



Peace in the Middle of a Pandemic – Part 4

You Have My Attention

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do, or you have the notes you can download from online—I invite you to open with me to Mark 5. While you’re turning, I’ll just mention that in addition to this wound on my head—which is continuing to recover well by God’s grace—I’m wearing this “Care Team” t-shirt again this week to remind you to continue to pray as we serve for the spread of God’s grace across our city during these days—and to give toward that end. Not gathering physically has certainly affected our offerings. So let me encourage you to give as you’re able to online or through the mail.

Here are some pictures of the work our church family has been doing this last week in our city. Of course, the recommendations regarding masks came out late this week and we’ll be exploring creative means for that. We want to protect everyone in as much as possible.

Over the last couple of weeks, you have spent over 800 volunteer hours distributing thousands of boxes across our city. Every box feeds a family for a number of days, plus every box includes an explanation of the gospel and an invitation to join us online. So welcome to those of you who may have joined us that way.



And thanks to all of those in our church family who have come by the building here at Tysons to drop off food at our donation center. Please keep those goods coming. You can find all the information on our website about what goods are needed, items you can bring and how you can serve. Just follow the links on the COVID-19 page.



Let me clarify that obviously not everybody can or should be doing this work. But this is where I want to encourage and challenge every single person in the sound of my voice right now who knows Jesus to invite someone you know who doesn't know Jesus to be part of our online gathering next week for Easter. Invite as many people as possible, but focus on at least one whom you are praying for every day.

This Friday we're going to have a Good Friday gathering online. I'm really looking forward to this. Everyone leading that gathering will be doing so from their homes, including myself, Lord willing. We will start at 6:30 p.m. and are going to reflect on the cross and Jesus' suffering, then we're going to pray specifically for God to draw many people to Jesus next Sunday.

I'm praying that would happen today, too. Ever since I started studying this passage we're about to look at, I have been looking forward to this moment and praying that many people today might see for the first time the depth of Jesus' love for you and that you might put your faith in Him. I've also prayed for those of you who know Jesus, that you would encounter Him in a fresh way in the next few minutes. This passage is a potent picture of Jesus' personal love for you and me.

I really just want to focus on you today. I want to speak directly to you, as best as I can from where I'm standing right now, to you wherever you are sitting right now—whether here in Metro DC or some other state or country in the world. I want us all to picture this like a personal conversation. I want to read this story to you that is, in almost a frightening way, so applicable to what is happening in the world right now. I want to personally show you four truths that I hope you will receive in your heart and mind, holding them tightly during these days. All four of these truths are going to be aimed at you individually. They're not just for us generally, because that's what the story is about. It's about Jesus' love, not just for the many, but Jesus' love for each of us.

This story is in Mark 5, beginning in verse 21. The Bible says, *"And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side..."* Remember, Jesus had left the crowd at the end of Mark 4 and had crossed to the other side in a boat. In the middle of that journey, a massive storm arose and Jesus stilled it. Then He delivered a demon-possessed man, then crosses back where *"a great crowd gathered about him."*

So the same crowd Jesus had left before was now waiting for Him to return. *“And he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name...”* The rulers of the synagogue were some of the most respected and revered people in society in that day. Picture someone very well-known and well-respected by the crowd. He comes up to Jesus, *“...and seeing him, he fell at his feet.”*

Now, that would have been shocking, because Jesus was not even welcomed by religious leaders at this point. So for this respected religious leader to come up and fall down prostrate before Jesus would have taken away everybody’s breath in the crowd. Jairus then *“implored [Jesus] earnestly.”* Why? Because he said, *“My little daughter...”*—we find out later she was 12 years old and his only daughter—*“is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”*

This man has a daughter who is dying. At any moment, she could die. Yet he believes without question—there’s no doubt in his mind—that Jesus can save his daughter’s life. *“Come, lay Your hands on her so she will be made well and will live. Come as quickly as You can.”* And Jesus went with him.

