

Hope and Healing Sermon | Mark 5:21-34

January 18, 2026

Hi, my name is Maggie and I have a new life in Christ. I struggle with shame, a longing to be in control, and sometimes idolizing success or achievements. And how humbling it is to be in this space and say those words out loud to you today.

We're in week three of our sermon series "Hope and Healing". In this series we're looking at Scripture and at all the stories of ordinary people like you and I, people with deep need, people that are hurting and hopeless. Jesus meets them right where they are and offers what they could never find on their own: healing, freedom, and new life. He invites them from their brokenness, and he offers them hope and healing that only He can provide.

The truth is, we're all one of "those people" who have searched for meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in places it can never be found. Each of us has some kind of hurt, hang-up, or habit that has led us to the wrong wells, leaving us thirsty for something more. But we'll see how one encounter with Jesus changes everything.

Today we're going to talk about a woman who carried deep shame. I looked up the definition of shame – it says "A painful feeling of humiliation." Shame is powerful. Shame tells us that we're unworthy, not good enough. Shame tries to keep us quiet – spiritually, emotionally. We don't like to talk about shame, it's not a fun topic. But the Bible does talk about it. And this scripture today gives us a tender and honest description of shame and what faith does to it. Because sometimes the brokenness that comes with it is exactly what we need. And in our story today, this woman was so confident in her desperation and her need of healing that she would do whatever it takes to encounter Jesus. Her story is powerful and I think we'll all be able to relate in some way.

Our text today is kind of a story within a story, and it's good. So, let's get right to it.

This is Mark chapter 5, verses 21-24.

²¹When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²²Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴So Jesus went with him.

So, in this story Jesus had just come from the other side of the Sea of Galilee where he had been healing people. He likely landed in Capernaum, and there were people there eagerly waiting for him. And this first short story talks about Jairus, and this is important to set up the next part of the story. Jairus was a synagogue leader, he was responsible for supervising worship, running the weekly school, and caring the building of the synagogue. He was a respected religious leader. And we read in the gospel of Luke that Jairus's daughter that was sick was about 12 years old and it was his only daughter, so he fell at the feet of Jesus begging Jesus to come save her. So, Jesus went, and they started to travel to this young girl.

This is verse 25 and 26, it says “A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶She 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.

There were people surrounding Jesus as he travelled toward Jairus's house. I can just picture this mass of people walking around him and that he would be hard to get to. In another gospel we read that the crowds almost crushed him, there were so many people.

And amongst those people was a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. This woman had a seemingly incurable condition causing her to bleed constantly. Now, we don't know exactly what this was, or what caused her bleeding. It may have been a menstrual or uterine disorder of some kind. But it didn't really matter what caused it, what mattered was that it had been happening for twelve years. Over a decade.

This might sound inconvenient and painful to us in our modern context. But for this woman in the cultural context she lived in, this was devastating. The saddest part is that this bleeding would have made her ritually unclean. We

read in the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus that her bleeding would have made her unclean, and that means that she would have been isolated and excluded from most social contact. So, for 12 years, because of this bleeding illness that she had no control over, she was an outcast. She was separated from people and people didn't want to be near her or touch her or interact with her. Can you imagine how lonely she was? How discouraged, and desperate and sad she must have been? For 12 years she had been told, both medically and culturally, "something is wrong with you." It's heartbreakingly to think about how this woman must have been feeling and the shame that she carried every day. She experienced that painful feeling of humiliation because of her bleeding.

She had spent all her money trying to get well yet she was still bleeding. This is shame layered upon suffering: physical pain, financial loss, lack of community. Shame does that. **Shame convinces us not only that we are hurting—but that we deserve to hurt.**

Verse 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.**

I always like to place myself in these stories in the Bible. I want you to do the same. I can picture this woman, shuffling along in the midst of the crowd. Now she desperately wants Jesus to heal her, but she probably thinks that it's risky to be near him, to touch him. Because under Jewish law, since she is unclean, if she touches Jesus, he would also be unclean. So I picture her hesitating, maybe crying, wondering what she should do.

And there is a word that sticks out to me here. She came up BEHIND him in the crowd. She didn't push through to the front, she probably didn't even speak a word to try to make it easier to get through the crowd.

But she came up from behind. This is a beautiful picture. She doesn't have this bold, confident, triumphant faith. What she does have is a quiet, timid, desperate faith.

But listen to her belief... "If I touch his clothes, I will be healed." She had confidence, not in herself, but she had confidence that Jesus was what she

needed. She knew that all she needed was to touch him, to touch his clothes. And in this moment of sheer desperation, she reaches out and touches the hem of his garment, the edge of his cloak.

Scripture says “Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” Can you imagine? She felt it, she knew that she was healed. After twelve years of suffering, it was gone. Jesus healed her before she ever spoke a word.

This is verse 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?’ ”

This woman had a moment of joy and relief when she knew that she was healed. And then Jesus says “Who touched me?”

I can hear the disciples with a little bit of sarcasm thinking “what do you mean, everyone is touching you it’s a massive crowd of people.” But Jesus knew that this particular touch had faith.

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.

