

BIBLE STUDIES

Theme:

“Who Touched Me?”

Luke 8:44-46

Healing Ministry Week
10 – 17 February 2019

Healing Ministry Sunday
10 February 2019

CMAI Day of Prayer
13 February 2019

Please write to: *The General Secretary,*
Christian Medical Association of India
Plot No. 2, A-3 Local Shopping Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi 110058
Web: www.cmai.org, Email: cmai@cmai.org

Theme for Healing Ministry 2019: **“Who Touched Me?”** *(Luke 8:44-46)*

To all respected Bishops, Pastors, CEOs of Institutions and all members of CMAI!

Dear partners in the Lord's healing ministry,
Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus Christ!

God's grace is sufficient enough to give us another chance to celebrate the “Healing Ministry Week and Sunday” for 2019. We hope the theme, “Who Touched Me?” from Luke 8:44-46 will inspire people who are going through tough time. May the Spirit of God inspire us to experience the healing touch of God in our ministry and reach out to others in need.

Please mark your calendar to plan for these dates: From 10th to 17th February, 2019. To thank God for the healing ministry, 13th February will be set apart as a special day of prayer and the Healing Ministry Sunday will be on 10th February. In case you miss that Sunday, you can celebrate on the following Sunday on 17th February or on any Sundays of the year. CMAI is celebrating the Healing Ministry Week along with the National Council of Churches in India, Catholic Health Association of India and the Commission for Healthcare Apostolate of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. This broad partnership has enabled many congregation to celebrate the Healing Ministry Week.

It is important to know that, as a Church, we can be a source of strength to those who are experiencing pain and struggles. Many people have bumped and brushed against Jesus but he always senses a different kind of touch - the touch of faith – when someone reaches out in faith. Thus it is our prayer that the congregation will join hands to make our service known and acknowledge God as the source of every healing through faith. As the Lord leads, you may send your contribution to CMAI during the Healing Ministry Sunday and I take this opportunity to thank everyone for the encouragement and support.

Our sincere thanks to Dr. Sunita Noronha, Fr. Dr. George Varughese, Dr. Nitin Joseph, Rev. Dr. Israel David A , Dr. Mrs. Vasantha Thomas, Rev. Dr. Shiju Mathew and Ms. Imtimenla Aier for their inspired thoughts for this devotional book.

Please let us know how we could be of help to you. We are also keen to know how you celebrated the occasion and your feedback will strengthen our partnership.

With all good wishes and prayers,

Dr. Bimal Charles
General Secretary, CMAI

The Invisible People Made Visible

Mark 14: 3 – 9

We live in a world where we are pulled in from many directions and we often feel deprived and devastated. Life can be very demanding and each individual faces situations and problems that are unique to them and they are constantly looking for a support system.

Let us look at the passage from Mk. 14:3-9. Here we read about a nameless woman who comes with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment (cost 300 hundred denari, perhaps a whole year's wages) of nard (root of a plant). She broke the jar (seal), and poured the perfume on Jesus' head and in a way anointed Jesus and prepared him for burial. She was a woman in need of a touch of the Rabbi but she touched him.. Jesus commends her for her faith by saying, "She has performed a good service for me.... (v.6). She has done what she could; " (v. 8). The anger of the disciples and others present is expressed towards her. But she knew the 'ME,' the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour, the Healer and the Deliverer. In doing what she did, this unnamed woman became a true disciple of Jesus. She is the "WHO," who became the instrument who loved, was loved back, has shared that love to others which brought healing and wholeness into the lives of hurting people. Only one "TOUCH" of faith, albeit an invisible touch was all that was required to bring about a healing transformation in her life.

May we pause for a moment and think of the nameless and invisible people in our midst who are in the periphery such as women, children, elderly people, mentally challenged person, excommunicated believers, barren women, people with chronic medical illness, drug addicts, victims of domestic violence, child abuse, unwed mothers, people with different sexual orientation, interfaith and inter-caste couples and others. They are so often judged and rejected, in anger. It is time to hear the words of Jesus again on her behalf, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her?" (v. 6). "Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (v. 9b).

Food for thought:

1. Identify the unnamed people in your circle of influence that you have neglected and ignored.
2. What are some things that you will do personally to seek and save the hurting ones?
3. Suggest concrete ways where the Church and Health-Care Institutions can be an instrument of life-giving touch.

