

Do you ever feel like the bucket of your life has a hole in it? That it leaks faster than you can fill it? No matter what you do, how hard you work, where you go, what you try, you just cannot fill it up. Work, play, friends, and family all leave you feeling empty, restless, and searching. The outflow is greater than the inflow. You are left drained of life, tired and weak, frustrated and hopeless, angry and resentful, sorrowful and grieving. At the end of the day, you are just exhausted. If you know what that is like, perhaps you know the hemorrhaging woman in today's gospel.

We do not know her name. We do not know where she came from. She could be any one of us. She is anonymous, another face in the crowd. What we do know is that she is sick, desperate, and in need. She has been bleeding for 12 years. That is 4,380 days. In all that time no one has been able to help her. She has spent all she had: time, money, energy. She has only gotten worse. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, it is always the same. Bleeding. The woman's condition is more than physical. She is losing more than blood. She is losing her life, its warmth, vitality, and fruitfulness. That is a spiritual matter. Life and death always are.

At one level this is a story of an individual woman. At another level it is the human story. Her story is our story. It is as much about men as it is about women. Drained of life, we go through the motions. We are alive but not really living. We feel disconnected, isolated and alone. Often, we convince ourselves that once this or that happens everything will be better. As soon as he changes, as soon as she does what I want, as soon as the economy gets better, as soon as I get a new job, as soon as I have enough money, as soon as I have more time, as soon as...We all have our "as soon as."

I suspect the bleeding woman spent many of the last 4,380 days thinking, "As soon as..." Today, however, is different. Something in her has changed, shifted. She has heard about Jesus. Maybe she heard about his teaching, about him casting out demons, about him healing the sick, or about him calming the storm on the sea.

We do not know what she heard about Jesus, but it was enough to make her believe she is more than a bleeding woman. She would no longer wait on others to fix her life. She refused to be identified with the circumstances of her life. Today she would reach beyond those circumstances and literally take matters into her own hand.

Deep within she knows, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” No matter how much we bleed the truth of those words flow through our veins. She knows that Jesus offers a life that is “unleakable,” a life that can never be drained from her. She touched his cloak. In that moment she was transformed with and by the power of God. It was enough to simply touch. The connection was made, and a relationship established. Life no longer leaked out of her but flowed into her. The hemorrhage stopped but the healing continued. “Who touched my clothes?” Jesus asked. He was calling her out. He would not allow her to remain a nameless face in the crowd. He would not allow her to drift off into anonymity. He named her, “Daughter.” She would no longer be the bleeding woman. She is now a daughter. She has an identity, a place and a relationship. She has been healed and made whole. She is now fully alive and free to go in peace.

That is the “unleakable” life Jesus offers each of us. We no longer have to live drained of life. We too can know ourselves to be called, “Son” or Daughter.” We too can walk the path of peace fully alive. If we but touch his clothes we too will be healed. Every moment holds before us the opportunity to touch. That means we must reach beyond the circumstances of our lives. How do we do that? We begin by looking at the clothes Jesus wears. Sometimes he drapes himself in silence, solitude and prayer. Sometimes it is mercy and forgiveness. Sometimes it is thanksgiving and gratitude. Other times it is compassion and generosity. Always it is self-giving love. The very attributes and characteristics of his life are the clothes he wears and the clothes we are to touch. Whenever you are living drained of life, touch the clothes of Christ. Connect to them in your own life. Let them transfuse you with his life, his love, and his power. Touch and be healed. Touch and be named. Touch and go in peace.