

In Pursuit of God

Mark 5:25-34

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Introduction:

I was asking the Lord what He wanted me to speak about and He clearly gave me this morning's subject. I don't believe that the Lord wants us to be passive in our approach to Him and in the way that we practise our faith. I think that very often people come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and then realising the benefits of the Kingdom think that the Kingdom is for them rather than for the King. To think this way is to engender passivity in our walk- God really wants us to go after Him with everything that we possess. This requires a paradigm shift in the way that we think. We need to overcome the passivity in us and radically change the way that we think if we are to be a NT church. God did not save us for ourselves but saved us for Himself. I think that this is at the heart of radical Christianity and what the early NT church really understood.

I am not interested in status quo Christianity. I am interested in a form of Christianity that brings radical life changing experiences to the people that it touches. Personal revival must occur before the people around us are revived. The church must be revived before it can revive a community. The church must be in active pursuit of God, His will, His purpose, His righteousness before it can touch a community. I want to develop this theme of pursuing God this morning. Maybe a sceptic or tow might say, "Don't we have the Holy Spirit within us?" If we have God within then surely there is no need to pursue Him!

Let me say that to pursue God is to recognise that I am not content with the way things are, and that I want more from Him as far as His will and intent for the kingdom is concerned.

1. Pursuit is essential:

When we want something from the Lord then it is mandatory that we press in to Him to receive those things wether they be for others or for ourselves. This requires activity on our part. Let's look at a familiar passage of Scripture.

Read Mark 5:25-34.

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came 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 affliction."

This woman knew that there was more in life than what she was currently experiencing. She knew that what she needed to her life situation could be found in no other than Jesus. She came up with a strategy that if she could only touch His clothes then she would have what she needed. What precipitated that? We don't read of any others to this point of time saying that if only they could touch the hem of His garment that they would be made well. But the results that this woman received changed the whole way that people who knew of Jesus approached Him for healing. She started a "touch the hem of his garment" movement.

Mark 6:56 *Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.*

Her pursuit of Jesus changed the way that others saw Him and caused them to believe that if they too could touch the hem of His garment then they too could receive His healing power.

2. Pursuit takes us beyond the traditional:

We need to understand here that this woman was desperate. How desperate are we today that we receive the power of God for our ailments. She had wasted all of her possessions chasing what she needed according to the acceptable traditions of her forefathers without success. She needed to come to the end of herself and to the end of all of her natural resources before she could approach Jesus and be healed. So it is with us- we need to come to the end of ourselves, our strategies, our desires, our concepts our beliefs to the way God is going to move....then like the woman in this story we might hear what he has to say and then receive from Him.

There were many given remedies for her affliction in her day that the physicians resorted to. The Talmud gives no fewer than eleven different remedies. Some are astringents and others are tonics; some however are just plain superstitions e.g. like the carrying of a barley corn that has been found in the dung of a white female ass. The natural remedies whilst not toxic in themselves simply did not work and were not going to work. The question is, "Are we too bound by the superstitions of our forefathers?" Are we locked into the way that God has previously moved in times gone by and are we without a revelation of what it is that He wants to do right now. I believe this woman heard from God and yet her approach was governed by the mores of her day. She knew that she could not disclose her condition publicly for according to the Levitical law she was unclean and as an unclean person she was prohibited from appearing in public and from attending the temple to worship. Her condition made her a social outcast.

Lev. 15:25. *'If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean.*

She was desperate. How desperate are we to go beyond our natural resources and social acceptability to believe God that He is capable of meeting our needs? We know it but are we prepared to press through the crowd?

3. Pursuit brings results:

Jesus neither rebuked this woman for breaking the Law nor for touching Him whilst prohibited by the Law for doing so. He saw the intent of her heart. He knew the inner desperation that must have brought her to that point. He also knew what she needed. There is absolutely no condemnation here.

The thing that we learn here is that when we pursue Jesus to touch Him something of His power and grace leaves Him and we receive the benefit of it. The disciples had no comprehension of what had occurred- they did not have the same desperation within them and so were not aware of the power or grace that had emanated from Jesus.

Mark 5:30,31. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"

But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

They were ignorant of this heavenly transaction occurring. They saw only the crowd and not the individual within the crowd. Jesus knew that He had power leave Him. I don't think it would have been hard to discern who it was that had touched Jesus in the crowd that day, do you? There would have been no word of knowledge required here. The smile on the face would have been the greatest give away of all time. The thing is that she could not have announced it because she should not have been where she was in her condition. Her momentary smile changed to fear and then to confession as she relayed all to Jesus. But it didn't matter her faith won the day.... **v34** ...*your faith has made you well...* Jesus said.

The fact is that we too like the disciples can be looking at the crowd and not for the individual. To be focused this way makes us miss what is happening in the spiritual realm. We need to be attuned to the Spirit of God and His activity.

We need to exercise our faith in the pursuit of God and see Him at work just not in our lives but in the life of those in the community around us.

Conclusion:

- Don't be passive
- Overcome the traditions of men
- Pursue God
- Exercise faith
- Don't give up!

Questions

1. What do you think is meant by the kingdom not being for us but being for the King?
2. Why do you suppose that the church needs to be revived before the community can be revived?

3. What can our pursuit of Jesus do for others?
4. Can you identify any way that you might be bound by tradition? What do you suppose that you can do about it? Is it just traditions that can stop a person in their pursuit of God?
5. What did desperate pursuit achieve that passivity would never have done for this woman?