

# Mark - via Sickness Into Blessing

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon explores how the woman's suffering led to her miraculous healing through faith in Jesus, illustrating the deeper spiritual truths behind physical ailments.*

**Duration:** 40:22

**Scripture:** Jonah 1:17, Matthew 6:33, Mark 5:25-34, John 3:14-15, Romans 3:23

**Topics:** "Sickness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses a situation where someone has been gradually overcome by a problem that has separated them from God and society. The speaker emphasizes the importance of listening to the Word of God, as it may hold vital significance and provide answers to their struggles. While the sermon does not directly address physical or spiritual needs, the speaker encourages those who may be in such situations to take the significance of what God has done in their lives and seek His explanation through His word. The sermon concludes with an invitation to come to Jesus just as they are, believing in His sacrifice on the cross for their freedom from sin.

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## Transcript

Now we turn once again this morning to the Gospel recorded by Mark and we continue with our studies in this very lovely Gospel. The passage before us this morning has already been read by Greg Scharf, but you might like to have it open before you, just to check that what the preacher says is right, if for no other reason. And I'd like you to do that, I'm serious.

Now we are not going to read this passage again at this juncture, I take it it's rather a familiar one, but do please keep your eyes on the Scriptures. Mark 5 verses 25 to 34 and we have entitled it, Vaya Sickness into Blessing. Whereas much sickness and suffering remains a mystery to both saints and scholars, some cases of the most harrowing kind have been known to lead to the most rewarding blessing and discovery.

And the passage before us is a case in point. We have before us the record of an incident in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which the miraculous element is so evident that we need say nothing about it. But over and above this act of the miraculous, I come to this passage this morning in the confidence that the passage says something more to us than simply recording an act of divine power.

The miracles are that, and please don't misunderstand me, I do not mean to detract for one moment from the sheer miraculous deed that was done here, or is recorded as having been done in the other miracles.

But I have come increasingly to the conviction that the miracles of the New Testament, as well as being miracles, are also illustrations of divine truth. In fact, this principle goes on throughout the Bible.

You find in the New Testament that the New Testament often refers back to Old Testament miracles, not simply as historical events, though it does that, but also it sees in Old Testament events, in Old Testament miracles, a kind of parable of truth. I'll give you just two illustrations that come to my mind now. You remember in John chapter 3 our Lord Jesus says this, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and that was a miraculous provision for dying men.

Moses lifted up the serpent of brass when people were dying, and those that looked to the serpent of brass found that the disease was vanishing, and life was returning, and they were whole again. But you see what the Lord Jesus does. He brings in the Old Testament incident not simply as a fact of history, but also as an illustration of the fact, even so, He says, must the Son of Man be lifted up.

What happened there in the wilderness many years ago was illustrative of a New Testament truth. The other one that comes to me just now is, As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. But that'll not be the end of Him.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ is not simply referring to Jonah, Jonah's experience in terms of an historical event, I believe He's doing that, but He's using it, you see, also as a parable indicating something significant that is going to take place in His life. It becomes a parable as well as a miracle. Now I'm coming to the story before us today in that light.

I'm going to apply it as much to spiritual wholeness and health as to the quest for physical. Now with that in mind let's come and let's look first of all at the trial that this woman patiently bore. This is a very sad story.

A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years, says the New International Version. Her complaint had brought her considerable discomfort. It's a kind of hemorrhage, not uncommon, but perhaps somewhat excessive in her experience.

Apparently the most dire consequences lay not in any acute pain that it brought, though this could be considerable at times, but rather in the constant discomfort it entailed and in the weakness that eventually ensued. Constant loss of blood over a period of 12 long years made this woman less than half the woman she was. She's been drained of physical energy and probably her nerves are frayed and her mind is in turmoil and she knows not where to turn or what to do.

A discomfort she bore and with the discomfort there came considerable disablement. Along with the discomfort it entailed the person who suffered from this kind of illness in disablement, disability, inability to carry on with the affairs of life. If this only lasted for a couple of weeks or a couple of months I guess someone might be able to overcome it.

But you see in this case it's been it's been her condition for 12 years. Little by little she has found herself less able to face up to the responsibilities of life. Gradually her physical and nervous energy was sapped and while this might not completely incapacitate her, the lessening of the ability to cope would inevitably lead to frayed nerves, misunderstanding in the home or wherever she was, and arising out of that the whole position, the whole situation would become more and more complex with more and more tensions

emerging and fears and whatnot, especially in human relationships.

