

Grasping for Hope

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[0:00] Mark chapter 5. I want to begin today by reading an accident report. Dear sir, I'm writing in response to your request for additional information in block 3 of the accident report form.

I put poor planning as the cause of my accident. I'm a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a six-story building.

When I completed the work, I had about 500 pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel using a pulley attached to the side of the building. After securing the rope, at ground level, I went back up on the roof, loaded the bricks into the barrel, and went back down. I untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the barrel.

You will note in block 11 of the report that I weigh 175 pounds. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope.

[1:12] Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming down.

This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my ascent and did not stop until my right hand was jammed into the pulley.

This accounts for my broken wrist. Despite the pain, I maintained the presence of mind and held tightly to the rope. At approximately the same time, the barrel hit the ground and the bottom fell out. Devoid of the bricks, the barrel now weighs about 50 pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block 11. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the empty barrel coming up. That accounts for my broken ankles. Slowed only slightly, I continued to descent and landed on a pile of bricks.

[2:12] This accounts for my broken legs and lower back. At this point, I must have lost my presence of mind because I let go of the rope. The barrel then came down and struck me on the head. This accounts for my second fractured skull.

I respectfully request sick leave. The man had a hard day. And I wanted to start with a light moment because there's not a lot of light about this passage of Scripture, quite honestly.

It's talking about struggle. And the person we're going to talk about today is not the only one that's been through struggle. The reality is there's a lot of struggle in this room, probably.

And nothing light about that either. And I don't want to make it light. Now, Mark was quite a writer. He has a writing trait.

He has several of them. But he has a writing trait that stands out in his gospel. It's called the Markin Sandwich. And he uses it at least six times.

[3:19] Some theologians say as much as nine times. We've already seen it once in Mark chapter 3. But we see it again here. There is a story that is sandwiched between Jairus' approach to Jesus, asking for the healing of his daughter, and then the ultimate healing of his daughter as he raised her from the dead.

Christ did. In between that first occasion and the actual resolution, there is a divine interruption, an unplanned pause.

And in that, a life is changed by one grasping for Jesus. I want you to see this this morning. It's in Mark chapter 5, beginning in verse 25.

And it says this, And there was a woman who had a discharge of blood for 12 years and who had suffered much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather

grew worse.

She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, if I touch even his garments, I'll be made well.

[4:37] And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd saying, who touched my garments?

And his disciples said to him, you see the crowd pressing around and yet you say, who touched me? And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

And he said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.

The scripture says that this lady suffered much. And I will tell you that the English translation of the original Greek does not do that phrase justice.

Because the reality is when it says that she suffered much, it really means that she was in prolonged agony. She was spent.

[5:53] In every way. Medically, she had a persistent loss of blood that made her anemic at best.

And after 12 years, she very likely was close to the door of death. Physically, she felt awful. Constantly weak. Alone due to her condition. Too weak to care for herself. But not only that, she was affected socially. For being a woman in that day, her status was bound to her husband. And it's very possible that she didn't have a husband. If she had suffered with this before her marriage, she would not have been a candidate for marriage based on Levitical law. If she had suffered with it in that day and time, men typically didn't marry in sickness and in health. She would in most cases be cast aside.

[6:53] Therefore, her status was limited at best without sickness. But now sick, she is also unclean. Anything she sits on, anything she lies on, anything she touches is considered unclean.

She's unwelcomed. And for her, that is all the time. She is considered unclean, unkept, even cursed.

That was her reputation. Scripture says financially she was spent completely. She spent all she had. If no husband, that probably didn't last very long.

But either way, she had tried it all. We don't know about the doctors. Maybe they had done a good job. Maybe she had no advocate to help her get the proper care.

Or maybe she didn't give them the opportunity because she kept trying something else. We don't really know. We do know that Israel had some of the most modern medicine of that day. But it was still limited to folk remedies, herbal treatments, trial and error, and instructions given by the law.

[8:06] And some of those were in Leviticus. But there were a lot more of them written in Levitical law that said all kinds of things. With all of that, she had no success. As a matter of fact, the gospel of Luke that was written by a physician himself said no one could heal her.

The effort had been there. But the results were exasperatingly depressive. She was affected spiritually for the same reasons as socially because she was considered a spiritual outcast. She would have been constantly taunted, unable to be made right. A common thought would have been God is punishing her for something. Therefore, she must be a sinner.

