Evensong, Galhampton
Sunday 7 th July	9.00 am Communion, Yarlington

Sunday 7th July

9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton

Sunday 7th July

11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury

Excalibur online

The July edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

The Parish Office

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5: 2)