

Second Sunday of Pentecost, Year A Proper 10

Hosea 5:15-6:6, Romans 4:13-25, Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Three different Jews, three different stories but one common theme in our gospel reading today.

PRAYER

Yes, besides the Pharisees and John's disciples there are three main characters in this gospel reading: Matthew, the author and tax collector, the woman in need of healing who touches Jesus's cloak, and the synagogue leader, identified as Jairus in Mark and Luke, father of a dying girl.

Three different Jews with three different stories. Only Jairus is mainstream. Matthew is a tax collector, regarded as a sinner by the religious Pharisees because he collected taxes for the hated rulers, the Romans, whom they saw as usurping the place of God, and maybe also because Matthew skimmed money off for himself on the side. Tax collectors often did.

In *The Chosen*, the drama on Netflix and Amazon Prime that Peter often extols, Matthew is depicted as a social misfit and a loner. Clearly this is not the case here; he has many friends among those whom the Pharisees despise: *tax collectors and sinners*, those who do not adhere to the strict laws the Pharisees lay down. And here they take issue with Jesus associating with these sinners.

Jesus doesn't disagree; he also sees Matthew as a sinner, as someone sick in need of the healing of salvation. *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

God is not a legalistic judge on the lookout for every infringement against perfection. He is a healer. He is faithful and merciful, abounding in steadfast love and looking to see his people mirror his own mercy in their attitude, rather be judging like the Pharisees. *"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice"* as we heard in Hosea.

It seems to me that Matthew, in this gospel, has deliberately chosen to place the account of his own calling in the middle of three other stories – all different – and all about healing. One is prior to our reading today and two are in it. It is as if Matthew is saying "I was doing OK but I needed healing too."

Matthew's own healing is about rescue from the lifestyle he has chosen and which will continue to run in the pre-ordained tramlines of the dodgy tax collector unless something happens to break him out of the mold. It is so easy to be defined by mistakes and unwise choices that we have made in the past, isn't it? To let them determine who we are.

What happens for Matthew is one call from Jesus "*Follow me.*" Just a word from Jesus changes everything. Just a word and one simple response. Matthew comes to Jesus. He breaks out of the mold.

The woman with over a decade long history of menstrual bleeding comes to Jesus too. She shouldn't have done. She is an outcast. She should keep away because she is unclean on account of the blood and will defile anyone, and anything, that she touches.

She doesn't care. She knows that even just one touch of the edge of Jesus's cloak will bring her healing. She breaks out of the mold. Just one touch. That's all she needed. And Jesus knows.

Just one touch is all that it takes for a dead girl to be restored to life. Jairus was the synagogue leader or ruler. That doesn't mean that he was ordained or a Pharisee. He was more like a church warden responsible for the fabric of the synagogue and the ordering of the services. He may have been a mainstream Jew in many ways, but his role might make him a stickler for the rules.

It is after all the synagogue leader in Luke 13 who takes issue with Jesus healing a woman crippled for eighteen years on the Sabbath day. It is not right; it is not decent and in order.

So maybe Jairus steps out of the mold too. Needs must. His focus should be on the synagogue, but his daughter is dying, dead even. So Jairus comes to Jesus, the only one who can bring resurrection. Just one touch is all it needs. "*Come and put your hand on her, and she will live.*"

So, three Jews all in need of healing: Matthew, physically well but spiritually sick, the believing woman, physically sick and Jairus's daughter, already dead. All in need of just one touch from Jesus.

Does any of this resonate with us? Are we too in need of the fresh revitalizing touch from Jesus? Do we need to break out of the mold?

Are we perhaps spiritually in the doldrums? Is our relationship with Jesus withered? Has our first love atrophied? Perhaps like Matthew we need to respond to a call from Jesus to “Come”. ‘Come and share a personal relationship with me. Spend time with me. Learn to know me. See what I do and do it with me.’

As a student in the late 1960s I had the privilege of hearing Gladys Aylward, the missionary to China, speak in Sheffield City Hall, a miniature version of the Royal Albert Hall. She was a tiny little woman, under 5 foot tall, with a big voice that filled the auditorium. And the thing that made an impression on me was her explanation as to why she went to China. Referring to the calling of the fisherman Peter and Andrew to be Jesus’s disciples she simply said “Jesus said “Come” and they came.”

Is Jesus saying “Come” anew to us today? Unlike Gladys Aylward, he doesn’t shout. It is a gentle whisper. Do we hear? Just one touch from Jesus.

Or is it healing that we need? Have we been wounded? Is there a hurt that needs healing? A broken relationship? Or maybe it’s physical sickness or ill health? Or financial sickness? If so, come and touch the edge of his robe and expect his healing power.

Or is something dying within us? Faith? Joy? Peace? Hope for the future? A lost dream? Passion? Passion for the unsaved?

Whatever it is I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’

(Jeremiah 29:11) This was our verse for the vacancy before Nick came. It is still relevant now. Jesus says “come”. ‘Reach out your hand and touch mine. Allow me to revive what is dying. Let my touch restore your hope and renew your future.’

Just one touch from Jesus changes everything. Amen

Our liturgy booklet indicates a period of silence for reflection at this point. This morning I want to play you a piece of music, or rather a song, to reflect by. It is “Just one touch from the King” by Godfrey Birtell.

[\(2\) Rikki Doolan - Just One Touch From The King {With Lyrics} - YouTube](#)

Chris Shaw, 11 June 2023