Prayer:

Dear God of all people, open our eyes to the needs of those who are hurting. For those who have nowhere to turn to, in order to find reparation, healing and restoration. Help each one of us to be that instrument of peace and wholeness that we may touch and lead them to the one who commends them for their faith and courage. Amen.

Dr. Sunita Noronha

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Union Biblical Seminary, Pune*

Breaking Free To Touch the Saviour

Mark 6:53-56

Imagine a traveller who has collapsed on a desert trail, in the blazing sun. Just a few metres away from him is a water shed with large jars of cold water, available free of cost. He does not know that the water is available just a short distance away. Exhaustion and dehydration prevents him from reaching the life-giving water. His life will just ebb away, if no one comes by to help him.

Today we too are surrounded by people with many needs. The needs are varied; it could be physical, emotional, mental, social, financial and spiritual. There are many who are suffering, having lost all hope and are lonely and depressed. How can we offer them healing and hope?

Let us briefly look at the three lessons in today's Bible passage.

First, the people recognised Jesus. They recognised him as the miracle worker who had fed 5000, delivered the demon possessed, healed the sick and raised the dead. He had even healed the woman with a flow of blood which no doctor could heal. So, recognising the power and compassion of Jesus is the first step we need to take. Reading the gospels prayerfully will enable us to see Jesus afresh with eyes of faith. Then, we will recognise that Jesus' touch promises healing and wholeness even today.

Second, the people dropped whatever they were engaged in and ran to bring the sick to wherever Jesus was. They carried them on mats and just hurried to Jesus. Today we are all too busy to help others. Often we overlook the needy, broken, downtrodden, hurting, poor and individuals around us. Thus, we need to ask God to forgive us and make us more sensitive and compassionate. Then only can we reach out to those in need and connect them to the touch of Jesus and become his touch in their lives.

Third, all who touched the edge of Jesus' garments were healed. Not just a few, but ALL were healed. The healing magic of the 'Jesus touch' had worked once again. We need to believe in Jesus' power to heal and restore. We need to believe that Jesus loves all of humanity and answers our cries for help. If we truly believe in the power of Jesus, we will pray for those in need. We will share the love of Jesus with them and invite them to receive his healing touch.

Food for thought:

1. Think of ways you can get to know Jesus better this week and recognise his power and compassion.
2. How can you rearrange your life so that you can make time to help at least one needy individual every day?
3. Do you honestly believe that Jesus' touch can bring healing and wholeness to all? If yes, how can you share this belief with others?

Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to recognise you as the powerful and compassionate healer. Please enable me to break free from my unbelief, selfishness and lack of compassion. Help me to experience your touch today so that I can lead others to you. Amen.

Dr. Mrs. Vasantha Thomas

National Director, Arpana Ministries, Pune

Pilgrimage of Faith towards Healing

Luke 8: 44-46

Faith and grace strengthen us to continue living with hope on a daily basis. Faith saves, heals and gives peace. Faith brings restoration, inclusion and acceptance. Power of healing comes with faith within oneself. When Jesus said in Luke 8:48 that 'power has gone out from me', he presented two unspoken areas concerning himself. The fact that Jesus is the bearer of divine power and his ability to discern the power conveyed to others. Jesus boldly discloses himself and his healing power.

In this context, there is a correlation of the healing power of Jesus and the saving response of faith. The word 'faith' is highlighted and the speech of Jesus becomes aware in the context of healing. The hemorrhaging woman's faith was tested by the boundaries and conditions of the society and most importantly the law of the land. Yet, her expression of faith in Jesus as the one who can HEAL exceeded all kinds of human structures and boundaries. Her faith didn't heal her bio medically alone but her whole self was healed and restored.

Touches are very powerful. We touch others through our words, actions and attitudes. God is also the God of the sick and suffering, poor, downtrodden and oppressed. The times at present is challenged by inequalities, divisions, injustices, gender disparities, poverty, rape, crisis of various kinds in varied forms and social unrest have crept into our minds. There are heard and unheard shouts of brokenness and there is a need for healing today. But, there is power in the touch of Jesus to lead us from brokenness to healing. The same power is vested upon us to exercise it at the right moment of need.