Keep in mind, this is why the crowds were flocking to Jesus like this. Back in Mark 1:33-34, when Jesus was staying at a house, the Bible says, *“The whole city was gathered together at the door.”* Why? Because Jesus was healing *“many who were sick with various diseases.”* The crowds knew Jesus had the power to make people well. Imagine one physician right now with a cure for this disease. Everybody would be running to see him.

Mark 5:24 states, *“a great crowd followed him and thronged about him.”* You have all these people who are surrounding Jesus and He’s walking through them quickly on his way to a little girl who is at the point of death. It’s urgent. *“And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.”*

Now, let’s pause here and think about this woman. She has “hurt” written all over her life, in a number of ways. She’s had a painful, unstoppable bleeding problem for 12 years—for the entire time this other little girl has been alive. So she is physically hurting. She is physically in pain, and she has *“suffered much under many physicians.”* In other words, she has a physical illness for which there is no cure. Does that sound familiar?

Then, as if the daily pain, weakness and hurt associated with that were not enough, she was hurting not just physically, but spiritually because Jewish law said she was ceremonially unclean, which meant she could not go to the temple for worship or go to the synagogue. In other words, she was a spiritual outcast, deemed too dirty for worship. This not only had spiritual ramifications, but this had massive social ramifications, which means she was also hurting socially.

Put yourself in her shoes. Basically, if you were deemed unclean, you could not even touch someone else or else you would make them unclean. Her uncleanness was contagious, which meant she

couldn't touch anyone—for 12 years. We don't know more details about her, but just think. That meant she could not touch her children or her husband. She could not hug a friend. Nothing.

I didn't think until I started studying this passage this week about the social distancing this woman experienced. In light of what we're experiencing right now, imagine not being able to touch another human being for 12 years. And then—one more picture of her hurt—she was hurting financially. She “*had spent all that she had...*” She had no money left. She was not only physically worse off, she was financially worse off.

Could God have us in a passage that is any more appropriate than this one on this day, when the world is deluged by a disease for which doctors have no cure, when leaders of every state and almost every country in the world have demanded social distancing from other people, when millions of people are losing their jobs and source of financial stability?

God, speak to us right now. What are You saying to us right now through Your Word?

Let's read the story. Verse 27, “*She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd...*” Imagine her trembling in that crowd. She's never in a crowd. She stays away from crowds, because she has to. She doesn't want to infect anyone else with her uncleanness. But now she's decided to do the unthinkable. Imagine her walking, with her head down, hoping no one else sees her. If anyone knew who she was, they would not let her near Jesus or themselves. Yet here she was, head down, her body brushing up against people in a way she hadn't experienced in over a decade.

She doesn't want Jesus to see her, so she comes up behind Him. She reaches out her hand, shaking like a leaf in the wind, and she “*...touched his garment.*” What is going through her mind right now? Well, the passage tells us. “*For she said,*” and the language here is basically like she's saying it over and over and over again to herself, like she's murmuring to herself. “*If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.*”

What a statement! Picture this. This woman is both completely desperate and amazingly confident. She believes. She knows, “If I just touch His clothes, I will be made well.” The word there, which we'll come back to later, is translated most often in the New Testament as “delivered” or “saved.”

So she does it! She touches Him. Then verse 29 says, “*Immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.*” She touches His garment and time stands still. For the first time in 12 years, she is free from her disease and she can feel the ramifications of it. She's not just physically healed. She is now spiritually clean and socially accepted. For the first time in over a decade, she's able to use the money she earns on the things she most needs. Everything changed in the moment this woman touched Jesus.

So what is God saying to you right now through this story? Right where you're sitting, make this personal. Four truths—hear and receive them, right where you are now.

1. For every hurt you have, Jesus is your only hope.

God is saying to you right now through His Word that for every hurt you have in your life, Jesus is your only hope. I know I'm looking at people right now who are physically hurting. Maybe you have this virus. I think about one older brother who almost every Sunday comes up to me here in the lobby and encourages me, who was taken to the emergency room yesterday and tested positive.

