The Woman with the Middle Miracle

Scripture: Luke 8:40-48; Mark 5:1-43

In Mark 5, the bible records how Jesus meets a demoniac, a diseased woman, and a dead girl.

What ties them together is not only the fact that they all start with the letter ‘D’, but there is utter hopelessness and helplessness.

For the demon-possessed man, the gospel of Mark hammers home his desperation with three resounding negatives in the Greek. Verse 3 literally says, "Not with chains could no man no longer restrain him." Society could not restrain him. Physical chains could not restrain him, and that is the irony. He is the chained chain-breaker. He is unrestrained, but he's in a total prison. There is no human solution for him, and therefore, he is cast out from society.

For the woman suffering with bleeding, Mark describes her with a volley of six Greek participles, to capture the comprehensiveness of her condition. Verse 26, reads in the Greek, "Having a blood flow, having suffered much from many doctors, having exhausted all her wealth, having not improved, but having gotten worse…" For 12 years, this woman has been sick, alone, rejected, and tormented with no human solution. Nobody could help her.

So, the people that Jesus encounters are not people at the end of their rope. They have completely fallen off their rope. Mark makes sure you realize that these three characters are completely hopeless, and helpless; there is no answer for them.

The three healings in Mark 5 utilize a literary technique known as a Markan sandwich. It's an ABA structure, and the theological key is in the middle. The middle healing is the strangest one.

In Mark 4, He's confronted with a storm, and with a word, He stills the storm. The beginning of the chapter in Mark 5, He is confronted with a legion of demons. This is, as scholars say, anywhere from 5,000-10,000

demons. And with a word, He casts them out. At the end of the chapter, Jesus confronts death itself, the ultimate enemy, and with a word, He brings a girl out of death.

But here, with this bleeding woman, power flows out of Him. The woman gets stronger, but Jesus gets weaker. There is almost an exchange here. There is almost a substitution of status. Jesus takes on her weakness, and this weak woman takes Jesus' strength and power.

When you think about that, you can't help but to remember Isaiah 53, ***"Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquity; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."***

Do you see what's going on here? This is a foreshadow of the Cross, weakness and resurrection. You know Jairus gets the resurrection of his daughter. That only points to a greater resurrection because on the Cross, Jesus doesn't heal just one sickness, He heals all sickness. On the Cross He doesn't just still one storm; He puts an end eventually to all storms.

Because of what Jesus did on the Cross, Paul says in 1 Corinthians that death and suffering are swallowed up in victory.

For anyone who has ever asked the question, "Where is God," out of pain or loss or suffering, the gospels show us a God who goes to unclean places, who meets and loves desperate people, and who restores broken bodies and broken minds with healing from His nail-scared hands.

A couple weeks ago, I showed you a video clip of Alistair Begg taking about the man on the middle cross. Today's message is **The Woman with the Middle Miracle.** This story is recorded in Matthew 9, Mark 5

and Luke 8. I want to read it from Luke's gospel, chapter 8 beginning with verse 40.

"On the other side of the lake the crowds welcomed Jesus, because they had been waiting for him. 41Then a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come home with him. 42His only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying.

As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds. 43A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. 44Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe {hem of His garment}. Immediately, the bleeding stopped.

45"Who touched me?" Jesus asked. Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you."

46But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me." 47When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. 48"Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace." [NLT]

I've heard this story all my life. This story of the woman being healed of an issue of blood is one of those stories that I thought I understood.

I want to take you a little deeper into the events and the circumstances surrounding this great healing miracle, and I hope that before this morning is done, what I have to give you will help you to better understand what really happened and why every detail of the story is so very important in the strengthening of your faith and your understanding of the Word of God.

The fact of the miracle is easy to understand. This woman has been sick for 12 long years. She has done everything she knows how to do. She

was growing weaker every day and unless she had a miracle, she knew that she was going to die.

ILLUS: Walter Matthau SAID, "My doctor gave me six months to live, but when I couldn't pay the bill, he gave me six more."

Added to her physical issues, there were the social and spiritual issues of her condition. Because she had an issue of blood, she was considered ceremonially unclean and could not mix with other people. She could not attend worship at the synagogue. She was shunned by everyone around her because if they even touched her, they too would be considered unclean.

So, she stayed to herself. Chances are that she lived in secret places, hiding in the shadows, moving around only in times when there wasn't much activity going on. It was like she was a stranger in her own town.

When I read about her condition, I am reminded that all of us are born with an issue of blood.