She must be one that we stay away from. Isn't it amazing how we are really good at pointing out and ridiculing other people's public sins while we're ignoring our private sins?

It's a whole lot easier to deal with that than somebody else's life than it is for us. And the reality is, just like in this situation, when they didn't know the whole story for this lady, we probably don't know the whole story and whoever we're talking about either.

[9:33] The reality is, the tendency of us to get so enamored and ridicule someone else for their public sin while we ignore our private sin is not amazing at all.

It's of the devil. It smells of smoke. It's a distraction from us dealing with what we need to deal with. And the reality is that our prideful glare is just as wrong as their sinful act, whatever that is.

Folks, I'm just going to let the cat out of the bag. We're all in a spiritual mess. Outside of the grace of God, we're all in a spiritual mess, so we need to watch who we judge.

Our sins weigh as much as their sins, and we're not even sure about their sin. They sure wasn't sure about hers.

They had assumed a lot about this dear lady. How about the mental and emotional anguish that she had to go through? I mean, have you ever felt bad?

[10:52] I mean, bad. And over a long period of time? I mean, sickness for just a few days will absolutely wear you out.

How about for 12 years? It made her desperate. It made her desperate enough to take a chance. When it seemed like all hope was gone, her life was slipping away. She decided to risk it all. What do you do when you've tried everything that you know to do and you're losing hope?

Not only does she beg the question, but she also answers the question as well. Now, if you have lost hope in your situation, I want you to notice where she found it.

How did she find hope? She found hope through the testimony of others. I want you to notice what it says in verse 7. It says, she had heard the reports of Jesus.

[12:03] You have to realize the chance that she was taking. It would have seemed to her that Jesus may not acknowledge her at all.

Because the reality is, right before she approaches him, he's been approached by a man with clout. Jairus was a synagogue leader. To most synagogue leaders, Jesus was a threat.

He challenged their system. He threatened their authority. He threatened their system. By being someone that would not control, but one that would disturb their order.

And they didn't like it. By the way, God's good at shaking systems up. He'll do that. But with all that said, and in his time of need, the pompous and well-positioned Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus and begged for the healing of his 12-year-old daughter.

He was in a dire situation, an urgent matter. But I want you to notice, did Christ run frantically with Jairus?

[13:14] He didn't. He didn't rush. As a matter of fact, when this unclean woman touched the hem of his garment, he stopped.

Not to ridicule her, but to love her. Even though Jairus was significant, and even though his situation was dire, Christ still took the time for this dear, hurting woman.

And you know what? He always will. I want to be clear. God is not a respecter of persons. The ground is level in Jesus.

It is. Our titles, our wealth, our talents do not sway the love of Christ. It does not. He sees the soul. And all souls have one thing in common. They are in desperate need of Jesus Christ. Every soul is. Our souls have a vacancy without Christ.

[14:24] Now, does everyone know that? Well, let's assume they don't. So let's tell them about Jesus.

Let's not trust somebody else to do it for us. Let's not trust the fact that they may live in Pickens County, and there may be a lot of churches around, and they may live close to one, and they may ride by one a lot.

And that ought to be enough. Let's not bother to assume that. The reality is, some people need to hear your story.

They need to hear what God's done in your life. And the reality is, with all the technology that we have today, and with all the media that we have today, the personal testimony is still the most compelling method of anything to get a message out.

When I purchase something online, businesses want me to review the purchase and to publish that review. And a lot of times they ask me to do that before I even get the product.

[15:44] And I want to say, hurry up, you know. I ordered it this morning. Where is it? And before I buy from an individual or before I buy from a small company, I check reviews.

And those reviews are personal testimonies. In a court case, the whole case hinges on the power of testimony. And I want you to understand that this woman never would have got to Christ, never would have bothered.

Somebody told this lady about Jesus, or she would have never known about him. Let's never underestimate our Christian testimony.

Let's tell folks how Christ has changed our life. Life. Let me just ask you. Has Christ changed your life?

Well, let's tell somebody. Telling each other is not enough. I mean, we need that too. But let's tell somebody. This lady found hope by somebody telling her about Jesus.

[16:52] Not only that, but she also found hope by having the faith to change. She had labored over her illness for as long as Jairus' 12-year-old daughter had been alive.