Jesus accepted and restored the woman by referring to her as his own as a result of her active faith. The pilgrimage of faith, even today, is tested by different boundaries and circumstances of life. Sicknesses of rejection, fear, guilt, hopelessness, doubt and mistrust blind humans to focus on the healing touch of God in their faith journey. With so much happening around us, we can be easily distracted from living a life filled with faith and grace. We face giants each day, in different forms and unintentionally develop a grumbling and griping attitude. At such times, we tend to question our faith and our stand in God. Fears and doubts creep in and we forget that God is just a prayer away. It is in such moments, approaching towards Jesus' power of touch for healing will restore and heal us.

Food for thought:

1. Are we channelling the power vested in us by God to heal and be healed?
2. Do we cross boundaries and exercise the power that comes from God to touch and heal people?

Prayer:

Help us, O God in our pilgrimage that we will touch you with faith. Allow us to be touched by you as we join this life trusting in you. Restore us, heal us and instill in us the spirit of love, peace and joy to live a life worthy of calling. Amen.

Ms. Imtinenla Aier

Secretary – Chaplains Section - CMAI

Touching in Faith Inviting God's Response

Mk. 5: 21-34 and Lk. 8: 42b- 48

The healing event of a woman with haemorrhage is a story of touching in faith. The unnamed woman was virtually unclean and a social outcast and, therefore, she was shut out from the fellowship and religious life. Her pathetic chronic condition and her past painful experience with many healthcare professionals made her hesitant to approach Jesus openly for help.

Moreover, she was lost in the crowd of many needy ones who thronged around Jesus and that attempt was probably her last hope. By her unwavering faith and courage, she arrested the attention of Jesus - a message to Jesus that she wanted immediate attention than that of Jairus's daughter whom he was going to heal.

Jesus' response was quicker than what he himself probably perceived. Healing power burst forth from him, stopping her blood flow immediately! That was all that she wanted - physical healing.

But Jesus took her to another level of healing. Jesus confrontational question "Who touched Me?" was not only an attempt to expose the person who touched his garment but also a bold invitation to overcome her fear and to publicly come forward to witness to the healing event.

While Peter stands amazed at the unusual touch, Jesus' empowering function reveals that he was not merely a channel of God's work but the true source of divine power.

Jesus addressing her as "Daughter" (whom the community considered as unclean) and his declaration that "your faith has healed you" assure her of being welcomed into God's family and the community that alienated her.

By stating "Peace" (Luke 8: 48), Jesus welcomes her into the right relationship with God and the faith community and restores her full humanity. This was God's response to her touch in faith.

The delay caused by this event, however, cost the life of Jairus's daughter - she died but Jesus raised her later! Anyway, the story emphasises the mutuality - touching in faith which elicited Gods immediate response. It also gives the mandate for the faith communities and related caring institutions in India to imitate Jesus who cared for the broken, marginalized, unnamed, and "no humans" who are lost in the "crowd" of today's world.

Food for thought:

1. In what ways can our healing missions and ministries go beyond the physical and touch the deeper levels of human life?
2. As faith communities and caring institutions, how do we become sensitive to and act on behalf of the ones who are lost in today's "crowd"?

Prayer:

O God, who never rejects those who come to you, help us not only to be sensitive to the needs of the ones who are lost in the "crowd" but also to move to action. May we and our faith communities and caring institutions be true to our calling and witness to what you, in and through Jesus Christ, continues to do in this world, Amen.

Fr. Dr. George Varughese

Union Biblical Seminary, Pune

Significance of Special Touch: Rejection to Restoration

Mark 1:40-45

The mission and ministry of Jesus were threefold: Teaching, Preaching and Healing (Mt 4:23). Healing was done in many ways. One of the ways was by touching the needy and the broken ones (Lk 7:11-14; Lk 8:44-48; Mk 1:40-45; Mk 7:31-37). Touching the dead, lepers and women with menstrual disorder would cause Jesus to be unclean under the Jewish law. Jesus had two options: Either to stick to the Jewish law or to come out of it. Jesus deliberately opted for the latter.

