

“If only I could touch Him!” Mark 5:21-43

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, “Who touched me?”” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Have you ever been sick? Or maybe you are sick right now? Maybe you know someone who is sick? What comes in mind when we ask questions like these? How do we think about sickness?

I guess usually we think about sickness in terms of something being not well with our physical health. Some problems with body. And there is almost endless list of sicknesses that we may and often do suffer.

But how about this, – can it be that sickness is just another name for what the Bible usually calls ... sin. Isn't sickness when something doesn't function the way it is designed to function?

Remember, in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, He designed His creation, He ordered it and then He saw that it was ... yes, it was good. Even very good.

Everything was working according the Creator's design. Everything was good and healthy. How far are we now from the goodness that we were meant to enjoy? In how many ways are we sick today?!

It is enough to look at how many different therapists we have today. This word therapist comes from Ancient Greek verb "therapeuw", which means – to heal. Therapists are healers. They heal sicknesses.

Sure, we have those who heal sicknesses of body. And there are so many different specialists. Then there are those who deal with sicknesses of soul. Yes, our soul can be sick. It may be unwell in so many ways.

Our mind may be sick. Then people tend to do and say things which we then characterize by saying: "That's sickening." Our emotions may be sick, we may spend our days in anxiety and depression, jealousy and envy, and so on.

Our ability to trust may be broken, and we may struggle to build healthy relationships. When we look deeper, our will may be twisted. In fact, it is twisted with the result that we don't want what is good for us according to God's design, instead we desire things that are destructive for us and others.

The worst expression of our sick will is this, that we don't want to know the true God, we don't want to be with the very source of every good gift, with the only person who truly knows us, loves us unconditionally, the only one who can satisfy our deepest longing. How sick are we?!

Then we have marriage therapists and family therapists. Obviously, our marriages and families, our closest relationships tend to get very sick. How is this that two people who can promise to love one another till death do them part, can get to one another's throat ready to rip them apart?

How is this that people who are the closest by their blood can be those who hate one another the most? How terrible is the sickness that makes us do things like that? You can see from this brief reflection just how sick we all are. There is no one who is well. Not one.

Not even one who is completely healthy. We spend our lives battling with many kinds of sicknesses, but at the end, death comes to all. That's how sick we are. And even churches can and do get sick. Sometimes very sick. Then they too die.

How does that happen? It is very simple, the same way as our bodies get sick. It can be some destructive viruses, or tumors, or it can be some bad food, or it can be some trauma. Viruses and tumors are destructive ideas that infiltrate into healthy churches, take them over and make them weaker and weaker.

Bad food is bad or poor teaching, – the food for our souls. Most people are rather careful with what they eat and drink, but when it comes to spiritual food, we seem not to care much. As long, as the one who serves the food seems to be a nice person. But it's not the person who serves, it is the food that is important.

Trauma is when people do things in their churches that damage relationships, that alienate others from Jesus, most often when we can't control what we say to one another and about one another. Often behind our backs.

I am afraid that most churches in Australia, our Lutheran church including, right now are very sick. One of the signs that someone is very sick is when they stop fighting their sickness. When they become apathetic about how things are.

When they don't fight against viruses or tumors, when they don't care anymore what kind of food they eat or whether they eat at all. These signs tell that death is lurking just around the corner.

Today in our Gospel reading we heard about God's solution against all these sicknesses that we just mentioned. We read about the very source of health and well-being, about the One who can heal every sickness and make well everyone who suffers.

And the name of this God provided solution is – Jesus. Jesus, what a beautiful name... That was this name that was on the lips and minds of so many. And we can relate to that. This man, He was going around and proclaiming the Good News that the Kingdom of God is near. That it is among us.

And He not only preached the message that brought joy and gave hope, He was also healing. He was healing everyone who was brought to Him. People with all sorts of sicknesses. People who were born blind and deaf and lame.

He healed all of them. What would you do to meet a person who by just laying on hands, or even by just saying a word could make you well, could restore your health and well-being, could restore you back in community. Wouldn't that be once a lifetime opportunity?!

Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogues heard that Jesus had arrived, and He hurried to see Him. As soon as He saw Jesus he threw Himself at the feet of Jesus and prayed to Him earnestly.

What a fitting attitude. We certainly can learn from him how to come into God's presence. The Triune God doesn't owe us anything, and we don't deserve anything, apart of His anger.

We can only hope for His grace, we can only throw ourselves at Jesus feet and beg for His mercy. And we do well, if that is our attitude. Jairus was an influential man in his community, but he knew where his place was before Jesus, – at His feet.

And what heartbreaking words for a father to say: “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” Despair of a parent, whose child is dying before their eyes...

And without any hesitation, Jesus went with him. “And a great crowd followed Him and thronged about him.” Not all of them believed in Jesus. Some were curious what will happen, some didn’t have anything better to do.

Like these days, some may come to where Jesus is for they have nothing better to do, some may come to be where the crowd is, to exchange the latest rumors, and so on. But there were also those who had come because of Jesus.

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

Then she had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, “If I touch even His garments, I will be made well.”

Twelve years... perhaps she once was a rich widow. Now, suffering from her sickness for twelve years, she had spent all she had. There are many testimonies that physicians back then often were masters of making things worse.

And this is not all. Her sickness would have made her unclean in Jewish community. Because of her sickness she would be an outcast. Longing to belong but being forcefully separated against her will.

Now, she had heard about this Jesus. It is not hard to picture how she repeated these words to herself. “If only I touch even His garments, I will be made well. If only I touch His garments...”

She did touch, and immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And as Jesus was looking for her, she came in fear and trembling, fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

Again, we see the attitude that we should strive to imitate. And Jesus kindly said to her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.” Jesus not only had healed her, He also had restored her back in her community.

He had healed her body. He had healed her soul. He had healed her relationships with her community. The Kingdom of God had come, indeed, very close to her on that day. She had received the gift of new life.

Meanwhile Jairus’ daughter had passed away. “Why trouble the Teacher any further?” Remember, whatever our sickness is, this is not a trouble for Jesus. He is here for you, to help and to heal. Hear Jesus saying: “Don’t fear, believe!”

Sure, people just laughed about Jesus and about the broken father. Too late! No one can help! Nothing can be done! How often today we have situations, when people around us say: “This marriage can’t be fixed. This family can’t be brought together. That person is hopeless, no one can help. Or that sickness can’t be cured.” Yes, go on laughing...

And how often we as Christians have seen that Jesus does His thing. Where it seems impossible to us, with Jesus all things are possible. The greatest miracle, of course, is when our hearts are healed, and we desire to be with Jesus.

When that happens, gradually everything else can be healed as well. Even death has lost its sting. It has become the gateway into the very presence of our loving God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

“For an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28-29)

What would you do just to touch the garment of the very source of life and health, eternal life and eternal well-being? What would you sacrifice to experience the power leaving Jesus and transforming you into new being?

We don’t need to speculate about this. We have more. Much, much more. You can hear Jesus. It is Him who even today speaks to you His life-giving words and sends His life-giving Spirit to restore your soul.

Even more, you can touch Him. In fact, He invites you to touch Him. Not just His outer garment. Jesus Christ invites you: “Come, take and eat, this is my body, which is given for you! For you!

Come and drink, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Come to me! Come and I will embrace you.” Come and the streams of Jesus’ power, the streams of life giving Spirit will flow from our Great Healer into your soul.

And then, filled with God’s goodness hear Jesus Himself saying to you as He said to the healed woman: “Now go, for your faith has made you well. And the peace of the Lord be with you always.”

Yes, we all are sick. In so many ways. But we don’t need to go where there are great crowds, we don’t need to hope that maybe we will be able to get closer to Jesus and to touch His garment. We don’t need any of this.

For He has come to us. He gives Himself to you. And with Himself He gives you the healing that we all need the most. He takes away our sin. And where there is no more sin, there is – eternal life, health, well-being, joy and blessedness in the most harmonious, in the most beautiful relationships with Him, our great Healer, whose name is Jesus.

Amen.