

McCabe United Methodist Church
The Desperate Woman!
Mark 5:21-34: July 13 & 14, 2013
Pastor Rick Fossum

Have you ever been in a desperate spot? Have you ever been painted into a corner by something you did or someone did to you and you didn't know how to get out?

Several years ago, I was driving my car back to West Fargo where we were living. The timing belt in my car broke. Now, at the time, I didn't know a timing belt from a spare tire. I just sat there on the side of I-94 wondering what I should do. I wasn't desperately, desperate, but I was headed there. This was in the days before cell phones. Finally, I walked to a nearby rest area (about a 2 or 3 mile walk) made a phone call and help was on the way.

It wasn't a big deal, but it was a taste of desperation. Have you ever been there? I can remember when my dad died. He was only fifty-one years old. He was in the hospital and the doctor's last words to my family were these: **"I'm sorry. There isn't anything more we can do?"**

Desperation is when we run out of options. Desperation is when we're down to our last dime and we don't know where the next one will come from. Again, have you been there?

Once, there was this woman. We don't know her name. The Bible doesn't tell us. Some people call her the *'bleeding woman'* while some others call her the *'hemorrhaging woman'*. Today, I'm just going to call her the *'desperate woman'*.

This is her story. One day, Jesus was walking to the house of Jairus. Jairus was one of the leaders of the local synagogue. His daughter was dying. He had tried everything possible to help her. Finally, as a last resort, he begged Jesus to come to his home and lay his hands on his daughter so that she might be healed and live.

It wasn't easy for Jairus. A synagogue leader asking Jesus for help was unthinkable. Jesus had been the proverbial pain in the side for all Jewish religious leaders including Jairus. He was questioning and challenging Jewish customs and traditions and laws and they didn't like it. But, you do desperate things when you need to like when you have a daughter who is dying.

And so Jesus was walking to the home of Jairus, the synagogue leader. A crowd was following Jesus as he walked. It was a big crowd.

The *'desperate woman'* was part of this crowd. I want you to picture her if you can. Maybe you know someone like her. Maybe her story is similar to your story.

The *'desperate woman'* was considered unclean according to Jewish law. The Bible tells us that she had been hemorrhaging or bleeding for twelve years. According to the law, once a woman stops hemorrhaging, she could purify herself and all would be well. She would be clean.

The problem for the *'desperate woman'* was this: the bleeding never stopped. She couldn't purify herself until it did stop.

Which made the *'desperate woman'* an outcast. She was an outcast in her own town. She was an outcast to her husband. She was an outcast to her own children and friends. She didn't have anybody.

The Bible tells us that this *'desperate woman'* had spent all her money trying to get clean. She had been to many doctors and received many promises to help, but they couldn't help. They didn't know how.

The worst part was this: Whenever she was around other people . . . people who were clean . . . she had to say in a loud voice. **"I'm unclean. I'm unclean. I'm unclean."** She had to say this according to Jewish law. It was a warning. She was warning people: **"Here I come. Stay away from me. Don't touch me unless you want to catch what I have and become unclean yourself!"**

This is what it was like for our *'desperate woman'* for twelve long years. For twelve long and lonely years her only companions were a few lepers who were also unclean who lived nearby.

And so each morning this *'desperate woman'* would wake up hoping, it was all she had left, hoping that this might be the day when she gets healed. But nothing happened. Day after day, nothing ever happened.

The *'desperate woman'* knew all about desperation, didn't she?

She isn't the only person who knows desperation. Casey was his name. He started drinking way too young. He couldn't stop. He wanted to. He tried getting help several times, but he couldn't stop. He lost everything including his family, his home, and his bright future.

Delores was going through a divorce not of her own choosing. Her husband had *'fell out of love with her'* as he described it. She was depressed. She didn't know why

it happened? She didn't know what to do.

And I can picture a young couple standing in a cemetery. It was a sunny, summer morning. It was in the children's section of the cemetery. The couple were mourning and grieving the loss of their infant daughter. They had waited a long time for the wife to get pregnant. And now, they'd never have the chance to know their daughter.

And then, there was Ron. Ron lost his job. The company said something about down-sizing. His job wasn't needed anymore. They told him he could take his twenty years of faithful and loyal service and leave.

These are just a few faces of desperation just like the face of our '*desperate woman*'. Maybe you do know someone like her?

But then, one day, she heard about a man named Jesus. She didn't know him personally. She had no idea who he was or what he did. After all, her mind had been on other things during the past twelve years. Like, how to get well.

But, she heard about him. Someone told her that Jesus heals people. They didn't know how he did it, but they said he could make the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and maybe . . . just maybe help desperate people like her.

She was in the crowd that day. Her plan was simple. All she wanted to do was to touch Jesus. In her mind, just touching him would be enough. And so she slowly made her way through the crowd being careful not to touch anyone.

Finally, she could see Jesus. She walked a little closer, reached out her hand and touched the jacket he was wearing.

We don't know what she was expecting to happen, but pretty sure she had the surprise of her life. Immediately, the Bible tells us, her bleeding stopped and she felt free! Free from her suffering. Free from her bleeding. Free from being unclean. Free from being an outcast.

Jesus stopped and looked around. He realized that someone had received some of his power and he wanted to know who. "**Who touched me,**" he asked?

The '*desperate woman*', who wasn't desperate anymore, fell at his feet, trembling and told him the truth.

"Daughter," Jesus said, **"your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be**

freed from your suffering.”

There is a lesson in this story for us. Do you know what it is? In life, both good and bad things happen to us. We get sick. We have accidents. We lose our jobs. We lose loved ones. We get divorces.

In the middle of everything that happens to us . . . both the good and the bad things . . . there is Jesus Christ. He has the power to help us in every part of life.

What do you expect from Jesus? When you came to church today, did you expect to come face to face with the living Christ? When you pray, do you expect your prayers to be answered? When you read your Bible, do you expect to hear the living word of God? When you cry out for help, do you expect the power of Jesus to help you?

Somebody once said, “**Jesus is either Lord of all, or he’s not Lord at all.**” It’s a choice we each have to make. What choice do you make today?

Our last hymn today is a hymn written for desperate people. And maybe it’s written for you and me. Please turn to page 367 and read the two verses with me.

1. Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and shame, then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same. He touched me, O he touched me, and O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

2. Since I met this blessed Savior, since he cleansed and made me whole, I will never cease to praise him; I'll shout it while eternity rolls. He touched me, O he touched me, and O the joy that floods my soul! Something happened, and now I know, he touched me and made me whole.

May the hand of Jesus touch you this day.