

THE TOUCH OF FAITH

By Hepzibah Kore

Theme: Faith

Call to Worship: #301 Faith of our Fathers , *SDA Hymnal*

Opening Song: #185 Jesus is all the world to me, *SDA Hymnal*

Closing Song: #100 Great is Thy Faithfulness, *SDA Hymnal*

Scripture: Matthew 9:20-22

All those who are born on this earth fall sick at one time or the other. There are different degrees of sickness. Some are mild and common like cold, fever, headache and digestive disorders. Some are severe like the Flu, Typhoid, Malaria, Jaundice, but curable. Some are fatal like cancer, AIDS - incurable. None is exempted from sickness because it is one of the evils sin has brought into this planet associated with God's curse and our negligence to the laws of health. No matter what the cause is, the sick suffer.

In Matthew 9:20 – 22; Mark 5:25 – 34 and Luke 8:43 – 48 we read about a sick woman suffering from bleeding for 12 long years. The record says that she went to all the physicians possible and spent all the money she had. Yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she had no other physician to go to, she thought of Jesus Christ, the Greatest Physician. She believed that He alone could heal her. She just touched the hem of His garment and received healing. It is her faith that made her whole.

The woman's touch of the hem of Jesus' garment as the touch of faith has caught the attention of the whole Christendom. This is a story of a woman in trouble; a woman of desperation, a woman with determination, a woman who received deliverance, a woman who declared what the Lord did to her and a woman whom Jesus addressed as 'daughter'.

The Bible has records about many women-some with names – Eve, Sarah and some without – identified by the name of the place she came from – Shunamite woman, Widow of Nain-or husband's name-Lot's wife, Manoah's wife. Each woman in the Bible-good or bad, young or old, rich or poor, healthy or weak - teaches us valuable lessons for our spiritual nurture. Let us for a few moments meditate on how this woman's experience relates to us today.

A Woman of Desperation

First of all we see that this woman was desperate. She was:

Physically Desperate: She suffered from an incurable disease. Bleeding for 12 long years. As women we know the seriousness of it though we may not have suffered like her. She was growing weaker day after day. She might have started with home remedies; then tried some remedies of the Jews of those days like drinks of herbs, sudden fright, burning new grape vines, sitting over certain ditches. Then she might have gone to a

“qualified physician”, then to the Gynecologist in today’s term. Poor woman, she might have tried anything and any doctor that her neighbors, friends or relatives suggested. Today, doctors advice removal of uterus the – the best possible remedy, I suppose.

Financially Desperate: Not only her health was gone but her wealth also was gone. It is said that ‘she spent all her money’ consulting all the physicians possible. She might have used up all her savings, sold her property; valuables even mortgaged her house but was getting worse which increased her misery.

Spiritually Desperate: She was ceremoniously unclean. She was not allowed to enter the temple. Therefore, she could not participate in the worship services.

The woman’s condition represents that of every sinner. **Physically**, we are aging and ever moving towards death. Death comes to all without any warning. **Financially**, no matter how much money or wealth one may have it cannot buy salvation. **Spiritually**, our sin, the most dreadful disease, weakens us, makes us unclean, destroys our spirits, and separates us from God. In Isaiah 59:2 we read, “Your iniquities have separated you from God. Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.”

A Woman’s determination

In spite of her desperate condition, she was determined to find healing. Her disease was such that she could not speak openly to Jesus for cure, as others did. But she believed Him to have such healing power and was confident that even the very touch of the hem of His garment would cure her and make her whole. She did not come directly in front of Him but stealthily came from behind and touched the hem of His garment.

There were conditions to discourage her from coming to Jesus.

1. There was a large crowd around Him.
2. The attitude of the disciples-they were quick to turn people away from Him. They did not hesitate to turn away the parents who brought their children to Jesus.
3. The importance of His mission at that moment – He was on His way to Jairus’ house to save his daughter from death.
4. Her own appearance – she was anemic – looked pale, poor and pitiful. Moreover, not only she was unclean but her touch would make others unclean. Yet, nothing could prevent her from pressing through the crowd to Jesus, because she was determined to find healing in Him.

Are you anxious enough to touch the “Hem of His garment” and find healing from your sinful condition? Jesus alone can pardon our sins; renew our nature; strengthen us to fight the Christian conflict with success. Such fullness of grace is there in Christ that “from it we all may receive.” John 1:16

Someone has illustrated it this way. “The sun can send some of its light and heat through very murky – dark, gloomy, misty, smoky – skies. The Sun of Righteous can do the same and even more. There may be much earthly rubbish in the soul that comes to Christ. But

if there be in it one gleaming grain of the gold of faith, Christ will receive that soul with all its rubbish; for He knows well that in due time all that is worthless will drop away, that the eye of faith will sweep over a vaster horizon of truth from day to day, until we shall be light in the Lord and shall not walk in darkness.”

When sinners view Jesus as the only Savior they will persevere till they find Him. History records that when Cortez went to conquer Mexico, he found that the soldiers were few, discouraged, dispirited. The Mexicans were many, and the enterprise hazardous. The soldiers would have gone back to Spain, but Cortez took two or three chosen heroes with him, and went down to the seaside and broke up all the ships; and “now,” he said, “we must conquer or die. We cannot go back.” Only at the most critical or crucial state of life or death, heaven or hell, pardon or condemnation, most people determine to act courageously as these poor Spaniards or this poor woman.

