

"Living With Dead People"

Last week I spoke to you about knowing who Jesus really is: He is the son of the Most High, the One who embodies the Sovereign of the universe. In knowing him for who he really is, we come to know who we are. Our true identity is found in his presence, because He is one with our Heavenly Maker. Jesus knew who He was, knew where He was going, and knew what He was to accomplish. These are for us to know as well, about ourselves, as we live with him.

Two more illustrations describe this for us. The first concerns a little girl who was very ill and her father, a leader of the synagogue, came to plead for Jesus to come to her. Each synagogue had a council of experienced and respected men. Over these was a president, who was termed the ruler of the synagogue.

Sometimes there was more than one ruler in a synagogue. This ruler of a synagogue came to Jesus with a critical problem: the mortal illness of his daughter; a problem that presumably could not be handled by the leaders of the synagogue. Though he was a person of authority, this man threw himself at the feet of Jesus, believing him to be a great prophet, and man of God; though he might not know that he was the Messiah, and truly God. He showed great reverence and respect to him, gave him homage, at least in a civil way, though he might not adore him as God.¹

Yet Jesus knew who he was. He went with the ruler of the synagogue. "He did not let anyone follow him" except The Rock and The Sons of Thunder, that is, "Peter, James and John the brother of James." (When St. Mark wrote, not long after our Lord's ascension, the memory of St. James, lately beheaded, was so fresh, that his name was more known than that of John himself.²) He took with him only believers and encouragers, not allowing discouragement to get a foothold. Sometimes, that is just the way it is in your own walk with Jesus. You must have firm believers around you; people who won't assail you with doubts and questions that you know are in your own heart.

On the way, they were interrupted. Jesus was surrounded by a throng of people from other places who had followed him to this town. There were those who had before attended on his ministry in these parts, and had seen his miracles (as the casting out of an unclean spirit from a man, healing the centurion's servant, curing the man sick of the palsy, and Simon's wife's mother of a fever, and a man that had a withered hand). Add to these the curious and hopeful of the town and you will see why it says they pressed around him so that he could not see who touched him.

It says his cloak was touched by a woman who had had a flow of blood for over twelve years. She had spent all her money on doctors, but to no avail. Anyone with her sickness was considered cursed. She was not allowed to touch anyone, and if anyone touched her, he was unclean, and had to isolate himself for eight days. For people living around her, she was as good as dead. That is why she came to Jesus from behind. She could not come from the front; they would have chased her away as if she were an evil spirit, one not belonging to this world. Maybe she came to Jesus as a last resort - she'd tried everything and everyone else. That's how it often is with people - they come to Him after trying everything else; they've put off approaching Him for as long as they could. It is

¹John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Mark 5:22.

²Ibid, Mark 5:37.

usually only when someone has been humbled enough by his/her own inability to cope, to be healed, to overcome, that they will come to Jesus for help.

You could liken this woman's malady to the disease of sin that afflicts all humans. That sin is like a pollution, of a defiling nature, that infects the whole person, body, mind and spirit, making us unclean in the sight of God. This disease makes us unfit for the company of saints in heaven, and it is a communicable disease liable to corrupt morals and character on earth. As this woman's disease was long-standing and stubborn, so is the disease of sin, indeed it is much worse. Sin is brought into the world with humans and is natural to us, and cannot be removed by ordinary, natural methods. God it is who, with supernatural power and grace, finds his people and quickens, sanctifies, and cleanses them.

She touched Jesus' cloak, and while touching him a power went out of him into her and she was healed; brought to full life. (See Ezekiel 16:6).

Even as the woman touched the hem of his robe, a sinner may lay hold on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and the garments of his salvation. As Bible scholar John Gill says, such a one who is aware of his/her need for cleansing from sin may reason that if he/she can by faith lay hold of Christ's goodness and strength, even if only by a touch, then he/she will find solace. So, this sinner thinks, I will venture close to Jesus, and though he may slay me, I will trust in him; I will throw off my own filthy rags of righteousness, and He shall be my salvation. A sinner such as this finds, as the woman afterwards did, "a perfect cure, cleansing from all sin, a free and full forgiveness of it, and complete justification from it."³

When that woman's bleeding stopped, she was also free to rejoin society, to heal relationships, and to begin true living. That is how it is with one sinner who finds healing and salvation in Christ: he/she is freed to repair relationships and begin living, not just for self, but also for others and for Jesus.

