

Comedy and Horror

In the Bible

It is what it is: **Mark 5** (The woman in the Crowd)

Jesus was pressed in a crowd and wanted to know who touched him

The Story Part one:

Let me give you several mental images. Have you seen *The wizard of Oz*? Near the beginning, we find Dorothy caught in her house during a twister. The bed shook and swerved all over the room. Pictures fell of the walls and hay and dust swirled in the air. There was poor Dorothy being tossed around in the mist of chaos. Then all of a sudden the bed, hay, and dust thumped to the ground as the storm abruptly ended.

One more image. I had heard stories of the Beatles at their height. My day told me that at one concert there were 8 barricades before the stage. The Beatles played for a half an hour and left. The eight barricades were unmercifully crushed by the mob of women wanting a piece of them. I bet that is why they left so quickly as the last barrier fell.

These two images fit well with the Jesus story presented in Mark 2-5. Jesus begins his ministry and the crowds pressed in. In the mist of chaos, the enemies and demons pressed in on him from all sides. It's no wonder that he spent many moments on the water in a boat where the people could not get to him just like the Beatles.

There is a moment in Mark 5 where a hemorrhaging woman attempts to touch Jesus in a crowd. There is humor and a whole lot more going on in this comical moment in the ministry life of Jesus. As with the other stories we have covered so far in Comedy and horror, this event has back story. I think the woman in the crowd incident has more meaning through the back story. The crowds, and everything else were swirling around Jesus like a twister. Within this chaos we

find a woman and Jesus having an exchange. Let's first recall how we got here to this comedy moment.

Let's just remember that Jesus said he came with a purpose. He claimed that he was coming only to draw the Jewish community. Several times woman from outside that community confronted him at the well, at a table with crumbs, prostitutes, and here in a crowd. The people wanted Jesus help but not to cause riots, drown herds, or free the sinners. Jesus was everything they hoped for and hated about religion. This whole ministry was a swirling mess.

The reception of Jesus by people seems unexpected. I suppose Jesus did not expect a centurion to ask for distant help. A woman to have faith enough to just touch him and be healed. Maybe he didn't even expect a criminal on a cross asking to be saved. Peter stepped out of a boat into the water. An unknown woman tried to anoint Jesus. There were several times it hinted that Jesus was amazed at their faith.

I wonder if humans surprised God the Father, Satan, and Jesus. Even the likes of Peter might have been surprised hearing the cock crowing twice. Jesus ministry seems reckless as demons flew out of men into pigs. With crowds growing and the authorities concern it's no wonder Jesus ministry appears like a hot mess. This crowd incident in Mark 5 is no different. It is a funny story because the whole thing is comical, uplifting, and amazing all at the same time. Yet, it takes place in the middle of a pressing crowd.

I think that's why it's so funny. Jesus and the disciples were experiencing rock star status. The crowds were getting bigger and bigger. Some was the lineups to be healed were ridicules The opposition to Jesus by the religious leaders was equally gaining steam. With all this chaos

pressing this group day to day, on this day, Jesus noticed that someone touched him. The disciples thought that was amazing. Wait until we dig deeper next week.

The story Part two:

Imagine standing in a crowd waiting for a concert to start. It's hot and cramped in the stadium. People are pushy and jammed in there like sardines in a can. Then you turn to a friend and say someone touched you. Your friend looks at you as if you have two heads and replies "Your kidding right." Yet your serious, and you begin to seriously question what just happened. That is what happened to Jesus one afternoon.

All kidding aside I'm just teasing right? Actually no, I'm not, Jesus did wonder in Mark 5 who had touched him. Let's take a step back to set this up. To get a picture of the scene we need to visualize the atmosphere. In the times of Jesus there was sickness and oppression. People outside of the rich had it pretty bad. There were no drug marts and grocery stores. I bet even doctors (if any) were there for the rich mostly. Then comes along this man named Jesus.

Jesus enters the scene preaching and teaching astounding things. It says in Mark 1 that they were amazed at the teaching. Some could not get their head around the fact that Jesus was a carpenter's son. He appeared to be nobody, who was raised by a nobody. Jesus came from a commoner's life. He was not famous like the Kardashian or rich like the Queen. To many, only the rich were blessed, yet this man Jesus said things that deemed him blessed with knowledge and insight.

The intrigue surrounding Jesus began to grow. Then out of the woodwork the possessed, lame, and sick began coming to Jesus. Maybe Jesus had taught about healing. In any case these people were healed by Jesus and the crowds began to form. Who wouldn't want to be healed. As

we go from the first days teaching in a Synagogue to speaking at the seaside, Jesus gained notoriety and fame. The crowds grew and the expectation grew with it. Many had heard of the miracles and wisdom of Jesus.

I said last week that a storm brewed around Jesus just like a twister. Jesus began to raise the dead, heal the lames, and cure the sick. The religious leaders also began to test and question Jesus. The crowds grew and so did the miracles. At one point a group of men had to tear a hole in a roof and lower their friend inside to get to Jesus. A demon possessed man had his demons tossed from him into a herd of pigs. The pigs then raced down a hill and drown in the lake. The people came and drove Jesus away, yet the crowds grew.