And if those around her met it with a kind of stoical hardness and failure to be sympathetic, well you can imagine what would happen. The discomfort, the disabling, and let us let us stress the discouragement. You see it's gone on for 12 years.

Not only has it gone on for 12 years but she has been around all the physicians that she could lay her hand on and they've all failed her. Now the Jewish Talmud tells us that there were no less than 11 common methods of treating this kind of affliction. Some are tonics and astringents while others are no more than superstitious humbug such as the carrying of the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in summer and in a cotton rag in winter.

You try it, see what happens. But whether serious or of this order, silly, nothing that the physicians of the day could suggest, nothing really helped this woman. She spent her all and she was no bettered says the King James Version and I think that's putting it well.

She was no bettered. But to put a capstone to all this I would like you to think of the sheer deprivation that this woman experienced. You see this sickness of hers meant that she was severed from society.

If anybody touched this woman then she was he or she was made ceremonially unclean. This is a religious law. Now this raises no end of repercussions for the person in question.

She's almost like a leper. No one can touch her. I really haven't been able to discover what would happen if this woman had a child for example and she nursed it.

I believe the child would have been rendered ceremonially unclean. I may be wrong. I'd like someone to enlighten me.

I've not been able to discover the answer to the question. But one thing is certain. If you only touched the garment of this woman you were rendered ceremonially unclean.

You had to keep away from her because of this condition. She was not even allowed to enter the synagogue. So you can see the picture can't you? Disappointed with the physicians of the day.

Trying to bear with a burden of this sagging, this weakening disease in her body. This constant loss of blood with its impact upon the nervous system and much else and upon her associations. Really this woman is a heartbroken sort of character.

It isn't that she has suddenly discovered a tumor, a cancerous tumor in her abdomen that requires immediate attention and that it's something that has gradually come over the years. But over the years it has so gripped her and affected every aspect of her life that now she is veritably a broken-hearted woman. Now let me ask.

Is that a picture of anyone here this morning physically or spiritually? Is it a portrait? Is it in embryo or in general? Is it a picture of someone here spiritually? Is this the way that the disease of sin has found its way into your life? Something that gradually got hold of you and there have been no great crises. It isn't as if you suddenly discovered a tumor that you've got to get rid of. But it's just got hold and got a grip of you over the years.

And gradually you've been incapacitated. And gradually you've lost hope. And gradually your nerves have become frayed.

And gradually you just don't know where to turn. But you've come there. And you've been separated from God and you've been separated from people.

You can't make sense of good people and you can't make sense of God. Because this thing has separated you from decent society and it's separated you from God. Now my friend I want you to know this morning that if this is the word of God then it's worth listening to it.

There may be something of vital significance from the throne of God from the mouth of God in this passage today. Whether it addresses somebody in physical need or in spiritual. Now I come to the second main division here.

I want you to think now of the touch that she daringly sought. I say daringly sought because it was a daring thing to do. She determined on a certain course of action but you see how daring it was.

This woman is not to be seen in company. She's not to touch anybody. No one is to touch her.

But she's heard something. We are probably right in assuming that this event took place in Capernaum. Now if you know the Gospels and if you've been following us in our studies of Mark you will remember that already the Lord Jesus Christ has exercised his sovereign mighty power already in Capernaum.

He's done some wonderful deeds in Capernaum. For example there was that demon possessed boy in the synagogue one Sunday morning one Sabbath morning. Then there were crowds that gathered around the house late at night you remember.

And all kinds of people with all kinds of diseases came and he healed them all we're told. No one no one no one went away unhealed who came to him for healing. No one.

If you remember the incident of that boy carried by four of his friends and they took him up to the roof and they undid the roof and they led him down at the feet of Jesus. He too was healed. Now she wasn't there or she shouldn't have been there.

But I guess she's heard of them. And quite recently in a town not very far away from Capernaum a leper was healed. A leper was healed.

Now you know how the leper went about crying unclean unclean. In other words telling all and sundry keep away from me don't touch me. And she probably heard that the leper had been cleansed.

And little by little you see hope began to well up in this otherwise hopeless human breast. And this woman with her afraid nerves and with this complaint getting more and more of a grip upon her began to think he who touched and healed the leper can surely heal me. He who sovereignly dealt with all the physical and mental needs of that crowd that other night in Capernaum.