Leprosy was considered as a dreaded disease in biblical time. It is a progressively disfiguring disease. The book of Leviticus describes in length about leprosy (Lev. 13-14 c.f. Num. 5:3). People with leprosy were asked to shout 'unclean, unclean,' to keep away others from touching resulting to exclusion from society at all levels: physical, mental, social and religious. Only twice does the Old Testament record that God cleansed a leper (Num. 12:10-15 [7 days of separation]; II Kings 5:1-14 [7 dips]). When Naaman was suffering from leprosy, Elisha the prophet perhaps knowing the Jewish law commanded him to wash seven times in the Jordan River (II Kings 5: 10). It shows clearly that lepers were not worthy of a touch. However, the leper in Mark 1:40-45 heard about Jesus and was desperate to be healed, perhaps to become a part of his community and society. Hearing the words of the leper, 'If you will (without presumption), you can make me clean (without doubting Jesus' ability),' Jesus the true source took a paradigm shift. He was moved with compassion (literal meaning having deep pity) and broke all the barriers. He touched the untouchable (showing not bound by Rabbinic regulations regarding ritual defilement) and said to him 'I will (Gk-present tense; authoritative pronouncement); be clean (Gk- aorist passive, decisive act received).' And immediately leprosy left him and he was made clean. It was complete and visible to all who saw him. Jesus asked the leper to show his restored body to the priest knowing the rigid rabbinic regulations. 'But' the leper went out and began to talk freely about it (literal meaning - to proclaim it much). The divine touch leads him from rejection to restoration.

We too are living in a fragmented world, a world of divided walls on the basis of caste, gender and dreaded diseases. Though we are on the top of the ladder in the area of technology, many in the church and society consider the 'others' as untouchable. Being the disciple of Jesus, we are expected to break the rigid walls of separation and restore the fragmented church and society.

Food for thought:

1. Are you willing to touch or being touched by Jesus, the true source?
2. What stops you from touching Jesus with faith?
3. Would you make a deliberate choice today to touch the lives of 'Others'?

Prayer:

Lord, I need your special touch in my life, the touch which will restore my life. Also, I wish to touch the life of 'others' who are rejected and dejected. Help me to see 'others' through your eyes! Amen.

Rev. Dr. Shiju Mathew

Union Biblical Seminary, Pune

Congregations: Channels of Divine Touch Acts 3:1-10

'Who touched me?' is an expression of God's solidarity with the suffering of humanity. The creation narratives in the first three chapters of Genesis affirm the comforting message that human beings came into existence through the touch of God. God's desire for belonging with human beings is exhibited throughout the history of humanity and the community of Israel in the Bible.

The Gospels' miracle narratives are pointers to this powerful dimension of Divine-human relationships. Whenever we go through difficult times God continually affirms that His presence is always with us. The question by Jesus 'Who touched me?' must be located in this larger picture of God's mission to the suffering humanity, though the touch was initiated by the woman. i.e., Jesus' question is not 'whom did I touch?' but 'who touched me?'

The healing story found in Acts 3:1-10 clarifies a great aspect of the healing ministry of the congregations. The story portrays Peter's touching the suffering man, thus: "Taking him by the right hand."

At least there are Three Biblical truths we could understand from the episode.

1. The Nature of Human: An Unnoticed Needy Human Person at the Beautiful Gate.

Here is a person who is dependent on others, but has not experienced the power of the presence of God in its fullness. The paradoxical picture is that a needy person sitting near the Beautiful Gate, but unnoticed, longing and expecting a touch.

2. The Channel of God's Healing: The Trust of Peter in God's Ability to Heal

What makes this suffering human's healing possible is the commitment of Peter. Others might have 'seen' him but, it was Peter's trust in God's ability to heal that made the difference the suffering person. Realizing that the source of healing flows from the Divine is an important lesson which reminds us to be part of healing ministry. We may mistrust in His almighty power. The over-dependence on technology can limit our understanding of healing ministry itself. The ownership of healing ministry lies with us as we are the channels of God by making the healing power of Jesus Christ a reality.

3. The New Status of the Healed: Became a member of the congregation

The suffering person's status transforms after the healing. He moves from outside the gate to inside the synagogue. He receives a new physical, social, economic and ecclesial status and becomes part of the worshiping community. The commitment of a congregation member and acceptance of the healed person to worship with them has become a reality.

Today the suffering person asks: "Are we untouchables?" "Will someone touch us?" "Is there anyone to touch me?" The human touch that can bring healing has its origin from the Divine touch of humanity.

Food for thought:

1. Can we prayerfully introspect of the kind of channels we are for God?
2. Can we become God's channel to serve humanity by touching their lives as Christ did?

Prayer: "Lord, the Divine Healer, make us channels of your touch to the suffering humanity through our presence, love, and your healing power"

Rev. Dr. Israel David. A.

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