

Woman with a Blood Issue Mark 5:21-34
Also, Matthew 9:18-22; Luke 8:40-48

In the listed Scriptures we have two encounters, both of which are truly unique. The encounter with Jairus was unique not only in terms of the miracle associated with it but because Jairus was a leader in the synagogue made this encounter unusual. Generally, those associated with organized Judaism had little to do with Jesus. Likewise, the encounter Jesus had with an unnamed woman who had a medical problem that left her totally ostracized from everyone in the Jewish culture was unique because she is a woman. Before that is finished Jesus calls her “daughter” and she is the only one identified in Scripture that way by Jesus. The encounter Jesus had with the lady is different because of the nature of the healing and the way in which Jesus responded to her.

The setting for this miracle is important. Mark wrote that Jesus had left Gerasenes. There Jesus had an encounter with men who were possessed by demons and after Jesus performed that miracle the townsfolk asked Him to leave. In contrast to that, as Jesus approached the shore by boat a large crowd was there to greet Him.

Mark then recorded two miracles in his sandwich approach of beginning a story, interrupting it and then returning to it. One of the interesting things about these miracles are the similarities and the differences. Both miracles involve women and in both cases 12 years figure into it. The woman had had a serious bleeding problem for 12 years while the girl who died and was raised from the dead was 12 years old. Both encounters involved women and in the society of Jesus day any encounter with women would have been unique.

It is, however, the differences that stand out. Jairus, who approached Jesus first, was an important synagogue officer while the woman is not even named so was in essence an anonymous “nobody.” Both were welcomed by Jesus. Jairus was undoubtedly well off. He was not a priest but a synagogue official who helped maintain the synagogue and ensure it was ready for worship. Generally, only the well-off and important members of the community were given such positions. The woman, was, as we will see, a social outcast because of her condition and was basically bankrupt, having spent all she had on doctors in an effort to find a cure. When it comes to Jesus, one size really does fit all. Peter tells us in Acts 10:34, **“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism.”**

If we read this story in a modern context we totally miss the seriousness of this condition to this woman. Read Leviticus 15:25-27.

Her condition meant that for 12 years she had not been permitted to have physical contact of any kind with anyone and had not been permitted to attend any synagogue or religious activities. She was ceremonially unclean. If she went out into the public and even accidentally touched someone she made that individual unclean.

She heard that Jesus was coming, and she knew that only He could help her. BUT, she was unclean, so she could not simply go up to Him and ask Him to touch her and heal her as Jairus had done. She believed Jesus could heal her, but she had to act on that belief and actually go to Him. She believed that even if she could touch the hem of His robe she would be healed. It had to be the hem because touching any other part of Him would have made Jesus unclean. To do that deliberately to someone was to risk being stoned to death. The moment she touched His robe we read she was healed.

Mark 5:30 tells us that when that happened Jesus knew what had taken place and asked, "Who touched me?" This is one of those many questions God asked that technically He already knew the answer to. God's questions are not designed to inform Him but to direct our attention to what He knows is important for us. Mark wrote that everyone denied it. While Jesus waited Peter jumped in and said, "Give us a break, in this crowd with everyone pushing and shoving we probably have all touched you. How are we supposed to know which one of us you want to acknowledge that?"

Jump out of the story for a moment and put yourself in the place of Jairus. He had gone to Jesus with a critical issue. His daughter was dying and there was no time to waste. Yet Jesus had stopped the procession to inquire about who in a crowd of dozens had touched Him. Time was so critical that his daughter actually did die while they were on the way. Try and imagine the thoughts of Jairus. "Jesus, hurry, don't worry about someone who touched you. Time is of the essence." We assume that God has to act on our timing. If He seems to be late we panic. God is always on time all the time and will be here also. Nothing was lost by His stopping. It was an interruption to Jairus but not to Jesus.

Think about this from Jesus' perspective. He had been asked to help and was on His way to do that when a lady seemingly messed everything up by touching His robe in faith. I doubt Jesus was upset by it but many of us struggle with interruptions to what we consider important. We need to learn to seize interruptions as opportunities God sends our way that not only enable us to help others but to grow ourselves.

Jesus wanted to know who touched Him. Why?

1. A critical issue is expressed in verse 34 where Jesus made it clear that her faith was what healed her. History has speculated at the alternative. In 1942 Lloyd Douglas wrote a book entitled "*The Robe*" that was made into a movie in 1953. Historically men have made fortunes selling so called relics to people who think there is some special power in the relic rather than God. Jesus wanted to make it very clear that it was not the magic of His robe but the faith of the one who reached out to it. Many people have what they call their lucky item, be it a coin or clothing or whatever. The truth is that very good and perfect gift comes from above, not from lucky numbers or right contacts etc. Jesus wanted to make it very clear that it was not the magic of His robe but the faith of the one who reached out to it. Faith is always key! The Apostle Paul tells us that we are not only saved by faith, but we live by it also.

2. There was undoubtedly a second reason for insisting she identify herself. Over and over again we are told that faith is not a private, personal issue but it is intended to be a public testimony to what God means to us and what He has done for us.

After she acknowledged that she was the one who touched Him, Jesus declared she was His daughter. Consider how those words sounded to her. For most of her adult life she was ostracized from just about everyone. To hear Jesus declare, in a loving tone, that she was special and belonged to Him had to have caused her heart to leap for joy. Too often we forget how special our relationship is with Jesus. We are part of the family of God and that truth should encourage all of us continually.

Then in Mark 5:34 we read that Jesus said, "Go in peace." This lady had received physical healing and for that she was certainly thankful but far more important than physical health is heart health, a heart that is right with God. Her faith meant that she was right with Him, so Jesus was able to send her away in peace. Read Romans 5:1.

To Jairus, and probably to all who were following Jesus, this woman was an interruption. She was not, however, an interruption to Jesus. To Him, she was someone with a need and someone of faith. Jesus wanted her, and us, to know that we are individually important to Him. We are never an interruption. He is always approachable. He loves us and desires that we come to Him.

And, for the rest of the story. Jairus received word that his daughter died while Jesus was dealing with this interruption but as the account continues Jesus went to the home of Jairus and raised the girl from the dead. Jesus is always on time.