Surely if I go to him if I go to him he's the type of person that will listen to my cry. He'll not send me away. He didn't send anywhere in the way.

But you see there was this problem. If she touches anyone she renders them unclean. If people touch her they're unclean.

How then is she going to make contact with Jesus? The thing I want to get at this moment is this. What this woman heard she believed about Jesus. I can't tell you how far that process had gone but she certainly believed in his goodness and believed in his grace and believed in his power within certain limits.

I can't I can't define it but it's there in embryo. There's a real faith in Christ here in embryo. And what she believed about him she decided that she's going to act upon.

And so she counted the cost. I guess her friends would be angry with her. I guess the scribes and the Pharisees would be angry with her.

And the religious leaders would be angry. All of them are about the Savior. She was prepared to face the ire of everybody and look at the confidence with which she bravely sought to touch him.

She's got her plot hatched and she's ready. She sees a crowd gathering. Jesus has been away in the land of the Gerasenes.

He's back home again. He called Capernaum his home. She sees her opportunity and she's got it all ready in her mind.

This is what I'll do. I'll move out into the crowd and I'll elbow my way through gradually until I come within the touch of him. And then when no one is looking I'll just touch the hem of his robe or the tassel of his garment whichever it is.

I'll just stretch out my hand and touch him and I'm sure he has the power to do what I need. Oh blessed be the name of God. You see no person with this kind of confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ can ever get away unblessed.

This is not magic. This is not faith that there is some healing property in his robe or in the tassel. That's not that.

This is not an impersonal thing. She wants to get to him. It's him.

It's Jesus. He is the one she's heard about. He's the one she's going and she believes that somehow she can't explain it any more than you can explain salvation.

But she believes that he is such an one. He will do her good and he can do her good. And here she sets out.

And that brings us to the last main point this morning the transformation she personally experienced. I read this in verses 29 and 30. Have you noticed the juxtaposition of these two statements? Having touched the hem of his garment as the King James Version puts it she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

In the beginning of the next verse at once Jesus realized that virtue or the word is power had gone out of him. Oh this was a delightful hour. The cure she instantly experienced.

It wasn't trust in a tassel or in a robe or anything else. It was faith in Christ and the moment she touched him she sensed life pulsating again into her weak body. Fresh health invaded diseased tissues and she knew that the miracle had happened.

You know my friends it may be a hard thing to say but we have to face the facts. There was a world of difference between this woman in the crowd and the whole crowd apart from her that day. Not only in the fact that she was sick and they were not maybe.

But I want you to notice one difference and that difference may be found right here in Knox this morning. You see the other company the larger company came to see what he was going to do. Maybe to hear what he was going to say.

I don't know what they would do beyond that. I can't tell you. Some of them might praise God others of them might get angry.

But the fact of the matter is this that this one woman in the crowd had come with one solitary intent. She had come into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ because she had one felt need. And she put out her emaculated hand and she touched the hem of his robe because she had one need and she was looking to him to be a savior.

The healer. Now I want I want to ask you will you be patient with me when I do so. How many of us came to the house of God this morning with a felt need.

Conscious of our sin and don't let's be humble don't let's presume that we don't have sinful tendencies and problems. I have them. And I've not met anyone in Knox that hasn't.

We all have them. Sins of the lips. Sins of the tongue.

Sins of the ear. Sins of the eyes. Sins of the mind.

Arrogance. Pride and what not. We've all got them.

Now we've all got them. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There's not a man there's not a woman without them.

But listen this is what I want to ask. Some of you don't get much blessing out of the services perhaps. I don't know you don't tell me that.

But I wonder whether there are some people who can come and sing and sit and listen. Sunday after Sunday but who've never come with such a felt need that they're determined to touch the hem of the Savior's garment in faith and get from him what he promises in his word. And those people in church must grow miserable.

You're going to get delusion disillusioned with religion sooner or later and you're going to say I don't get anything out of it. My friend there is one answer to that. There is one answer to that.

Bring your needs like this woman and say like Jacob of old I'm mixing my metaphors hopelessly. I will not let you go until you bless me. Treat God as God.

But if we're coming just to play a game of watching and listening and they're on the touch lines we're watching it all we've seen it all we know what's going on. My friend sooner or later your whole religious experience whatever its nature will turn sour and you'll be disillusioned and you'll say there's nothing to it. And these are the most tragic people that I at any rate try to counsel.