That's a long time. And she was desperate for her circumstances to change. And she thought, if I can get to Christ, if she could somehow squeeze through unnoticed and get a touch of him.

And I don't know exactly how it all went down. I have a spiritual imagination. So go with me for a minute. But if this lady was not supposed to be in public due to her condition.

She was not supposed to be socializing. She should not have been in a crowd. And because the disciples looked at Jesus and said, why are you asking who touched you? Look at all these people touching you. There must have been a clamor of people there.

So how in the world do you get through when the locals know who you are? You've been sick for 12 years in a situation where you shouldn't be out in public culturally. So how do you get there?

[18:06] How do you do that? In my mind, I feel like she had to, she wanted to touch the hem of his garment. She had to get low. And if she got low enough and held her head down, maybe nobody would even recognize her.

And just reach through and just, and just, just get a touch. It's interesting that Matthew tells us that she was repeating to herself, if I just touch the hem of his garment.

If I just touch the hem of his garment. You know it had to be a struggle. She had to wonder what will people think.

She had to wonder what would they do. She had to wonder what will happen to me. Well, when I read that, it reminds me of something we deal with practically every worship hour.

When I get done preaching in a few moments, we're going to stand and we're going to sing a song. We're going to call that the invitation time. And I'm going to encourage you, and I'll encourage you now, that if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to do that today.

[19:28] He'll change you forever. He'll heal what ails you. He'll touch you spiritually, powerfully. And you come down and tell me, Pastor, I need to give my life to Christ.

He'll change your life for eternity. Or maybe there's a matter in your life where you need to follow him. You need to just obey him. You've been ignoring it.

You need to obey him. Or maybe God's calling you to live your life publicly for him and to be a part of this church. And maybe he's leading you in that way. Or maybe there's a struggle that you have that you want somebody to pray with you about and those type things.

There's all that stuff that whatever it is that God leads you to do, I'll never ask you to do more than what God tells you to do. And I'll never want you to be satisfied with doing any less than what God tells you to do.

But whatever God tells you to do, that you would come and do that. But I don't, I wish I could count how many people have told me at the front door, back door, whatever that is in a Baptist church.

[20:28] How many people have told me, you know, preacher, I almost came. I felt like I needed to. And when they tell me that, I'll say with a smile on my face, being as nice as I can, well, you can trust the Lord for that.

You can come when you, but in my heart, I'm going, you know what you could have messed up? Because the reality is when we fail to obey the Holy Spirit of God and do what he's told us to do, it quenches the Spirit of God and it can change the atmosphere in this very room.

I mean, you've seen it in your own life. When somebody else will step out in some form or fashion, it makes it easier for you to step out and to go. And again, I never want anybody to orchestrate anything and come up with some scheme or plan.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about obedience. When God speaks, come. Because when you come, you usher other people to respond in the same way. And it may not be immediately. It may be next week.

It may be in a month. But you give other people the confidence to do that very thing. Simply because you've been obedient to do what God's told you to do. Don't ever leave this place going, I wish I had done what God told me to do.

[21:55] What if that day she had said, oh, I wish I had reached out for him. But thank God the story is different.

Because she didn't worry about other people. Folks, quit worrying about other people. Get your heart right with God. We serve an audience of one. Period.

And I want to be very clear about it. I work diligently to try my best to prepare what God says in his word. And to put it in a way that applies to your life.

And it speaks to your life. And that I'm not a hindrance to that. But I just let the Holy Spirit work through me. I want to be very clear about it.

And I hope you are challenged by it. I hope you enjoy it. I hope you want to come back. But I want to be clear about something. I serve an audience of one.

[23:02] And the most important thing I have today is to be obedient to Christ. God's taught me a long time ago that if I'll just trust him and do what he tells me to do, he'll take care of the rest of it.

He'll take care of it. And he'll do that in our lives every time. Quit worrying about what other people are going to say. Please him. The reality is our disobedience in this room affects us all.

Let me be clear about something. On that note, our sin outside of this room affects us all. You hurt the kingdom of God when you sin against God, if you're a Christian.

I mean, it's real. Our decision for Christ at all times makes all the difference. And when we obey him and when we honor him, we build an atmosphere where others have the courage to trust Christ and follow him.

Our individual walks of obedience help others to walk obediently. And then God begins to move in us and those around us as well.

