

Streetsville United Church
Sunday, June 28, 2009
Rev. John Tapscott

"THE FAITH THAT RELEASES POWER"

Mark 5:30-34

For two thousand years, Jesus of Nazareth has been easily the most popular and fascinating figure in world history. Michael Jackson, God rest his soul, was a popular figure of our time, but eventually his name and fame will fade away. But Jesus' popularity continues to grow. There is a vast number of recent books about the person and the meaning of Jesus. No other figure in history has ever had or will ever have the attractive power of Jesus Christ. And Jesus is not just a figure of past history, but the risen and living Lord. In him the very power of God is made available to the world today. But how do we access that power? How does the power of Jesus Christ get released in our lives and in the church?

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus was tremendously popular. Now not among the elite Jewish leaders. We know what those leaders along with the Romans eventually did to him. But Jesus always had a great following among the common people. Mark 5 tells us that great crowds gathered around Jesus as he got off a boat on the Jewish side of Galilee. But no matter how big the crowd, Jesus always had time for the individuals who came to him. So a leader of the synagogue named Jairus came to Jesus and fell at his feet. He begged Jesus to come and heal his daughter who was at the point of death. As he went with Jairus a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

In that crowd was a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years and was getting worse. Medical care had failed. She had heard of Jesus and knew that if she could only touch his clothes she would be made well. So somehow she made her way through all the people and touched the hem of his garment. Immediately she was healed of her disease. Jesus knew that power had gone forth from him, and he turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" The disciples were incredulous. "Who touched your clothes? Hundreds of people are here, Jesus. It could have been anyone." But Jesus knew that someone had touched him with faith and that power had gone forth from him. He looked around to see who had done it. And the woman came before him with fear and trembling, knelt before him and told him what had happened. And Jesus pronounced words of blessing which not only confirmed her healing but overcame her fear, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." The woman's faith had released Jesus'

power in her life. And it's true for us, too. This is the answer to the question I asked above. Faith releases Jesus' power in our lives. Let's think about the faith that releases divine power in us and in the church.

First of all, it is faith in Jesus himself.

The woman said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well. "His clothes". Her faith was directed towards Jesus and given to him alone. He was the centre and the focus of her faith.

Sometimes people say, "I have a great faith," but never say what that faith is in. Sometimes it seems as if they have great faith in their own faith. But faith in the New testament is the Greek word "pistis" which means faith in a person. Do you remember how Jesus said to the disciples during their boat ride on the stormy seas. "Where is your faith?" In other words, "What is your faith in? Where have you put your faith and trust?" And of course the faith which the New Testament invites us to is faith in Jesus.

There was a famous basketball player named Larry Bird who played for the Boston Celtics a generation ago. It's said that the Celitcs game plan in the last two minutes of each game was "Give the ball to Larry and follow him." Christian faith is, in every circumstance, giving the ball to Jesus and following him.

For it is faith in Jesus that releases his power in our lives. It's much better to have a mustard seed of faith in Christ than a truckload of the wrong faith. For the Bible shows us that lack of faith prevents the release of Jesus' power. Later, when Jesus went in to raise up Jairus' daughter, He took with him just those whom he knew had faith. If any unbelief had been in that little girl's room, Jesus' could not have raised her up.. And in chapter 6 of Mark we read that Jesus went up to his hometown but the people rejected him, thinking this fellow they knew so well was getting too big for his britches. And listen to this sentence. "He could no mighty work there...because of their unbelief." Faith in Jesus releases his power into our lives while unbelief blocks the release of that power.

You might also notice that the woman's faith in Jesus had some determination in it. She was determined to touch the hem of his garment. She wouldn't let the crowd or anyone else block her way. She just focussed on Jesus and got past the obstacles to touch the hem of his garment. The faith that releases power in our lives sees past obstacles; it doesn't let sceptics deter you, or even your own doubts discourage you. It just keeps focussing on Jesus and on making contact with him. Now there is much in the world that would discourage us from coming to Jesus or cause doubts to rise in our minds. But

there's nothing here in this place. Here you are free to reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Here you can reach out to touch and to be touched by the love and grace of Almighty God. So this is the first thing I want you to notice. Yes, faith releases Jesus power' in our lives. But just not any kind of faith - faith that is given to Jesus himself.