They come for nothing and they go away with nothing. Save that they know what's going on. But the man or the woman that comes with a sin I don't care what it is.

We've been dealing with homosexuality recently or referring to it. Be it that. Be it adultery.

Be it pride. Be it this. Be it that.

The man that comes with a consciousness of sin and lostness and need and a peril even of hell in his soul and comes to Christ. That man that woman goes away blessed and they are going away blessed. There are some of them here this morning that would dance in your seat if they had the opportunity.

The cure she instantly experienced. She felt in herself. Now you pardon me if I go contrary to much evangelical theology here.

Thinking now of the spiritual experience that comes from men for men and women that rarely come to grips with God. I believe that there is something in the Christian experience which is to be felt. I do not understand the theology nor the psychology of people who say you just take it that God has given you this and that God has promised you that.

You don't feel anything. My friends what is our view of God? Is God such an insignificant person? Is he whose love boiled over on Calvary's cross in the slaying of his son for his enemies? Is he such an insignificant person that when he comes by his spirit into my heart I'm going to be like a slab of stone without a little bit of emotion? Men and women let's get down to serious thinking. If he's the all-holy one who condemns my sin is there not going to be a sense of fear and dread and awe? There will be a mingling of emotions in the soul of a man that has come into real touch with God.

This woman felt that something had come in. Isn't peace something to be felt? Isn't it? I hear a lot of people talking about the joy of the Lord but they don't want emotion. Isn't joy something to be felt? Isn't hope something to be felt? Don't tell me, don't tell me.

I know it is and I'm not going on my own experience I'm going on the Scriptures. These things are to be felt and I would like to see here among us a number of people every Lord's Day knowing that something has come out of the Savior in glory and entered into them and they know the difference. And I want you to notice that just as she knew that something had come into her he knew that something had come out of him.

She didn't see her touch him but he looked around and he said who touched me? Now you remember the disciples were a little bit confused about that they said Lord you're being a little bit silly no they didn't say it like that I know. But here's everybody touching you everybody's rubbing shoulders with you as it were. Everybody who comes anywhere near well they're touching you they're jostling you you're in the crowd.

So it's a silly question to ask who touched me but you see Jesus knew that there was this touch that is different. Somebody had come with a view to stretch out the hand of faith to bring a problem to him to ask for his help when all other helpers could do nothing. And he knew that something had gone out of him because faith had claimed it and received it and it had been felt in the body of this dear woman of our story.

So Jesus' eye followed his question who touched me? It always does. Jesus always looks at his questioners and his eye followed his question and at last it fell upon her and she felt like a worm. You see

she didn't want to make it known.

Now you can understand this can't you? She didn't want to tell people what had happened because she'd broken every law to touch him. And if people get to know well now perhaps he'll get into trouble and she'll get into trouble and well who's not going to be in trouble? And these ceremonial laws are so complicated and oh you're gonna have a real hell of a loo in the synagogue when this is known. She didn't want to say.

Now I can understand that. And when our Lord said to her when our Lord saw her and his eye fell upon her and he said he said something I don't know quite what he said to her but then she opened up she felt well I must know. And I like the way it says she told him all the truth.

She told him everything. It's always the best thing to do with our Lord Jesus Christ tell him everything don't hold anything back. She told him everything about her trouble, about the many years, about the disappointments, about the fact that the physicians had failed her, about this that and the other.

She told him everything and he listened. And you remember his response. She received this blessed confirmation said the Savior daughter let me explain to you what's happened.

Your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of this your disease. You felt in your soul that you're better.

All right let me give you something over and above what you're feeling. Let me give you my word. I'm telling you now you are healed.

Your faith has claimed it. Now go in peace knowing that you have been healed. Can I just notice this delightful little touch here.

Jesus didn't address her in the normal way. This is what makes me feel that there was spiritual salvation as well as physical healing here. The normal way to address a woman like that would be woman in the Aramaic.

Not daughter you see. We tend to think that addressing somebody as woman is is not really the best way. It's not etiquette.

Well that may be so in in our Western culture. But but in this culture the this was the way of addressing a lady woman. Jesus addressed his mother even as woman and there was no insult involved in that at all.