I know I'm looking at people with this virus who know it, others with this virus who may not know it, as well as people with other physical struggles. I know that I'm looking at people right now who are spiritually hurting. Some of you, if you are completely honest, feel too dirty for worship. Maybe this physical virus has exposed in you a lack of spiritual peace.

I'm looking at people who I know are socially hurting. "Shelter in place" orders earlier this week hit you hard. Day after day after day, staying in your house or apartment is hard. You're now separated from people you love and you long for. Or really, you just want to see anyone. You want to be around someone socially. I know some of you already struggle with anxiety or depression, so you are hurting to the point where you wonder in some moments if you want to go on.

I'm looking at people who are economically hurting. You got your furlough notice this week. You don't know where your next check is coming from. Some of you were struggling to get by before this and now you really have no idea what to do. Regardless of what hurts you have, I want you to hear this word straight from God to you today: for every hurt you have, Jesus is your only hope.

As soon as I say that, I know some of you think, "That is ridiculously simplistic. This is the problem with the church. You think the answer is always Jesus. No, the answer is a strong economy. My hope for supporting my family is not Jesus; it's working hard to get another job. And the answer to our social struggles is following these strategies of containment. If we do that well, this will all be over. The answer to our physical struggles right now is science and medicine. We don't need Jesus; we need doctors, nurses and researchers who can come up with a vaccine or a cure. That's what we need."

If that's the way you think, then you are in an extremely dangerous place, because you think the key in these days is more confidence in ourselves. You are in danger of missing the whole point. What more evidence do we need of our weakness? How much more of the world must shut down for us to see our collective, worldwide insufficiency? Our medicine is not sufficient. Our strategies are deficient. We are making decisions in the dark. Our economy is not almighty. We cannot save ourselves. God help us to know what this woman knew—we need Jesus!

Again you say, "Okay, I'm turning this off. This is absurd. You're saying we shouldn't go to the doctor or work on stimulus bills or participate in strategies of containment?" I want to be crystal clear. I'm saying we should do all those things. I am so thankful for doctors and nurses, heroes on the front line of this pandemic. I'm so thankful for economic stimulus bills. I am 100% supportive of strategies of social containment. But I also know that every doctor or nurse who wakes up to work on a patient today

does so in the strength that Jesus provides them. And every medical researcher toiling away today is doing so with knowledge that they possess because Jesus has given it to them. This is straight from God. Colossians 1:16-17 states, *“For by him,”* talking about Jesus, *“all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him,”* in Jesus, *“all things,”* everything, *“holds together.”*

Even if scientists or medical professionals hate Jesus, the reality is their skills right now come from the very One they hate. That means all our hope right now is not ultimately in doctors or nurses or researchers, although we’re extremely thankful for and are continually praying for them. But that’s just it. Our hope is not in the ones who are merely trying to fix our bodies. Our hope is in the One Who formed our bodies in the first place and Who sustained them every second before this pandemic, and Whose power alone will sustain us through this pandemic. His name is Jesus.

Likewise, we are thankful for leaders and politicians who are working really hard to stabilize our economy. But let us be clear, our hope is not in the governor of our state or the President of our country. Our hope is in the Governor of the wind and the waves, the King Who has the capacity to still the storm, silence demons and heal disease.

This woman knew Jesus could do what no one else could do for her. Jesus could do what all the doctors and nurses in the world could not do. I pray that you would know the same, that you would know that Jesus can do what no one else can do for you. For every hurt you have, Jesus is your only hope.

Now as I think about this first truth, I think, “Well, that is only comforting if Jesus cares for me. If Jesus doesn’t care for me and He’s my only hope, then that is not good news. Truth number one is not encouraging. So does Jesus care for me?”

Well, let’s keep going in the story. This woman has touched Jesus, she has been healed and she’s now ready to get out of that crowd as fast as possible, unnoticed. But verse 30 says, *“And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my garments?’”* Talk about getting caught. Have you ever been caught doing something you hope no one else would see, but all of a sudden someone calls you out? It’s embarrassing enough when it’s just you, but it’s all the worse when you’re in a crowd of people.