[24:12] This woman stepped out and came to Jesus. She took a chance. She stopped caring about what others thought. She came at all costs. At the same time, we need to quit worrying about others and come to Jesus.

Never put others and their opinions before your obedience to Christ, regardless of the cost, because when you do, they are between you and Christ.

They're more important to you than Christ is. And you probably sometimes don't even know who you're talking about. You just worry about what somebody's going to think. I mean, it's easy for us to get caught up in that, and the devil loves it.

This lady had so much at stake, a lot more at stake than we do. I mean, she would have been exiled. She would have been publicly rebuked. She would have been verbally humiliated.

Yet she came anyway. Do you remember that look that you gave people when you went out during COVID? I mean, right in the first two weeks, and you had to venture out into open air and take a chance at life, and you saw somebody without a mask on?

[25:27] Why in the world? Is that a thin mask you've got on? Is the cloth going to work? How dare you? If you didn't ride in your car by yourself with a mask on, something's wrong with you.

You're trying to kill people. That's the closest thing that we've got to what they thought about this lady.

That was the circumstances. And she ventured out without a mask, I guess. She responded to her faith that God had given her to change.

God gave her that faith. But she responded to it with obedience. Her only hope of change was in Christ.

And of all the differences that was in this lady's life and our lives, that's not different. The only hope that we have is in Christ.

[26:38] And our obedience to follow him. She found hope by the testimony of others, by having the faith to change, and lastly, by the touch of Jesus. Because when she reached to Christ, her healing was immediate.

Verse 29 says that her ailment was gone the moment she touched the hem of his garment. She immediately felt healing come through her body. The word for suffering in verse 29 is the same word that's used for somebody being whipped.

She was whipped. She had agonized. And she was instantly healed. She didn't understand everything about Christian theology. She didn't understand everything about her own anatomy. She didn't know how God would work in her own body, but that wasn't necessary. She went to Christ by faith upon the testimony of others. And by her total, sacrificial, risky confidence in Christ, she was made whole.

And she was made whole immediately. And you know what? God is still in the healing business. My friend, in an instant, you can be made whole in Christ.

[27:49] And the great thing about the healing of Christ is not only was it physically, but it was spiritually. She left him in peace. God filled her life for the first time in at least a dozen years with peace.

And I'm not saying she never had another storm. I have no idea. What I am saying is she left with peace. There was a settling of her soul. There was a tranquility of her heart in the midst of her poverty.

There was a building back of her reputation, a mental and emotional recovery. I want you to notice in verse 34 that Jesus called her daughter. That's an affectionate term.

She came into this unnamed. She left in the family. She came into this unclean. She left renewed. She's family because she believes.

Even outcasts are not outcasts when we put our faith in Christ. And that faith in Christ and his touch is what changed her life. And he sent her in peace and healed.

[29:01] And that's what happens when we reach the Christ. He takes away all of our infirmities and sends us down a healing road.

He gives us a peace that is beyond understanding. You can reach out to him today with whatever ails you.

He is a hope that's worth grasping for. And he'll meet you where you are. And he'll give you what you need.

More and better and many times unexpectedly. When you come to Christ.

With every head bowed and every eye closed. I want to ask you this morning. If you know the Lord Jesus. If you've ever given your heart to him.

[30:02] I want you to know. If you haven't. The spiritual infirmity in your life can be changed immediately. And be taken away. And you can be made new.

By just a touch of Christ. Maybe you're here and you've never publicly acknowledged him.

Well that's a hindrance in people's lives sometimes. To just have a private faith. When there's nothing biblical about that. We are to live privately for the Lord.

We're to live publicly for the Lord. Jesus by his commission and by his example. Show us to do that through baptism. Maybe it's God's drawing you to this church. This is the place that he'd have you to serve.

And it's a step of obedience for you to follow his will and his way. We'll guide you in that. Or maybe there's a. There's a struggle.

[31:02] There's a hardship that you need to lay down before him today. You need to reach out and touch. And let God do what he wants to do. Just be obedient and trust him.

He'll meet you where you are. I'll never ask you to do. Something more than what he tells you to do. And I hope you're never satisfied with doing less than what he tells you to do. Just be obedient and follow him.

Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you. For your word and for the example of someone whose life was changed because she reached out to Christ. Help us Lord to spend our lives reaching for Christ.

Father. In Jesus precious name. Amen.