I bet she had a moment of panic, and Scripture even says that she was trembling with fear. This is an important moment. This is the moment that shame fears most: being seen. (The thing shame fears most is being seen.) But she conquered that fear and she told Jesus the whole truth.

But his question, ‘Who touched me?’ wasn’t an accusation. He knew who touched him. But he wanted this woman to step forward to identify herself. To let her slip away would have meant a lost opportunity for Jesus to teach her that his cloak was not magic. It was her faith, her belief that healed her.

But even more than that, I think that Jesus also wanted to teach the others in the crowd. I mentioned that Jewish law, in which a man who touched a menstruating woman became ceremonially unclean. This was true whether

her bleeding was normal, or in this case, a result of illness. To protect themselves from becoming unclean, Jewish men would have avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at a woman like her. And she knew that by touching Jesus she would have made him unclean. But instead of his question being accusatory, instead of anger, Jesus asked her to identify herself. And through that moment, that question, Jesus proclaimed to hundreds of people that she touched him and she was healed. In Jesus's mind, this woman was not to be overlooked. I'm sure he looked her right in the eyes. He saw her. He lifted her up in front of hundreds of people that would have looked right through her.

Jesus didn't expose her to humiliate her. He exposed her so that he could fully restore her. He didn't want to heal her physically without also healing her from her shame.

Verse 34: ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

This might be one of the most beautiful verses in all of Scripture.

Daughter, your faith has healed you.

This one instance in Scripture is the only time that Jesus speaks to an individual woman and calls her daughter. That's so powerful. And not only that, this word "healed" is the Greek word "sozo" - In the New Testament, sozo is frequently translated as "saved," but its full meaning includes making someone "well" or "whole," not only rescuing them from sin, but also from sickness, danger.

Daughter, your faith has healed you.

Daughter, your faith has saved you.

Up until this point in this woman's life she had been called unclean, unworthy, dirty, and unseen. And Jesus calls her Daughter. He calls her loved, clean, worthy, seen, and valued.

Up until this point shame had told her to stay hidden. And Jesus brings her out from hiding and gives her the confidence to be seen.

This passage, this moment in Scripture leaves me in awe of who Jesus is. He is powerful enough to heal and save us. But he does it because he is tender, and kind.

We have a great example of who God is in Isaiah 40, verses 10-11. It says “See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.”

Power, and tenderness. Hope and Healing. It’s who He is, even when we don’t deserve it.

This woman brought her desperation, her years of illness, her shame and loneliness. She brought it to Jesus and in turn she received healing and salvation.

A few weeks ago I was with my friend Claire, and she talked about the Kingdom exchange rate. When we bring God our despair, he gives us hope. When we bring death, he gives us life. When we bring shame, he gives us grace and freedom. That is an exchange rate that I want to continue to experience in my life. This is an exchange rate that we don’t deserve, yet it’s just who Jesus is.

Crawford Lorrits acknowledges this Kingdom exchange rate in one of his books. He says “Weakness and shame comes in all shapes and sizes – broken relationships, strong temptations, depression, tragic loss, feelings of inadequacy, mistreatment. It really doesn’t make any difference what it is. The question is: What do you do with your weaknesses, failures, and wounds? Do you hand them over to God in exchange for His grace and strength, or do you wallow in self-pity, allowing the enemy of your soul to immobilize you?”

What do you do with your weaknesses, failures, and wounds? Do you carry them on your own? Or are you like this woman, confident and desperate enough to give them to Jesus and exchange them for the things that only he can give?

I have been a recipient of the Kingdom exchange rate. And I relate to the woman in this story, not because I have a physical illness. But because I also spent years carrying deep shame.

I grew up here in Bloomington, and I grew up going to this church. I had a wonderful home life – everything that would make a happy, healthy home. Loving parents, lots of activities, I did well in school. I had a foundational relationship with Jesus – I was active here in the church, I went to church camp each summer. I actually had a pretty sheltered and privileged life when I was growing up.

It wasn't really until I headed out of my safe and sheltered home when the train fell off the tracks. I moved away for college, and the next few years were a blur of a million poor choices. I was the life of the party and it wasn't a good party. I now look back and refer to that time in my life as my 5 years far from God. It wasn't just that I wasn't pursuing God, I was actively turning away from Him. I had enough of a foundational faith that I knew the life I was living wasn't good, it wasn't right, it wasn't honoring him. So I actually had to work to ignore any pull towards Him.

Thankfully those 5 years were just that – a season in my life. There were a few specific things that pulled me out of that time. Moving back home and away from that environment, getting married, having our oldest son, and getting connected again to this church. And since that time in my life the train has, for the most part, stayed on the tracks.

But the reason I connect with the woman in this story is because it has taken me every part of a decade to work through the shame, the painful humiliation, that those 5 years far from God brought to me. And while I have mostly worked through that shame and I can confidently say that I am a daughter of the King, there are still moments that it rears its ugly head.

I know Shawn said it last week when he was sharing some things that he didn't want to share, and I'll say it again. I don't share this story because I want to. In fact, I'd prefer not to, I tried not to. Because do you remember what shame fears most? Being seen. And there's no better way to be seen than to stand in front of a sanctuary full of people and share this part of my

story. But it felt disobedient to get on this platform today and preach about the redeeming love of Jesus and to leave this part out.