This woman was looking for a quick getaway when all of a sudden Jesus says, “Who did that?” Now what’s going through her mind? “How could He know? There are so many people around right now. How could He know what I did?” Which is exactly what the disciples asked in verse 31: *“And his disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’”*” Like, “What kind of question is that? A lot of people just touched You. They’re touching You all the time.” But *“he looked around to see who had done it.”* The language implies that He scanned the perimeter. He searched the crowd to find the one.

2. In a sea of urgent need, Jesus stops for you.

So don't miss this second truth in your life right now: in a sea of urgent need, Jesus stops for you. In a sea of urgent need. Remember the context here. Jesus is on His way to help a girl who is at the point of death. And not just any girl, but the only daughter of one of the most respected men in the city. Now He's stopping to say, "Who touched Me?" "Jesus, come on. This guy's daughter is dying and You're concerned about some commoner in the crowd who touched Your clothes?" Is this not awesome? The world thinks about the crowds. Jesus thinks about the one.

Think about the situation we're in right now. It's staggering. Hundreds of thousands of people with this virus in this country alone, with thousands upon thousands of people overwhelming hospitals here and all around the world. A sea of urgent need. People dying. The wonder of this story is that Jesus stops for the one.

This is where I want to urge you to please see yourself in this story. Right where you're sitting, see yourself. Yes, there is a sea of urgent need around the world right now, but see the awesome reality that Jesus stops for you. For you!

This hit me one morning this week in my time with God. I was praying and spending time with Him, just pouring out my heart to Him. I was reminded in a fresh way that Jesus loves the crowds. He loves the world. He gave His life for the world and He is ministering in so many millions of ways right now. In that moment, I was reminded that He was meeting with me. Ha! He was meeting with me. He was listening to me. He was speaking to me. God in the flesh, Jesus, stops for me—and He stops for you.

That's the word I have for you today straight from God's Word. He stops for you. He loves you. Now your needs, or my needs, might not be as severe as someone else's needs, but that's the beauty of this passage. That doesn't mean He doesn't care. He cares about every single thing you are thinking about, every single thing you are struggling with. Wherever you're sitting, whatever you're struggling or wrestling through, you have Jesus' attention. Jesus is not distant from you. He is with you. He cares about you. For every hurt you have, Jesus is your only hope and He cares for you.

That care is indiscriminate, by the way. The passage makes it clear that He cares for the elite and the outcast. He cares about the synagogue ruler and He cares about the struggling, hurting woman. The rich and the poor, the respected and the rejected. The love of Jesus is indiscriminate.

Which means, by the way, we must continue to renounce all discrimination during these days, particularly anti-Asian racism. There have been over a thousand reported incidents of Asian-American racism in the last two weeks alone. Church, we must combat that contagion. We must beware of anti-Asian bias that exists in our country, being willing to stand with and for the Asian-American individuals and businesses in our city. We must be willing to stand with and for the large number of Asian-American brothers and sisters in our own church family. Jesus' love is indiscriminate.

So the story continues in verse 33: *“The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.”* As the crowd and the disciples are dumbfounded by Jesus’ question, this woman steps forward. Now listen to the wording: *“Knowing what had happened to her, she came in fear and trembling...”*

Fear. That’s the same word that is used at the end of Mark 4 to describe what the disciples felt as soon as Jesus stilled the storm. Remember, we talked about this kind of fear. It’s reverential awe. She’s in awe of Jesus, to the point where she is trembling and falls down before Him. Listen to this. She tells Him the whole truth.