It was the right way. But you know he turns to this lady who was probably much his senior in years and he says to her daughter daughter. Why did he say daughter to a woman who's older than he.

Well you see I believe that what the Lord Jesus wanted to do is two things at one of the same time. He wants to show that he really loves her and that she's received and that because of her faith she's come into a new relationship with him and with a Godhead. She's now she's now in his kingdom and he wants to stress the fact that there is an intimacy of relationship that he has the love of a parent for his child as he looks upon her.

Now my friends there is a principle here which is exceedingly important be our need physical or spiritual. It is this. It is not enough for us simply to live on our feelings and trust our feelings though they should give us some indication if we have been born again of the Spirit of God and if we know his spirit in our hearts.

But you see what we really depend upon is our Lord's own explanation. His word that confirms what has gone on within us and that tells us all about it. Not either or but both and.

I have to bring my experience to the light of Scripture and see Lord what do you say about this. How do you understand this. Do you confirm it as something valid.

And if he doesn't then all my feelings are of no use. But if he does you see you have this double this double sign this double indication this double assurance. Now there may be some people who are looking for assurance here this morning.

I'm not addressing those people directly but but if there are take this with you. Take the significance of what God has done in you and what God has done for you in providence and in grace take all that and let it stir the strings of your soul. But on the other hand take that to him and let him give his own explanation.

Let his word explain his own deeds and God's word always explains God's saving deeds. Now I'm coming to the end. Could it be that in this picture someone is seeing today a little portrait of yourself.

Maybe on the physical plane. Now I want to speak very tenderly here. My colleague Greg Scharf has prepared the way beautifully perhaps quite unconsciously in his prayer this morning.

We believe together the two of us that normally God uses other means for the healing of the body and of the mind. And God has gifted people. They're not always his children but he's gifted men and women with healing powers.

And we thank God for that. And we make use of such means. We acknowledge them as coming from God.

But there are times when these are of no avail. And occasionally there are times when God wants to heal from among that company some not all. This is the mystery of the whole subject of healing.

Sometimes God wants to step in and do the utterly extraordinary and miraculous. Now we've seen it here and we've seen it elsewhere. And it may be that as we've been speaking this morning the Lord is encouraging someone in the congregation to stretch out the hand in faith.

Do it my friend. Do it. Do it in the faith that God is bigger than you've ever thought of him and greater and has more grace.

Do it in the belief that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. If he doesn't take away the thorn in the flesh then he'll give you grace to bear it. But it may be that he's asking you to exercise that faith.

Then do it. And if he doesn't, accept the grace he gives you to bear your burden. But now, whereas that may be the means whereby physical and mental healing is sometimes secured, it must be and it is the only means whereby spiritual salvation is secured.

There is no other way. By that I mean this. If you want to be saved of your sin, you must come just as this woman did.

With your faith focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ. In the awareness of your own need and peril and then in the awareness of his greatness and grace, let your soul go out to him in confidence and in faith and

appeal to him. I wonder whether there are some here this morning and the hour has come to do just that.

You've not come to the house of God today just to sit in the pew and listen. You've a problem. You know you're a sinner and you know you're lost and you know you're separated from God.

You know you have no fellowship with his people. You know that heaven is another continent to you and you wouldn't be happy if you got there. Isn't that so? Now listen.

Come to him just as you are and focus your gaze away from the preacher, away from the people, away from the church, away from everything here this morning. Turn your eyes upon Jesus in his greatness, in his glory and say to him, Lord, I do believe, I will believe that Jesus died for me. That on the cross he shed his blood from sin to set me free.

And I believe that he will never say no to those who sincerely seek him in that way. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God and our father, as we pause during these closing moments of our morning worship, we're very much aware that we have not dwelt upon every facet of this story.

But we thank you that we have seen something in it that relates to all of us and certain principles that apply now to me and probably to every individual bowed before you in this congregation. Oh Lord, we ask for grace to bring our needs to you, not just to hug them to ourselves, not simply to talk about them to others, be it our physician or psychiatrist or anybody else. But we ask for grace to elbow our way through the crowds and beyond the difficulties until we come close up to you and trust you and draw saving and healing virtue from yourself that will meet our needs.

Oh God, our father, please make this building, this edifice, this sanctuary this morning a scene of joy that comes from trusting the Savior. Whether it be in physical healing or in spiritual salvation and rejuvenation, we shall give you all the praise and all the glory through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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