Then we enter Mark 5:21 and we find Jesus yet again pressed in a crowd. A woman had been hemorrhaging for 12 years. She had heard the stories about Jesus. She pressed through the crowd saying “if I could just touch his cloak I would be healed.” There is nothing fairly funny in that. Yet, with all we have read about the crowds, this time, Jesus stops. Somehow and some way Jesus can feel the power to heal in him. Is it the holy spirit or something else? Regardless Jesus could not feel the woman or anyone else pressing against him, but he could feel his power go out to her. Look at these verses:

30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” 31 And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” 32 He looked all around to see who had done it.

It’s amazing and hilarious all at the same time. The disciples are astounded. The woman is astounded too. In reality the crowds are not. They were there because they knew what had

been going on through Jesus. In a way Jesus was amazed too. Nobody had thought to just touch him in faith. This story grew in fame years later as things touched by Jesus became sacred. Even some of the disciple's articles and bones became valued. Several churches had these articles buried under them to bless the building. There was clearly power in Jesus ministry. I could just imagine the electricity in the crowds surrounding Jesus. I bet even the disciples were caught up in the foray.

It is funny that Jesus asked who touched him. The disciples immediately questioned Jesus sanity. Theoretically Jesus should have not have even noticed anyone touching him. Really the woman only touched Jesus cloak. I can just imagine being pressed from all sides as a disciple. The look on their faces when Jesus began looking for who touched him must have been hilarious. There are several other spots in the Bible where the disciples made of the cuff comments on Jesus actions. I think it's amusing stuff.

Because Jesus had this power in him is why he could feel something leave him. It's interesting that Jesus could not read her mind beforehand. Several times in the Bible Jesus perceived what they were thinking but not in this story. Sometimes we call on God for his power so we can touch or heal people. Jesus had that power inside his person. That is interesting. There is so much to learn from this funny and miraculous tale. Till next week then.

What we can learn:

What I've noticed is that with Jesus everything is messy. His ministry is full of little messes. There was Judas and his betrayal of him and the disciples. Jesus hung out with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes. Image if your pastor had those kind of friends? Jesus death was

messy. His words and teaching messed with people's minds like the parables. The biggest mess might be Jesus himself. He never did what you wanted him to do. He never acted the way you thought he should.

Jesus talked to a woman at a well that astounded the disciples. He fed 5000 people without food. This distressed his followers. Half the time they never had enough food, money, or protection, yet there was Jesus doing it his way. In the middle of a storm there is Jesus asleep in the boat as the disciples bailed for their lives. He approached demonic men and cured sick people. Jesus called men down from trees and prayed for us while crucified on a cross. Jesus always does what needs to be done over what seems right or correct. It's the same with the woman in the crowd in Mark 5.

Jesus could have ignored the woman and not healed her. She did not ask for his healing power. In a way she just took it from him. I get it that Jesus power just left him and healed her. It's as if the power had a mind of its own. So what could we learn from all this mess in the ministry life of Jesus? For starts let's talk about the power. I wonder if her faith is connected to the power of God. What if the Holy Spirit is the key? If Jesus had it and she had it then maybe touching his cloak caused a spark.

I think a lesson is having it. The power of God is not something we use. Only God has it to use. However, if God places that power in us as he did with Jesus then who knows. Is it possible that this woman in the crowd believed in the power of God before she asked for it? Maybe she had enough of bleeding and called on God to help. Possibly God drew her heart to the source of power found in Jesus.

I know a friend who had cancer. I know not everyone is healed but my friend was. Maybe she had always believed and in that moment of need she called on God with an earnest heart. It's hard to say what was in the mind of the bleeding woman in the crowd. When did she decide that touching Jesus was worth the risk.

Another lesson is Jesus himself. Could we be so dedicated that noticing something is secondary. We are focused on the plan. It's a good thing to be dedicated and focused. The lesson could also be that we should be open to the whatever. Jesus was wading through the crowd and all of a sudden things changed. Are we open to change? Will we notice? To have power is one thing but to use it when needed is another. So often we use it at the wrong time. Have you ever executed your power in the wrong way or in the wrong time? Have you used your authority too much? It's true that with great power comes great responsibility.

Finally, the disciples taught us a lesson. Throughout this ministry they were caught up in the fame. They rebuked others talking about Jesus. They refused to see the situation with 5000 hungry people. They missed much of what Jesus was all about. They were amazed in this crowd but each one of them should be slapped. They had seen this mess with Jesus a hundred times. By now they should have expected Jesus to be strange, messy, and oddball. Yet in this crowd they were caught off guard once again.

Maybe we need to believe a little better. If God says he can then maybe he can. If Jesus says he will then maybe he will. If we say that we believe then maybe, we should really believe. Jesus avoided giving too many signs that he was God. What he did give should have been enough. My goodness after all we have read even John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the right one. This scene was funny but it's also sobering. Many of us have a long way to go in truly believing in God and the power at hand.