This is breathtaking. This woman, no doubt now recognized as the unclean outcast that she is, falls at Jesus’ feet and pours out her heart. She tells all. All of her hurt built up over 12 years. All of her pain, physically, spiritually, socially and financially. She’s saying, “I just knew that if I could touch You, I would be okay. I would be delivered.” But that’s when it hits the crowd. “What? This unclean woman has touched Jesus? This woman has now made Jesus unclean!” And that is the beauty, because when unclean people come to Jesus, He is not afraid of their uncleanness which leads us to truth number three.

3. Jesus takes you as you are, not as you wish you were.

This woman was trembling, at least in part, because she knew she had defiled Jesus by touching Him. But what she didn’t realize was that this was the whole purpose for which Jesus came. Jesus didn’t come for the clean; He came for the dirty. Jesus didn’t come for the well; He came for the sick. Jesus didn’t come for those who think they have it all together; Jesus came for those who know they need help. So for anyone listening right now who is exploring Christianity—maybe you tuned in on your own today, or a neighbor or family member or friend invited you—regardless of the reason, this is the big-picture story of the whole Bible.

God created the world and you and me to enjoy Him, to enjoy each other, and to enjoy the world in perfect harmony. But we turned from God to ourselves. Every one of us has trusted in ourselves over God. The Bible calls this sin which separates us from God. Sin disrupts the harmony that God originally designed for us with Him and with each other and with the world. We have sickness, sorrow, suffering, disease and death in the world because we are separated from God. If you and I die in this state of separation from God, you and I will spend eternity in suffering away from Him. Which begs the question, “Is there any escape from this? Is there any hope of deliverance from sin and death and everlasting suffering?”

The good news of the Bible is, “Yes, there is hope. There is a Deliverer. There is a Rescuer Who can remedy our separation.” Jesus came, lived a life of no sin, then even though He had no sin to die for, He chose to die on a cross to pay the price for our sin. Then He rose from the grave in victory over sin

and death, so that anyone, anywhere, who turns from their sin and trusts in Jesus will be cleansed of all their sin and reconciled to God forever.

This is the greatest news in all the world. Jesus came to take your uncleanness upon Himself so that you can be clean. Jesus came to take your shame upon Himself so that you can receive honor. Jesus came to die your death so that you can experience eternal life. You don't have to fix yourself up to come to Jesus. You don't have to make yourself clean. That's the whole point. You come to Jesus with all that you are and He gives you all that He has. Jesus takes you as you are, not as you wish you were.

So listen to His final words to this woman in verse 34: *"He said to her, 'Daughter...'"* It's the only time in the entire New Testament that Jesus addresses a woman with this term of endearment. He says, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."*

4. For you who trust in Jesus, no matter what the future holds, His peace will never pass away.

Every word in this fourth truth matters. First, this is for you who trust in Jesus. So up until this point, all three of these other truths apply to anyone. For every hurt you have, Jesus is your only hope. That's for everyone. Regardless of who you are, Jesus is your only hope. Even if you hate Jesus, He's your only hope. In a sea of urgent needs, Jesus stops for you. That's for everyone. No matter who you are or what you've done, Jesus cares about you. And Jesus takes you as you are, not as you wish you were. That's true for everyone, no matter who you are or what you've done. But this truth is only for you who trust in Jesus.

Here's why I say that. Go back to verse 34 and look at what Jesus says to this woman. What made her well? *"Your faith has made you well."* Or *"Your faith has saved you."* It's the same word the woman used earlier when she said, *"If only I touch Him, He can make me well. He can deliver me. He can save me."* She trusted in Jesus. That's the reason she was saved.

That leads to an obvious question. "So if I trust in Jesus, does that mean I will be delivered from all disease? If I just trust in Jesus, I won't get this virus; I won't die from it?" We'll talk about this more next week. But the short answer is that is not what this passage means and it's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible does not teach that if you trust in Jesus, you will never get sick, nor that if you get sick and have enough faith, you will be made well. That is false teaching that is promoted around the world as the so-called prosperity gospel. But it's no gospel at all. The good news of the gospel is far better than that.