When she touched his garment Jesus was "immediately aware that power had gone forth" from himself. He knew all things in His divine nature and so this healing was not done without his will. There was an internal, essential virtue in Christ to cure diseases; not derived from another, or exercised under another's influence; but his own nature and power. The apostles of Christ cured diseases, but not by their own power and holiness, but in the name of Christ, and by power derived and received from him. The same holds true with respect to healing spiritual diseases: Christ has a power within to forgive all trespasses; and virtue may be said to go out of him to this purpose, when it is his will to make application of pardoning mercy to his people; which requires an exertion of power, as well as a display of grace.⁴

While Jesus was still speaking to this lady some men from the house came to announce that the little girl was dead. What was Jesus' reaction? It says he ignored what they said. Was he callous, unmoved, or indifferent, to this tragic news? Again, he knew who he was, and what he was to accomplish. So, when Jesus arrived at the house, all the little girl's relatives said it was too late; she was dead. They all laughed at him when he said, she's only asleep. Maybe some thought he was cruel to say such a thing. They just continued on with their funeral preparations. He ordered them all outside, and went in only with the girl's parents and those he called with him, Peter, James and John. Jesus took the little girl by the hand and ordered her to get up. She arose.

³John Gill, *Exposition of the Bible*.

⁴Ibid

Was the girl raised from the dead? Was it resurrection? Or was she in a coma? Was it resuscitation? We cannot know, but it is clear that this event is an encouragement to belief in the resurrection of all true believers.

Jesus commanded that something to eat should be given the girl. It is evidence that she was really alive and a lesson that when either natural or spiritual life is restored, even by immediate miracle, all proper means are to be used in order to preserve it.

Additionally, he strictly ordered them to tell no one about this. Why? This sort of thing could not be kept quiet for long. Most likely Jesus wanted to avoid every appearance of vain glory and prevent too great a crowd from gathering.⁵ Perhaps he did not want to stir up the Scribes and Pharisees against him, he having some other work to do; and a more full manifestation of him being reserved for another time, to be done in another way. He knew who he was, where he was going what he was to accomplish

These two illustrations are simple enough for us to understand and share. Aren't we too surrounded by living people who seem to be dead? Or should we say people who seem to be living but are really dead? Sometimes, you and I could confess that we too are dead, though we appear to be living. Is there a place in your life that makes you dead? That needs His touch? (Think of the elderly who have little to do, or little to live on. Think of the sick who have little hope for healing. The very busy, upwardly mobile, who run from the loneliness inside. There are young adults, who search for direction and purpose in life. There are families who yearn for togetherness and genuine love.) He has the power to make life more than just survival. Can't we allow His power to repair our lives? Can't we share with others the power we find in Christ? Can't they also come to know him, and know what he can accomplish in their lives?

God, whom we believe raised Jesus from the dead, works through the Risen One to restore life and to provide salvation also to us and to all who believe in Jesus our Lord. [We note the progression to greater miracles of restoration to life in the later Gospels Luke and John, for in them the man had been dead for a day at Nain and for several days at Bethany.] It is for us to study the Scriptures within their life situation, and then to proclaim them and their messages from God in our life situations. Let us do this with confidence. With Him we can know who we are, where we are going, and what we are to accomplish.

We, the ones bearing his name, must let him touch all the places in our living that need true life. We need not be afraid. We, the ones bearing his name, must join him in raising others to life. We need not be afraid. We, the ones who bear Christ's name, have been given his Spirit to flow through us to others. Come to Him, receive Him, live with Him.⁶

⁵John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, Mark 5:43*.

⁶See Joseph G. Donders, *Beyond Jesus*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 173.