

Dear all, greetings.

The story of Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:41-56) is well known. The story begins with Jairus begging to Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter, for she was dying. Jesus agreed, and started on the journey to Jairus' home. The text specifically states that the "crowds pressed in on him." Thus, Jesus was walking in the midst of a crowd, all heading in the same direction. If you have ever walked in the midst of a crowd, you will know that you are constantly jostled, pressed, sometimes pushed, and constantly touched.

Jesus arrives at Jairus' home in v. 51. The girl is dead. Jesus goes in with 3 disciples and the parents, past the professional mourners who were paid to weep and mourn to announce the death to the community (a form of prototypical Facebook), and Jesus assures the weeping parents, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved" (v. 50).

The beginning and ending of the story of Jairus' daughter are like the two slices of a sandwich. In any sandwich, it is what is in the middle that defines the sandwich, e.g. cheese and tomato, or PBJ, or tuna, or peanut butter and marmite etc. The meat in the middle defines the sandwich, not the bread on the outside.

And so, in the middle of the sandwich, we have the story of the woman with a medical problem who had been ill for 12 years and had spent all she had on doctors in a vain effort to find healing. Finally, as a last resort, when all of her money has been spent, and she has nothing left to contribute to her healing, she approaches Jesus for help....from behind....in the midst of the crowd. She creeps up behind, and touches the hem of his robe. In those days, robes would often drag in the dust, so to touch the hem would be an act of profound humility, touching the dirtiest part of His clothing, and not even daring to touch His body. Jesus immediately stopped, recognizing that He had been touched, and that power had gone out of Him. What simple lessons can we learn from this story:

- 1) Many press in around Jesus, but few touch Him. Many were walking with Jesus, going in the same direction, to a common destination, for a common purpose. They were physically close. They jostled him. They pressed in on Him. However, nobody touched Him – for no power went out of Him to the surrounding crowd. This is a reminder that we may be casually close with Jesus, share a common purpose with Jesus, walk through life with Him, yet never experience His touch of power in our lives.
- 2) When Jesus touches us, we may be called to witness to the power of His touch. The woman, when healed, hangs back....but Jesus turns and calls out for the person who touched Him. She knew what He meant, and came trembling forward to tell her tale....of ritual uncleanness for 12 years, of silent suffering and shame and dashed hopes....and how He had healed her. This is a reminder that we must be willing and ready to share our personal testimony of the power of Jesus in our lives if we wish to experience that power for ourselves. Why would God heal us if we are not willing to testify to His power and grace? The story of the underground church in China in the 1980s-1990s is replete with miraculous healings, deliverance from demons, resurrections from the dead....and these stories went like wildfire across rural China in an unstoppable force.
- 3) Yet, unlike the woman who physically touched Jesus, we learn in the later dialogue between Jesus and Jairus that it is faith that will save / heal, not a physical touch. "Only believe, and she will be saved." The Greek verb *sozo* can be translated to be saved or to be healed. To both the woman and the girl, Jesus affirms that they are healed / saved. Jesus thus teaches that we can experience His healing touch not by physically touching Him, but by approaching Him with faith. It is faith that heals and saves, not being physically close to Jesus and being able to touch Him physically.

So, as we enter the Sabbath hours, let us never forget:

- 1) We are invited to slow down from our daily busyness and intentionally seek the touch of Jesus.
- 2) We are invited to covenant with God that we will testify to Jesus' touch in our lives.
- 3) We are invited to approach Jesus by faith, and to receive His touch by faith....a touch that will both heal and save.

Have a blessed Sabbath!