We are all born with the sin-tainted blood of Adam, through which we inherit a fallen nature. We can try everything we want to try and purify ourselves, but no matter what we try, we are considered "unclean"; lost in the eyes of God and dead in sin. We have a living body, with a dead spirit. We are dead men walking. We can't help ourselves and nobody else can help us, because we are all in the same condition.

Doctors can treat us with medicines and perform all sorts of medical procedures and use wonderful modern equipment, and their work is both needful and helpful; But they are limited. We cannot expect man to do what only God can do.

The fact is, that no man has the power to cleanse us from sin. Only the blood of Jesus, and the power of God through the Holy Spirit making us Born Again, can do that! Amen…for God so loved the world…

This woman heard that Jesus was coming to town, and suddenly a spark of hope arose in her heart! This was the Messiah, the one who performs miracles of healing and deliverance wherever he goes!

She plans her mission to the best of her ability. She waits in the shadows, unseen, until Jesus walks by. How will she ever break through to touch him? She is weak, sick and unclean! Will they stone her for trying! Will he even touch me publicly and cause himself to be unclean? So many questions, but only one hope. She must try at all costs!

Let me tell you that you don't know how much you need Jesus until Jesus is all the hope you have!

She began to push and shove and to break through the crowd. She could hardly move for the mass of people. And then to hear them cry out, "unclean", as she went by! Yet the crowd was so great and the noise level so high that no one stopped her. She just kept coming; never giving up! Her very life depended upon this one single act of faith!

She finally reached out and the Bible says that she "touched the hem of his garment", and she was healed instantly!

Now, as you read this story, it seems that it really is an easily understood miracle of healing. But I wonder if you have ever wondered why the bible emphasizes that this woman touched the "hem" of Jesus' garment?

That detail matters because the hem of His garment would be the easiest part to touch in a crowd. It shows her mindset: she's not grabbing Jesus to stop Him—she's reaching for the smallest point of contact, The point isn't the fabric; it's that she believed even the slightest contact with Jesus was enough.

In the OT book of Numbers, chapter 15, God gave Moses' instructions concerning the customs and manners of worship and everyday life for the Children of Israel after God had brought them out of bondage. Among those instructions are some that I believe help us understand what was so important about that "hem" of Jesus' garment!

Numbers 15:37-41; ***37Then the LORD said to Moses, 38“Give the following instructions to the people of Israel: Throughout the generations to come you must make tassels for the hems of your clothing and attach them with a blue cord. 39When you see the tassels, you will remember and obey all the commands of the LORD instead of following your own desires and defiling yourselves, as you are prone to do. 40The tassels will help you remember that you must obey all my commands and be holy to your God. 41I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt that I might be your God. I am the LORD your God!” [NLT]***

Two other verses that I think will help us are found in Deut. 22:11-12

“11You must not wear clothing made of wool and linen woven together. 12“You must put four tassels on the hem of the cloak with which you cover yourself—on the front, back, and sides.” [NLT]

In ancient Israel, men wore four-cornered outer tunics with tassels, tied to the four corners. This outer garment became known as a “tallit”, and eventually this “tallit” evolved into the formal prayer shawl that a lot of Jews wear as they pray.

Because these tassels were hanging on the four corners of your garment, in full view of everyone including yourself, they would be a constant reminder to walk according to God's Laws.

The Hebrew word we translate as Law, is “halacha”, and it literally means "walk." You see, following God's law is a daily walk, and to stay on His path of righteousness, we all need constant reminding.

The fringes, on both garments, are tied in a unique way. The standard is that on each of the four corners there are eight strings with five knots. This is especially meaningful as the numerical value, of the word tzitzit is 600, plus the eight strings and five knots, which brings the sum to 613, which is the number of commandments in the Torah.

Jewish men will put these prayer shawls over their heads to shut out the world and be in the presence of God. The white garment represents the purity of heaven; the dwelling place of the Lord. They also have blue on them to represent the Holy Spirit. Gold represents the deity of God.

Therefore, praying under the “tallit”, or prayer shawl, is covering yourself with the presence of God. All through the Bible, it was like having your personal prayer closet.

Some scholars say that this is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 6:6, when He told us to get into our closet, and pray in secret to the Lord.

God tell the Jews to use blue thread, because blue had a very special meaning to the Jews in ancient times, because it was hard to come by, very expensive and represented the fact that there is no other God but him.

In ancient time, blue could only be obtained from certain types of snails. Blue, used to create the purple color as well, was the most expensive color to produce. It was reserved mostly for royalty and only a very few of the wealthy who could afford it.

Before synthetic dyes were discovered, the only source was a small gland in the murex snail. It took 12,000 snails to fill up a thimble of blue dye. In 200 BC, one pound of cloth, dyed blue, cost the equivalent of $36,000.

Just so you know, Lydia, a maker of purple, mentioned in Acts 16, and an early convert of Christianity, was a wealthy woman

This information about Lydia, in effect is saying, "One of the wealthiest and most influential people in the Roman Empire had gotten saved!"

Now I’m not promoting the use of prayer shawls because we do not live under the Old Testament Law. We live under Grace, so our manner of prayer and customs are quite different.

The tassels around the fringe and corners of the prayer shawl signify much to those who understand why they are there.

1. **First, they represent Authority**

In I Samuel 24:3-11 we read; *"3At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding farther back in that very cave!*

4"Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today the LORD is telling you, 'I will certainly put your enemy into your power, to do with as you wish.'" So, David crept forward and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul's robe.

5But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. 6He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this to my lord the king. I shouldn't attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him." 7So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul.

After Saul had left the cave and gone on his way, 8David came out and shouted after him, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked around, David bowed low before him.

9Then he shouted to Saul, "Why do you listen to the people who say I am trying to harm you? 10This very day you can see with your own eyes it isn't true. For the LORD placed you at my mercy back there in the cave. Some of my men told me to kill you, but I spared you. For I said, 'I will never harm the king—he is the LORD's anointed one.' 11Look, my father, at what I have in my hand. It is a piece of the hem of your robe! I cut it off, but I didn't kill you. This proves that I am not trying to harm you and that I have not sinned against you, even though you have been hunting for me to kill me. [NLT]

Even though David did this to prove to Saul that he was not trying to kill him, the symbol of taking the corner fringe would be humiliation to Saul.

2. **The tassels reminded them they must have Humility**

By the end of the Second Temple period (70 BC - AD 135), tassels had become a symbol of social status. The wealthier you were, the fancier and larger your tassels might appear.

It is known that during the time of Jesus, the tassels of some Pharisees were so long and elaborate, that they dragged on the ground. It was this obvious display of pride that Jesus was rebuking when He said in Matthew 23:5, ***""Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra-long tassels." [NLT]***

3. **Another lesson of the tassels was to remember to stay "Under his wings", because God was their protector and provider!**

The prophet Malachi spoke of the Messiah of Israel and said of Him in Malachi 4:2, ***"But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." [NLT]***

The Hebrew word for "wings" used in this passage is "kanaf", which is a word that specifically means "the fringe-like feathers or edges of a bird's wing", not the whole wing. All of us have seen an eagle or hawk circling in the summer sky and have seen these fringe-like feathers. This word, therefore, had two meanings and could be translated wings, or fringes.

These tassels were a point of contact this woman needed to help her release her faith to receive a miracle. To her, they represented the Word of God. They represented the authority of Jesus, and his power to heal.

The woman had heard that Jesus might be the Messiah. Maybe she remembered this messianic promise from Malachi and thought, "If I am to be healed, then will it be found in His wings... His tassels on his shawl".

Maybe she had heard of the miracles spoken of in Mark 6:56, where it says, ***"Wherever he went—in villages, cities, or the countryside—they brought the sick out to the marketplaces. They begged him to let the sick***

touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed." [NLT]

But the power to heal wasn't in the fringes, or the tassels, or the hem of His garment. The tassels only served as point of contact for releasing her faith in Jesus!

What about you and me? Do we have the simple faith to reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment?

Mankind has a great tendency to make objects sacred, as though they have some mystical power. Statues of patron saints, prayer shawls; even the cross itself, are often considered by some to have some special power.

But objects that we look upon as having great spiritual significance, are just objects. They only serve to remind us of the true source of power to heal and to save.

Sometimes though, objects are used as a point of contact for releasing our faith. We use the oil to anoint those who we pray for. The Apostle Paul sent out cloths from his own body that brought people divine healing.

We sometimes need a physical "point of contact" that helps us exercise our faith in God. That is what the hem of Jesus' cloak was to the woman.

Because of her faith to believe and receive, the power, or virtue, flowed from Jesus and into her body, instantly healing her.

The theological shock: her uncleanness doesn't spread—but Jesus' holiness does.

In a normal direction of thought, her touch would "defile." But in Jesus, the direction reverses: His holiness heals her. Jesus was not contaminated by her touch, but the very reverse occurred - touching the hem of Jesus' garment purified the woman!

Let's step back and look at this just a moment:

1. Our Issue will DEFINE us if we are not careful.

Have you ever noticed that this woman's name is mentioned nowhere? We just don't know; but did you notice that she was known by the following description, "The woman with issue of blood?" That was all the information needed and everyone knew whom the writer was talking about. In other words, this woman was defined by her issue. Everyone knew her as the woman with the issue. She wasn't known by her name. She is defined by her issue; How many people are defined by their issue? [Examples]

2. Our issue can DISQUALIFY us.

But her issue did more than just define her. Her issue also disqualified her. Because of her state she could not worship. She wasn't allowed to enter the temple to pursue a closer relationship with God. Because of her issue she couldn't enter into relationships. She wasn't allowed to have relations with her husband or her children. Leviticus 15:25-27 declares that everything and everyone she touched would be unclean. She was cut off from God and man. She was cut off from meaningful relationship and service. She was disqualified by her issue.

Sounds like many people today; they can't worship because of what is happening in their life. They can't serve…can't help with outreach… can't do anything for God or others because of what is happening or has happened.

3. Our issue can DEVASTATE us!

The Word declares that this woman's issue had cost her everything. In fact the Word says she had spent everything she had and still only grew worse. She had tried everything. William Barclay says that there were at least 11 cures listed in the Talmud for this issue. They ranged from tonics to superstitions such as carry the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in summer and in a cotton bag in winter. Another solution was to carry a barleycorn which had been found in the dung of a white

female donkey. Barclay believes this woman had tried it all, but only grew worse.

Everywhere she went she had to shout, “unclean, unclean”. That is like you walking down the street yelling “I’ve got AIDS, I’ve got AIDS!”

4. Our issue can DRIVE us to the point of DESPERATION.

She would take whatever means and actions were necessary to resolve her issue. She pushed past shame. She pushed past man’s protocol. She pushed past the belief that nothing will ever change. Her desperation drove her to the divine. Her desperation positioned her for deliverance. She came to the place where she said, “I must touch Jesus!”

In the healing stories of Jesus, as in the two healings presented here, it is the faith of the person asking for healing that matters. In the case of the woman, the person requesting healing and the person being healed were the same person, but in the case of Jairus’ daughter, the person being healed was unconscious; unable to have faith or even to know that efforts were being made to heal her.

In the case of Jairus’ daughter, it is obvious that the sick person did not have faith and did not even know what was going on. It was the faith of Jairus, in requesting healing, that precipitated her healing.

Here are the powerful take aways that I hope will encourage your faith to trust Jesus for a miracle.

1. Faith requires risk

The woman with the issue of blood took a huge risk.

In Jewish culture, her bleeding disorder rendered her unclean. Everything and anyone she touched was unclean. According to Levitical law, she was not permitted to handle money or food or attend worship services.

2. True faith captures God’s attention

When Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” he was not referring to the act of someone putting their hand on him. In fact, the story did not even say she touched Jesus. She only touched the hem of His garment.

What Jesus really asked was **“Who to me with their whole being in unwavering faith?”** Her faith was so powerful that it reached God more deeply than anyone else in that crowd. The faith in her connected with the Heavenly Power that honors authentic faith.

3. God’s attention to your faith is rewarded

Despite the crowd, it seemed that no one else existed in those moments.

At this moment, his daughter needed him. He was fully present for her.

When Jesus heals, it is complete.

This is perhaps one reason why Jesus calls her daughter: to indicate to her that she had been restored. For so long she was an outcast. Ostracized. Defined by her disease. Her self-worth would have been trampled on.

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And there is more.

Jesus says to her “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” This final command really translates “go into peace.” God rewards those who stretch toward heaven in complete faith. He responds to authentic faith.

This woman had a strong, **“pushing through”** kind of faith; a faith that wouldn’t quit believing, or quit trying, until she got her answer.

Do you need to touch Him today?

Faith is the answer; faith in the power of God to answer prayer and perform miracles.

Jesus loves you and is fully aware of the weaknesses of your faith. But he is encouraging you to take courage, put your fears aside, and "go for it." He is teaching you to trust in him. And he says to you, as he said to the sick woman who pushed through her fears, ***"Son or Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go forward in peace."***