My story and the story of this woman in scripture are similar. We both experienced years of shame, of wanting to hide part of who we are. But we also experienced healing in similar ways. While hers was a physical healing, she was also fully restored when her shame was brought out into the light.

I'll never forget the moment years ago when I could feel God begin to restore my soul and redeem my story. It was about 6 years ago, working in ministry, still wondering if I am worthy enough to do this job, hiding my internal struggle with shame and not feeling good enough for this calling when I was asked to meet a 19 year old girl for coffee. She had reached out to the church and was looking for a mentor, someone to walk with her, answer some questions. I walked into our coffee meeting, and this young woman just word vomited all of the hard, wrong choices she was making and how they were making her feel and she just knew there had to be something more.

I sat across from this young woman and instead of saying "I bet that's hard", I was able to look at her and say, "I know exactly what you're feeling." I can't tell you how seen I felt in that moment. And not by her, but by God. It was like he was looking at me in front of a crowd of people and saying to me "Daughter, your faith has healed you, go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

God was **USING** my 5 years far from Him, redeeming those million bad choices, and allowing me to use my story to share the good news of Jesus with this young woman. My suffering, my years of shame, they were being used for His glory and His good. God is really good at using the things that we're ashamed by.

And here's what I've learned. Faith is not the absence of shame. Faith is the courage to reach for Jesus in spite of your shame. Faith is a willingness to keep moving and allow God to redeem your shame.

In this series we're walking through the steps of recovery. Last week we spent time in step 1 - We admit we are powerless over our addictions, brokenness and sinful patterns—that in our own power our lives are unmanageable.

Step 2, and what the Scripture today teaches us, is BELIEF. We come to believe that God is the only one whose power can fully restore. This step is about belief – believing that I can't, that we can't, but Jesus can. He can restore.

The woman who was bleeding for 12 years had tried everything. And through years of not being healed or restored, there were things that she did NOT believe. She no longer believed that doctors could heal her, or that her money would buy the right medical help, or that she could manage the symptoms, or that she could hide the symptoms and experience community.

At that point, her belief in Jesus came from sheer desperation. Because the only thing she DID believe was that she had no other option. She believed that God was the only thing left and that He would do what she could not. Her belief didn't begin with confidence in herself—it began with confidence in who Jesus is.

There are many things that I hope you're learning and hearing as we are working through this Scripture. But I want to highlight three things.

To Jesus, no one is more important than you. Do you remember Jairus, from the beginning of this passage? Jairus was a respected religious leader, and Jesus was on the way to his house when all of this happened with the woman who was bleeding. And if you keep reading this passage, you'll read the rest of the story about Jairus's daughter. The healing of this broken, unclean, ashamed woman is placed in the middle of the story of a religious leader. To me it shows that Jesus sees each of us equally. Marginalized people are treated the same as respected leaders. None of us are an interruption to him. To Jesus, no one is more important than you.

For Jesus, your faith does not have to be polished. We see in this interaction that Jesus does not have expectations on our faith. We can infer from this Scripture that Jesus did not require the woman's belief to be fully formed, or theologically sound, or loud. He healed her before she ever spoke a word, and he said, "your faith has healed you." It can be messy, growing, learning, faith. It

just comes down to acknowledging that we cannot restore ourselves, but believing that He can.

Because of Jesus, you can be confident in who HE says you are. In this passage, the woman who was trying to not be seen by others was seen by Jesus. Being seen by Him was the only thing that mattered. She was not too far gone, to unclean, to worthless for Jesus. None of us are defined by our past, or our missteps, or our bad decisions. I spent the first several years of ministry thinking that maybe God had the wrong person for the job, that I wasn't worthy of sharing the gospel with others. But as He redeemed my story I became more confident in who HE says I am. Both myself and the woman in this story today are a reminder to all of us that no one is disqualified from being used by God.

Now, I don't know what's going on in your life. I don't know if you're also struggling with shame. Or maybe you're struggling with pride, or loneliness, or addiction. Whatever it is, Jesus' power and tenderness is available to you. His Kingdom exchange rate is available to you, in the same way that it was for the woman in this passage. She brought pain and he gave her healing, she brought rejection and he called her daughter. She brought shame and he gave her freedom. That exchange rate, it is available to you.

All you need is belief that God is the only one whose power can fully restore.

PICTURE ON THE SCREEN

This painting is in a museum in Israel. I can't hardly look at it without it bringing tears to my eyes. I look at that woman's hand reaching through the crowd, quietly, desperately, from behind. And I'm reminded that we don't have to understand all of God's power to believe in it. We don't have to feel confident. We don't have to feel unashamed in order to be restored. We only have to believe that Jesus can do what we cannot.

You don't have to choose shame. You can choose Jesus and the freedom that He brings. All you have to do is reach out for the hem of his garment, and he will exchange your hurt, your shame, your sin, for healing, hope, and salvation.

“Daughter. Sons. Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

RESPONSE TIME & PRAYER