

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Sunday 27th June 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

As we worship in our homes, we are one Haverhill Methodist Church family at worship. God is with us. His love surrounds us. Let us bring our praise and worship.

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
we are yours.
We come as we are,
with our cares and concerns.
We long to touch you
and find healing in your embrace.
Strengthen our faith
and heal our brokenness,
that we may worship you with joy today. **Amen.**

Hymn/song

Bible Reading

Mark chapter 5 verses 25-34

Prayer of Confession

We want to touch the hem of your garment, O God.
Forgive us for being afraid to reach out to those who come to us for hope; we want to love the whole world: forgive us for ignoring our neighbour; we long for peace: forgive us for the pain we inflict on our families and friends; we want to share with those we love and like: forgive us for walking past those who are different from us. Give us grace: to reach out to those who frighten us; to carry the Bread of Life to the hungry; to offer the blessings of the kingdom to everyone we meet, even as you have blessed us in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Our loving God hears our voice and listens to our prayers, redeeming us from all our sins. Thank you God. **Amen.**

Hymn/song

Sermon

As a family we are self-isolating because of a positive COVID test. It is inconvenient, but our isolation does not compare to the isolation experienced by the woman in our Bible story today.

She had been suffering for 12 years with a constant flow of blood. Today this problem would be considered a private matter; in her day it was a public matter. She would not be allowed to go to the synagogue; nor would she be able to use the same dishes as her family. Her community would shun her.

Her community considered her ritually unclean because of her sickness. Imagine the isolation she felt - how lonely, how tired, how desperate and how poor. For she had spent all her money on seeking a cure, but all doctors had failed to help or heal her.

Did she ever wonder 'When will it end?' or 'Will it ever end?'

In her frustration, did she cry out in bitterness 'Why me, God?'

But her life was about to change the day Jesus was passing by.

She had heard about Jesus. Perhaps she had heard incredible news of his healing power. She knew enough to summon up the courage to get among the crowd and seek the Lord.

She has one chance and she won't let it pass.

Nervously she waits for Jesus to pass by and approaches him from behind secretly, so that she doesn't have to look Jesus in the eye and start a conversation. Embarrassed perhaps but determined.

In coming from behind to see healing, she tried to hide her impurity from Jesus and the crowd, knowing it was considered indecent for a woman to speak publicly with a man, let alone touch him - and knowing that she could be severely rebuffed by Jesus.

She was too scared to ask.

But she knew that "anything that touched a holy person also possessed a sanctifying power".

It was her faith in this sanctifying power that caused her to seek healing by reaching out to touch the tassels on Jesus' outer garment. The tassels on the Rabbi's cloak were a reminder to everyone present of the commandments of God which were not to be broken. In touching Jesus' cloak, she broke the purity laws of the Old Covenant symbolized by the tassels.

But Jesus, while wearing the reminders of the Old Covenant, brought the hope of the New Covenant by bringing healing to the outcasts of society, including this woman on the fringe. You see, in Jesus Christ, the God who is at the centre of all things took the centre to the margins.

Jesus identified with the poor and the outcast. He still does to this day. Jesus himself would experience rejection and suffering. In this moment, with great faith, as her fingers touched Jesus' clothes, the woman felt a surge of healing and her bleeding stopped. What a wonderful feeling that must have been. Jesus immediately sensed that healing power had gone from him and he wanted to know who had touched him. The woman took another step of faith and with fear and trembling fell at his feet and told Jesus the whole truth. Jesus brings her from the margins to the centre. He spoke lovingly and compassionately towards her: 'Daughter your faith has healed you, go in peace and be freed from your disease'.

No longer just a "woman" as stated at the beginning of the story, but now a "daughter" – a beloved child of God. She was healed, set free and restored to her community. Her isolation and loneliness are ended. A new resurrection life awaited her. What a wonderful Saviour. What hope this brings to us today.

Perhaps we find ourselves on the margins.

Life in lockdown can force us to the outer edges of life.

But Jesus is still found on the margins today.

We find he is right here with us just where we are.

It is not when we are confident and healthy and strong, but when, like that woman we are fragile; when we are bent low with suffering; when our world has disintegrated, when our self-confidence has vanished – in these moments we find Jesus is closest to us.

Will you reach out to Jesus today?

Each of us has the choice to reach out for Jesus.

We know our need and we can find today enough faith to reach out and touch more than the hem of Jesus' cloak.

There is so much more of Jesus we can touch and receive today.

Our hands are empty. Our powers are spent.

Like that woman, we know we are a church that is suffering.

We are a church that is bleeding.

Our Saviour Jesus meets us in our need.

Friends, Jesus is passing by right now.

In your need, will you reach out for Jesus?

Will you tell Jesus the whole truth?

You can receive his affirmation – you are a child of God – you can receive his power, his love, his peace, his freedom, his healing and his gift of new life. He will raise you up. Thank you Jesus. Amen.

Hymn/song

Prayers for Others

Let us pray.

Christ our Saviour, born for us bring healing & peace to all people.
Christ tested in the wilderness, give courage to those who are tempted.

Christ, who comforted and healed, bring wholeness to all who are broken.

Christ who hung in agony on the cross, bring strength to those who suffer.

(Name those God has placed on your heart today)

Christ who died to save us, give peace to all who face death.

Christ raised from the tomb, bring light and life to all the world.

(Pray for our world in need today)

Christ present among your disciples, unite all your people in love.

(Pray for the witness of the Church today)

God of love and light, in this time of fear, grant us your peace.

In this time of isolation, grant us your friendship.

In this time of sickness, grant us your healing.

In this time of uncertainty, grant us your wisdom.

In this time of darkness, shine your light upon us all.

We ask these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

We believe that by his dying Christ destroyed death forever.

We have been crucified with Christ and live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. May he send us out to glory in his cross and live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and was raised to life for us. Go in his peace. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- What burden do you carry today?
- How easy or hard do you find it to reach out for what God offers you?
- Who on the margins can you notice and help this week?

Suggested Hymns and Songs

More Traditional Music:

Be Thou my vision
How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
When I survey the wondrous cross

More Contemporary Music:

Lord I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed
Rescuer
Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice

Keep socially distancing.
Keep safe.
Keep communicating.
Keep celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.
My prayers are with you.
With love,

Peter