The good news, the great news, of the gospel is not that God will heal you of all your sickness now. The good news of the gospel is that God will cleanse you of all your sins forever. The good news of the gospel is not that you can be rid of all your conditions on this earth. The good news of the gospel is that you can be restored to your Creator for all of eternity. Which is exactly what this verse is about, because faith in Jesus leads to peace.

When you see this word “peace” here, the word is a reference to a life in harmony, in relationship with God Himself. So for all who trust in Jesus, you have a peace from and with and in the God of the universe that will never pass away no matter what the future holds.

Earlier this week I could tell it was time for a date night with my wife, some needed time alone. So we put together a plan. I asked the kids to get cleaned up and clean up the house. Heather and I got dressed up, got in the car and went out to pick up food. We picked up McDonald’s for the kids—I had no idea they are so busy right now. It’s been a long time since I’ve gone to McDonald’s, but be warned, their drive-thru lines are long right now.

Then Heather and I went to one of our favorite restaurants in the city to pick up take-out. We came home, set up the kids with their McDonald’s to watch a movie, and Heather and I lit a candle and sat at our table pretending we were at a restaurant. Then our date night conversation turned pretty sober pretty quickly, because we had both read articles that day about couples our age who were seemingly healthy with no prior conditions. Then one spouse contracted this virus and had to go to the hospital alone, and because no visitors are allowed, the other spouse never saw them again.

All of a sudden our date, in a way we had not planned, turned into a pretty sober moment that led to a lot of tears, as we faced the reality in a fresh way that that could happen to either of us. So we started having that conversation no one enjoys having: what would you or I do in that circumstance in the short term or in the long term?

Then I looked into my wife’s eyes with my heart hurting. On the one hand, I thought of what I would do without her. On the other hand, I was thinking that I don’t want to see her hurt without me there to help. The only confidence I could give her or myself was that if this happened, Jesus will prove sufficient.

I share that because I don’t know the future. I’m pretty sure there are funerals coming in the days ahead for our church, among our friends and in our families. I know it’s already happened to some who are listening and it certainly seems possible that some of us listening right now could need one of those funerals. None of us is guaranteed tomorrow and we would be foolish to think otherwise.

You might think, “This is really depressing.” But just follow with me here. The reason I land here with this personal conversation, after the story in Mark, is because I want more than anything else for you to know that for you who trust in Jesus, no matter what the future holds, His peace will never pass away. No matter what the future holds, the love of Jesus will never, ever let you down. No matter what emotions tomorrow brings, no matter what physical hurt tomorrow brings, no matter what social challenges tomorrow brings, Jesus’ love will never let you down and His peace will never pass away.

So trust in Him. If you’ve never put your faith in Jesus, trust in Him today. I urge you, please trust in Him today. If you have trusted in Jesus, hold tightly to Him. Reach out your trembling hand to Him, day after day after day, moment after moment after moment, knowing that Jesus always stops for you.

Will you bow your heads with me? Bow your head, right where you are and let me ask you a question. Do you know that if you were to contract this virus, if it were to take your life, do you know that you would be with God in heaven? Do you know that peace? If the answer to that question is not a resounding yes in your heart, I invite you to put your trust in Jesus today, to reconcile you to God right now, so you might know eternal peace with God immediately.

I invite you to pray, right there in your heart. Just say to God, “Dear God, I am a sinner. I have sinned against You. I’m separated from You by my sin. But today I believe that Jesus died on a cross to save me from my sin, so today I put my trust in Him. I ask You, God, forgive me of my sin and give me eternal peace with You. Save and deliver me.” If you cry out to God in this way, Jesus says your faith makes you well.

O God, I pray for all who are trusting in You right now and for every single person who is looking to You with the faith of this woman in Mark 5 to save them from their sins. I pray they would know their faith in You makes them well. God, at the same time, I pray for all those who know You, for all those who have trusted in You, that in these moments right now You would remind them that You love and care for and stop for them; that You never, ever leave them alone. You are with them now and You will be with them as their hope at every single moment. I pray these truths over every single person who is trusting in You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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