Notice secondly, that faith releases Jesus' power in our lives. Jesus' power. Divine power. God's power. And that's important.

You know we sometimes hear some New Age types say, "Just trust in yourself and release the power inside of you." I heard a New Age guru on TV not long ago say this. "Look inside yourself; all you need is there within you." The problem is that whatever power you release by looking to yourself is insufficient for your needs. So we first look outside of ourselves to Jesus in faith and then his power flows to us and is released in us. And it's his power we need.

Now in this woman's case, faith released Jesus' power to heal her from an embarrassing and debilitating disease. He restored her to health again and to her place in the community. Sometimes healing like that happens when Jesus' power is set loose in our lives. And certainly it will happen in the life to come. I think we need to keep in mind that Jesus' miracles are a precursor, a foretaste of what is to come in God's Kingdom for all of us. When I go into nursing homes to visit, I often see people that have lost so much, sometimes their mental and physical abilities, their memories. Often they've lost spouses and friends and family contacts. It's sad but then I remind myself that everything they and we lose here on earth will be restored by God in the life to come. Truthfully, I don't know how we could cope with life here without believing in heaven. Healing by Jesus' power is certainly possible here, but it is certain in the age to come.

But other things may happen here and now as faith releases Jesus' power in our lives. Jesus' power may enable you to forgive or to be reconciled with someone from whom you are estranged. Jesus' power can enable us to win victory over temptation. Jesus' power can help us to become like Jesus himself, which is the goal of Christian living. Jesus' power can enable you to face challenging situations with courage and to do difficult things and to have peace in the storms of life. The power of Jesus saves your soul from sin and death and brings you the calm of sin forgiven. Jesus' resurrection power will raise us from death to life on the last day. Faith in Jesus releases Jesus' power in your life. All you need to do is make that faith connection.

Now you might wonder - **how do we get this faith that releases Jesus' power in our lives? Where do we get the faith that causes us to reach out and touch his garment?**

Well, look at where the woman's faith came from. Mark says that when "she heard the reports about Jesus...she came up behind him and touched his garments." Her faith started to grow when she heard reports about Jesus. Just as Jesus is the source of power, so he is the source of the faith that releases power within us. Hebrews calls him "the author and finisher of our faith."

Now there is a mystery about how one comes to faith, why some do and some don't. "The Spirit blows where he chooses..." But if you have faith it's because at some point you heard reports of Jesus. and the Holy Spirit started to work in your heart and caused faith in Him to take hold and grow.

On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people came to faith. And it all started when Peter stood before a great crowd in Jerusalem and told them about "this Jesus whom you crucified, but God raised him up and made him both Lord and Christ...Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...and there were added that day about three thousand souls." Paul writes in Romans, "Faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes from the preaching of Christ."

The faith which releases Jesus' power in us comes from hearing the reports about Jesus. And faith is renewed in us every time we hear the old, old story. That gives us a good idea as to what the church's mission is, doesn't it? It is to spread the reports of Jesus, to broadcast his story recorded in Scripture. We are his witnesses, telling what he has done for the world and what he is doing in us and through us and among us now. Oh, there are many ways of doing it, preaching, teaching, service and outreach, but that's what we're here for. That's why we support the church and help to keep it going and growing. Our God-given mission in this community is to proclaim the story of Jesus so that many may come to know that "he is the Christ, the Son of God and that so believing people may have life and hope in his name." And the church which is in touch with Jesus receives power for this mission.

Mark tells us, 'She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garments, thinking "if I touch even his garments, I shall be made well." Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned around and said, "Who touched my garments?...and he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace; and be healed of your disease.'" As you hear the story of Jesus today the Holy Spirit may be working the miracle of faith in you, perhaps for the first time. Or perhaps he is rekindling your faith in Jesus. But whatever the case, faith comes so you can reach out to Jesus and receive his power. Faith releases Jesus' power in us and among us.