A Woman’s Deliverance

The woman’s determination did not go in vain. Her deliverance came from her contact with Jesus. Her touch, the touch of faith made the contact. This shows that healing is possible only when the connection is made. Without it the faith, even the strongest will fail. Our hands must touch Christ, the healer of souls to find healing from our sinful condition.

This woman exercised greater faith than the healthy ones around her. Even though she chose Jesus only when every one else failed – as the last resort – her touch drew healing power from Jesus and she was healed fully and instantly. All traces of disease vanished. Imagine the instant healing when medical science failed her for 12 long years. I wish such a miracle would happen to me. Don’t you? Many look to the faith of the pastor or the so-called ‘divine healers’ for healing instead of exercising their personal faith.

One of the most wonderful things is that those who need help can still find their needs fulfilled by touching “the hem of Christ’s garment.”

Now the woman was well and content to be gone her way. But Jesus did not want her to go unnoticed. He asked, “Who touched me?” By this question Jesus wanted to establish more direct and abiding relationship with her. The disciples – particularly Peter almost ridiculed Jesus when they said, “You see people crowding against you, pressing you from all sides. Yet you ask who touched me?” They did not comprehend the real meaning of the word “touch.” They did not realize that Jesus could distinguish the touch of faith from the casual contact. The many that surrounded Him did not touch Him though brushed against Him unintentionally. There was love, power and nearness enough for all in the crowd. Yet only one touched Jesus for healing. The rest were unaware of their contacts.

Unmindful of the remarks, Jesus still looked around for the victim, not to accuse her, not to condemn her, but to commend her, to praise her, to honor her and to encourage her act of faith. Just as secret sins – the sins committed in darkness – are known to God, so are the secret acts of faith. They are under His eye. This fact

encourages humble Christians to know that though they hide themselves from people are known to Christ who sees in secret their application of faith. Sins against God need to be forgiven. It is a disease within a human's heart that needs healing. We do not see Jesus' hand as it passes over the book of God, and blots out the dark record of our sins that are written there; but pardon is not all. You feel a sense of relief.

A Woman's Declaration

The woman declared her deliverance though not voluntarily. Knowing that she could not escape from Jesus and not knowing how He has accepted her act fell at his feet trembling with fear and told him the whole truth. She did not hide anything from Him. She gave her testimony of her suffering; her desperate need for healing and declared to the crowd of her healing. Her act of faith lives through all generations. There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble to do than to throw themselves at Jesus' feet. There may be phases in our lives that we have not shared with anyone but we can whisper all in His ears. Like this woman we should not be ashamed to own the secret transactions between Christ and our souls. He will never betray us. We should confess gladly and gratefully before people all the good we have received at His hands. Tell Him all the truth He knows them already.

In touching "the Hem of Jesus' garment" she touched the whole world. This woman received more than she anticipated. She was not only healed of her illness but became the "daughter" of God. Jesus honored her faith and spoke to her tenderly with the tenderness of a father. He said, "Daughter, your faith had healed you. Go in peace." What a privilege and honor to be accepted and called as "daughter" by Jesus, in the presence of a crowd! Imagine how delighted and overwhelmed she might have been to receive double blessings! Jesus gives more than we ask for. (Ephesians 3:20)

What was so special about the Hem of Jesus' garment?

Numbers 15:38 – 41 tell us that God told Moses to tell the children of Israel to have tassels in four corners of their outer garment. According to the Bible Commentators, the tassels were of white thread to symbolize Christ's righteousness with one dark blue thread or ribbon to remind them of God's law. The garment was nothing but a rectangular piece. The custom was passed down the generations. The Jews considered tassels as a special mark of sanctity. The dark blue thread reminded them of their duty to keep the law. This woman knew that the blue thread represented the word of God and believed Jesus to be a true Israelite whose hem was not worn in hypocrisy. It stood for the covenant of healing and the 'Word' that had healed all Israel. So, she acted upon faith and it worked.

What is the Hem of Jesus' Garment today?

1. Christ's humanity is the great hem of the Garment through which we can touch His Godhead.

2. A word of scripture is often a hem of His garment, through which we draw in salvation to our soul.
3. The ordinances of baptism, Holy Communion is a hem of Christ's garment which bind us to him.

Conclusion

When we talk of religious matters and pray for spiritual blessings without real hunger, faith avails nothing. The wandering crowd that pressed close around Jesus did not realize any vital power from their contact. But, when the poor, suffering woman, in her great need for healing, touched the hem of His garment, she felt the healing. Her touch was the touch of faith. Jesus recognized that touch and gave a lesson for all His followers to the end of time.

There is always a crowd of past sins, the cares and pleasures of the world between Christ and the soul. Jesus invites us today to press through "the crowd" to Him and touch "the hem of His garment" of righteousness and be healed.

"Come to Him," says Ellen White, "as you are with all your needs. Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him ... Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for he holds up worlds... Nothing that in anyway concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice... There is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. *Steps to Christ p.100.*

When you touch 'the hem of Christ's garment' with faith the healing you need is assured. God will say to you, "Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Be in Peace."

About the Sermon Writer: Hepzibah Kore is the Women's Ministries director for the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists.