

Jesus heals a bleeding lady. – 4665 words

OT Scriptures

¹⁶ To the woman he (the Lord God) said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” **Genesis 3v16**

¹⁹ “When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. ²⁰ “Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. ²¹ Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ²² Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ²³ Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening. ²⁴ “If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean. ²⁵ “When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period.

Leviticus 15 v19-25

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. ³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ” ³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” **Mark 5 v24b-34**

The bleeding Woman

It had not taken long for word to reach the streets of Capernaum within its town walls, that a boat with Jesus in had pulled up on the shore. The rocky outcrop now seated a few hundred people, clamouring to hear from Him. Yet the streets still seemed busier than normal, as the small cloaked figure crept out to see and hear what was going on. Jesus is back.

The wandering Teacher had set up home in this fishing port, but was so often out on the road. He was the number one topic of conversation ever since the day the local fishermen had pulled in that miraculous catch. He had healed their Officials son and their Centurions servant from a distance, he had cured loads of people that turned up at Peters place one day, and then there was the paralysed lad that was on another day lowered through the roof of the same house, and went out dancing. Then all that stuff that happened in the synagogue there with the demonised man being set free, and the man with the withered hand that was healed on the Sabbath. Capernaum was Miracle Central.

It came unexpected to her, that fateful month when her period bleeding didn't stop as it should have. It just carried on, every day being the same. It had been like this for 12 years now. Not 12 months but 12 years. She was exhausted with it. It is very possible, that she may have even suffered this since puberty, putting in her now in her mid-twenties, noting most adults still around at that age, didn't live though their thirties. She had started with significant wealth, as most people could not afford to go to Physicians. This must have been inherited from lost parents. The inference, is that she herself paid for the doctors, which she wouldn't have done if she had had family, as the Father, husband or sons would have paid. So most likely her condition had prevented her from marrying, as she would be unable to have had sex with a man without defiling him.

There seemed to be plenty of potential cures about, and some are recorded in the Rabbi's book of law, the Talmud, but most now with the benefit of science, can be seen for what they were, superstitious remedies with no hope of success. She had set about getting the best doctors she could afford, and each time as she took their potions and medicines, they would say 'Arise, from your blood flow' *1. But she never did 'Arise'. Whatever she was prescribed. of course, made no difference. So she tried another doctor, then another.

Now all the money was gone. There was no financial safety net, no family, and no community to support her due to her condition. Was in any wonder, she was desperate to be healed.

The cause of bleeding

But what was wrong with her? Although there are a number of potential causes for persistent vaginal bleeding, the woman had probably developed polyps or fibroid growths in her womb, which would cause some bleeding between periods. Had it been from hormonal imbalance (common during pregnancies) then it is unlikely to have lasted so long, and if it was a by-product of cancer then **she** is unlikely to have lasted so long. So, we know now, it was most likely a physical healing of the womb (uterus) that she was needing and was failing to get from the first century remedies and superstitious practices that she had paid for. The safe removal of the womb via a hysterectomy is a common procedure nowadays, but certainly not 2000 years ago.

The consequence of bleeding

The woman was weary. Discomfort, inconvenience, tiredness, and anxiety were not the only consequences of her illness. Her persistent bleeding, down below, made her ritually unclean every day of her life. She had been in that perpetual state for 12 years. She couldn't have sex, and anything she touched, sat on, or led on became unclean, as did anyone else that sat on it after her. Anyone that touched her became unclean too. To make matters worst the type of illness she had was seen as a result of living a sinful lifestyle, and so she had the additional pain of false accusations. Going about her daily life was hard going.

Out on the streets

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus ! As the stories, some real, some fabricated, resonated around town, some days it felt like she was the only one **not** being healed. Whilst lepers, demoniacs, and other outcasts were being restored, not just physically and mentally, but restored to the social acceptance of their communities, she was left suffering and living in the shadows.

She had slipped out on the streets, trying to be as invisible as she could, but mingling none the less. So where was he? Still on the coast, teaching from his boat? Would he head to Peter's house again? Perhaps if she hung out near there, she might catch a glimpse of him, but then what would she do? His name seemed to be on everyone's lips, and she tried to get close enough to listen to them.

Dressed for the occasions

Down on the coast, the crowd had been enraptured by the challenge on Jesus by a lawyer, and his response with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Everyone loved a good story. But here was a new distraction, as the well known figure of the synagogue leader had surprisingly fallen at the feet of Jesus and was imploring his help. It seemed to work as Jesus was stopped in his tracks and was moving swift of foot towards the gates of the town, despite the restrictive nature of his clothing and the pressing crowd.

The Rabbis may often have eaten and lodged below their means, but always dressed above them. Whilst more understated than religious figures that liked to show off wealth, nevertheless Jesus like every other Rabbi or teacher, was dressed well. It was a requirement of his role, and for anyone who read the scriptures in public. His close-fitting seamless tunic, woven on a double loom, descended neatly to his feet, and was fashioned into his waist by his girdle belt. Over this was his Tallith or robe, with its customary fringes and tassels. As he moved through the crowds his robe flapped up behind him, with the tassels occasionally taking flight.

The Large Crowd

One minute the streets of Capernaum, had been just a little busier than normal, but suddenly the lady was engulfed in a large crowd as people swarmed into town, from the coastline. It seemed that the whole town had turned up to herald the return of Jesus. And there he was, pushing through with focus and

determination. He was off somewhere on a mission, but it was the wrong direction for Peters house. The crowd pushed and jostled him, but didn't seem to slow him down. Now she was being pushed and cajoled out of the way, as others tried to join in on the action, whatever that was going to be. Everyone that was unwittingly touching her was now unknowingly being made ceremonially unclean for the rest of the day, and if aware of this would need now to take the required purification bath. At this rate, half the town would be unclean. She should not have been out in such a large crowd where she could not socially distance. If they knew, what trouble she would be in. What was she doing? She should really go straight home, but she couldn't miss this opportunity. Penniless, in frequent pain, and barred from the synagogue, she had nothing to lose, and came to Jesus in her desperation, breaking every rule in the book to get to Him. She could now see the miracle worker coming straight in her direction.

The Touch

She had dreamt of this moment, but in no time at all Jesus, engulfed by people, had already passed within inches of her. She was so close, she could see the tassels on his robe.

Unlike the professional Physicians, faith healers like Jesus, often touched the sick, and healing seem to be imparted through the touch. It was a thought that alighted on her, quickly and insistent. It could work in reverse. If she touched him, then she might be healed. There was such magical qualities spoken of **this** man, that even if she just touched the edge of his robe, she could be healed. She could sneak up, get his heallig power, and be straight out of there without anyone noticing. There was no time for the seriousness of such an offense to register with her, the defilement of a Rabbi. Twelve years she had suffered, twelve years.

Before he disappeared ahead of her she pushed the crowd from behind, and broke through enough, to reach out, and yes there it is, she touched the end of his robe and his forward motion lifted it behind him in her direction.

The second she touched his cloak, a power surged through her body. It was like a light had been switched on in the darkness, and heavy chains had fallen off her. She tingled with excitement. She felt so different, especially down below, she knew instantly that not only had the bleeding stopped but that she had been fully physically healed, she had been set free. She was glued to the spot in awe, and the crowd started to move away from her.

Who touched me?

But suddenly, Jesus pulled up sharply. A feeling had flushed through him, that same feeling he often had when the Holy Spirt flowed through him in healing power. It took something out of him, and he knew it.

"Who touched my clothes?". The words resonated through her head, and send a shudder through her. Had she been caught? There was a moment of hope as she heard Peters complaining voice, 'Are you joking, I touched you, he touched you, they touched you, everyone's touching everyone in this crowd'. Then she also heard the voice of the synagogue leader, desperately pleading for Jesus to keep moving. Jairus? Why was he here? Oh no, surely he won't see me !

She was trying to make her escape, but looked back and saw Jesus looking straight at her. He had asked the question, but she knew he knew it was her. She had defiled Rabi Jesus of Nazareth, and been caught in public. Now everyone who had touched her would realise what she had done to him and to them.

Negative thoughts stampeded into her head. What would happen to her? What would they do to her? What would the synagogue leader do? Could they stone her for this? Despite the pleading of Peter and the synagogue leader, she knew Jesus was having none of it. He was looking for a confession, and wasn't going anywhere until he got one.

“Who touched my clothes?”. It wasn’t a man of great prophetic knowledge looking for an answer from some-one, it was a man of great insight looking for a confession. He could have let her slip quietly away, but he had more for her than she had hoped for. Her healing was not yet complete.

Confession

Why? Why, did she touch him? What was she thinking? Now trembling with fear, she fell to her knees, tears rolling down her face, frightened in his presence. There was no escape. She had to face her accusers. There was no excuse. She had to tell the truth.

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It was no point lying to the Rabbi, he seemed to know anyway. She had to speak up in testimony of what God had done for her, and sometimes that a scary thing to do. She lifted her head a little, and sobbed out her story. Twelve miserable years of menstrual bleeding, not months but years. The doctors had taken everything she had. They were expensive and useless. No sign of healing from any of them and their potions.

Having said her confession, she was now properly outed and exposed to the teacher, to his disciples, to the crowd, many of them now recognising her for the first time that day, and to the synagogue leader Jairus, who seemed particularly upset and agitated with her.

Magic or Mystery?

She had believed that there must be some kind of magic healing that she could tap into by just touching the clothes of this great man of God. Her faith in this magic had at first seemed vindicated. We should not be shocked ourselves by this level of superstitions, because most of us would probably have thought and done the same. As it turned out, the seamless tunic that he wore that day under his robe, was taken from him at the Cross, and won in a game of dice by a Roman soldier who probably sold it on for beer money. Yet what if the tunic had been somehow preserved for 2000 years, and was now on display in a grand cathedral? It would be priceless to the Church. How long do you think the queue would be to see it and touch it. The very tunic that our Lord Jesus wore, in which he taught, healed, and showed compassion to the masses. Some of the very sick would be willing to queue for days to touch it. If you had been suffering for 12 years, would you be in that queue? Be honest? Would you want to touch his tunic? I would, even if the odds were stacked against me being healed, I would want to try. It might be faith that’s gone askew, but it’s still faith, and God can move in mysterious ways, often overlooking our shortfalls and misconceptions.

We read in Acts that..

People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. [Acts 5v15]

God did extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and the diseases and evil spirits left them. [Acts 19v11-12]

The Comedian Frank Skinner, a friend of a friend, sometimes stays in my village. I don’t approve of some of his jokes, too blue for me, but I like his attitude when he tackles those that ask him to explain certain aspects of his faith. He responds, part of God is mystery, so just accept that. We shouldn’t feel we have to try and explain everything God does. Creation will never fully understand its creator. That’s okay.

Jesus corrects her

Jesus had to call her out, in front of the crowd, because her healing was incomplete and he had to correct her on two issues.

First, there was no power in his clothes. She had so much faith in healing through Jesus, that she had assumed that anything touching Jesus also held power, an impersonal energy which perhaps radiated from Jesus into his clothing, that she could draw into herself from just a touch on the cloak. Yes it is faith, but

but it is one laced with misunderstanding. The healing power had to come from the person of Jesus himself, operating in the power of Gods Spirit. She had wanted to avoid confronting the healer with a request. In her appreciation of shame, how could she ask a Rabbi, to touch her so that he was defiled? However Jesus, know that she needed a personal encounter with him. She needed first to know that the power comes through Him, and Him alone.

There was **no** power at all in the tunic, there was no power in his robe, or the tassels on the end. The power was in and through Jesus alone.

She also needed to know, that it was not her physical touch that had ushered in the healing. The touch, was just a demonstration of her faith in Jesus to heal, and it was her **faith** that had set her free.

The power was released because of her faith in Jesus, her faith in God, no matter what else she thought.

To add to that, there was no power in Peters shadow, or in Pauls hankies' and aprons either, but the power was in the faith placed in God to heal through these servants of His, that brought about the incredible miracles of the early church.

Jesus completes the healing

Doctors today heal the part of the body that is not functioning correctly, whether it is a dislocated hip, a tumour in your bowels, a shattered arm, or persistent migraines in your head. The focus is on enabling the patient to function properly again physically, but folk healers like Jesus had a wider focus. Full healing can only come if the person can function socially again, as well as physically. To do that, they need to be able to be accepted back into their communities.

If Jesus, had noted the power go from him without confronting the woman, then she would only have had the physical healing, and would probably find it difficult to get acceptance of the healing and be allowed back in. But Jesus speaks acceptance, and deliverance into her life, publicly, so those witnessing it could now accept the healing had happened. This depended upon the community's acceptance of the healer's ministry, which was no problem for Jesus in Capernaum at this time, as they flocked to see him and hear him in action.

³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."
(Mark 5v34)

The words in Greek for healing and salvation are the same. So Jesus moves the miracle from a one-off functional healing, to a total restoration of the woman, for now and for her future. Daughter, you are welcomed out of my shadows into my family, be restored into your community, and into the family of God. She had touched his cloak. By calling her daughter, he was now touching her heart.

Today your faith has brought you salvation. Your total sickness, physical and social is healed. You can go in peace freed from all your suffering.

It is a beautiful picture of faith, of confession, of personal encounter with Jesus, of him speaking life into the woman, and fully restoring her to health, to her community, and to God.

Purity Laws

The woman's big issue was that she fell foul of the purity laws, but why have them?

If you walked the streets and passed by the entrance to a side alley, you might see an up-ended wheelie bin with all its contents spewed out into the alley, and a rat clearly visible amongst it. Whilst not liking what you saw, you would not be offended by it, or greatly affected in any way. You would most likely walk on by, and not think of it again.

However if you then went into your house, and into your lounge, to find some-one had dragged a similar wheelie bin off the street, and emptied it there over your carpet and sofa, complete with rodent, then you would feel disgusted, and probably physically sick. Your sacred place, your own home, had been violated.

The Israelites believed that their purity system derived directly from God, and kept everything in its proper place. The law drew the lines and made them clear. It aimed to keep what was sacred and Holy, pure from an impure world, such as the Roman culture that had descended upon them. Rules were rules, and if you stepped outside the purity laws then there were consequences. The laws were largely based on the book of Leviticus, and three areas singled out for special attention were skin diseases, touching a corpse, and menstrual bleeding for women. These crossed the line, and were seen as dirty and not sacred. They were enough to put you outside of community life, relegated from the lounge of social acceptance to the dark alley way of ostracism.

For touching a dead relative, eating the wrong food, mixing with the wrong people, or having your normal monthly period then the consequences were temporary. You were accepted back in to normal life, after a period of isolation, ritual cleaning and sacrifices. But if your condition persisting indefinitely, such as with a clear disability, or a skin disease, then you stayed locked out where you wouldn't contaminate the sacred. The Laws were the laws, and must be kept, for the sake of everyone else, for the sake of purity, for the sake of what is Holy ! Which may sound okay, until it is you being cast out.

Jesus breaks the Purity Laws

It seems to his opponents that at every move Jesus is breaking the purity laws, touching lepers and dead people, welcoming to his friendship circle known unclean sinners like tax collectors, and mixing with foreigners. He applied his own spittle to the eyes of a blind man (Mk 8:23) and to the tongue of a dumb person (Mk 7:33), showing disregard for bodily orifices and bodily emissions. In the mass feedings of the 4000 and 5000, Jesus apparently showed no concern for the purity of the folk with whom he ate or for any of the rituals to be practiced prior to eating. Common food was shared with common folk on common ground. He even declared that you could eat any type of food, and none of them made you unclean.

“Don't you understand ? Nothing that goes into the body from the outside can really make him unclean, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach and then goes out of his body” (Mark 7v19).

So did not Jesus have no disregard for boundaries, to separate the dirty from the pure, the unholy from the sacred?

Jesus defines Purity

Jesus still **upheld** boundaries to define Purity, but he was **redefining** them, defining new ones.

The Pharisees' concern is with externals and surfaces. The prostitute touched that pot, the menstruating woman sat on that cushion. Now they are unclean ! Jesus however was concerned about the interior and the heart. He said that there is nothing which goes into a man can makes him impure; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him (Mk 7:15).

Try and picture it like this. The laws of God through the 10 commandments are like a marshy area of land, which you can't step into or you will sink. It has a small fence around it, that you don't cross. Close to the marsh, is the good fertile land, and beyond that the land gets drier and stonier the further you go. It's like the religious rulers built a second fence around most of the good land with all their additional laws and rules so you couldn't live there, and left you to make a living on the poorer soil, and those with privilege got the best of the land that was left. Jesus comes in, and with his words and actions and dismantles the outer fencing, without touching the inner fence.

He declared that their purity system was wrong and that He was right. He had a new working definition of purity, of what God wants and what makes one whole, clean, and holy.

Jesus, the son of God **was** purity. Nothing he touched made him unclean, but instead the unclean was made clean, by his touch, or by his command, or even by his 'spit' ! Nothing he did, said, ate, or touched ever defiled him. This was **proven** when he died as the worlds sinless sacrifice. He was unblemished to the very end. His purity enabled his spilt blood to pay for all of our sins. This was God the Fathers vindication of his son's purity.

We find **our** purity by accepting what Jesus has done for **us** on the cross, confessing our wrongs and allowing his sacrifice to heal us **fully** by restoring us into a relationship with God, just like the woman was restored back into her community. We can then be part of his Kingdom life, living out his teachings, doing the good works he has prepared for us, and being empowered by his Holy Spirit. This is only possible because we have been made **pure** by Jesus, such that we can enter into the presence of God. Otherwise it would be impossible. This is the new boundary of the Jesus purity system. It is Jesus himself.

The old legacy lives on

Despite the words of Jesus on purity and his loving words to the bleeding woman, the Church still at times finds it hard to accept these new purity boundaries, and instead of looking at the state of the heart, still sees the externals and tries to draw up exclusion boundaries. One example was in the debate within the UK Anglican church on the ordination of woman priests, where the argument was raised by the opposition priests that that the women would not be able to take communion whilst having a period because they would defile the sacraments ! This attitude may be linked by the Christian back to Leviticus, or even to the curse of Eve (Gen 3v16), but Jesus has ushered in the Kingdom of God which redresses thos old purity laws. This is not just a burden of Jewish history, but the same thing is actually still a superstition in many other cultures and religions. Some Native Americans, aborigines, and Hindus (such as in Nepal) still have Menstruation huts or tents, where woman are confined to for their duration of their periods.

The Full Embrace

This miracle account, is just one example of how Jesus is willing to embrace all those seen as 'non-kosher', the excluded ones. These were the tax-collectors, the prostitutes, the foreigners, the lepers, anyone with deformities or sickness, and others labelled sinners (which really meant they had given up on trying to keep all the minutiae of laws and regulations). And the women, especially during their period.

These were people who were supposed to be 'hateful in Gods sight'. Instead, Jesus declares them as inside Gods special care, and reached out to them all. Through him, they could be made pure in Gods sight. Be they only received their purity by coming to Jesus for his touch, for his love.

It was the woman's desperation that drove her into the embracing and healing words of Jesus Christ. To Jairus the synagogue leader, to the other Pharisees, and to the town-folk of Capernaum, she was a lost case, relegated to the very fringe of their society. Jesus calls her daughter, a term of endearment, which invites her into his family of loved ones.

Paul summed it up brilliantly in his letter to the Romans **“No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord “** (Romans 8v39)

Lets rewrite that and say 'There is no sexual or racial make-up; no deformity, physical illness, mental illness, past wrong-doings, or anything else in the natural world or spiritual world that can prevent you from being made pure by Jesus Christ, and living in the Love of God. A love that can transform your heart, and your mind, and satisfy your soul,.

Jesus threw aside all the irrational fears and superstitions of his own culture, and expects the same of us today. You are not **locked** out by purity laws, or any other cultural laws or expectations. There is nothing that should hold you back from placing your faith in Jesus Christ, and then living life to the full within his full embrace, as his follower and disciple.

“Daughter, Son, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering.”

Amen

References

*1 – Edenheim p426 / Talmud (Shabb. 10a & b)