



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 6

June 30, 2024

Touched by God

Mark 5:21-43

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. ²²Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” ²⁴And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” ²⁹And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?” ³¹And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’” ³²And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. ³⁴And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

³⁵While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” ³⁷And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. ⁴¹Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to



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give her something to eat.

What would you do in the presence of God in the flesh? I suppose how you answer that question depends on what you think of God. In our text today, we see how two people react.

Jairus approaches the Lord and begs Him to come and touch his dying daughter. "Seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.'"

The second person is a dying woman who comes to our Lord hoping to touch something that has touched Him. "She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.'"

This seems to be a pattern. Elsewhere, Jesus encourages that little children be brought to Him: "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them" (Mat. 19:13-15a). There are the few in Nazareth that Jesus was able to heal by laying His hands on them. There was the blind man in Mark 8, whom Jesus healed by the laying on of His hands. There were the crowds in Luke 4, the leper in Matthew 3, Peter's Mother-in-law in Matthew 8, the blind men in Matthew 8, the fearful disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the list goes on and on. So, God desires to touch – and be touched by – His children.

It wasn't always this way, of course. In the days of the Old Testament, it was very dangerous to touch or be touched by God.

After the Children of Israel had been delivered from slavery in Egypt, God brought them to Mount Sinai, where He would deliver to Moses the Ten Commandments and other regulations and statutes. Before Moses was to ascend the mountain to meet with God, the LORD said to him, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death'" (Ex. 19:10-12).

The people were also warned concerning the Ark of the Covenant. It was included in the command given by God in Numbers 4:(15b), "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die." This actually happens many years later, as the Israelites were returning the



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Ark to Jerusalem, for it had been in the possession of the Philistines, having been captured by them. David and his men had recaptured it and were returning it to its rightful place, when the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and the Ark began to tip over. Uzzah, one of the Levites in charge of the Ark, took hold of it to steady it, and was struck dead by the Lord [2 Sam. 6:1-7].

So the Israelites were never to touch the holy things of God under pain of death. In fact, it was impossible (with rare exceptions) even to look on the face of God, for the Lord had said, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see my face and live” (Ex. 33:20).

All of that changed at the Incarnation, when Jesus became man and walked among us. Here now, was God in the flesh – God in a form that man could see and touch and not die. It was God’s intention to present Himself in a way that brings life instead of death. Remember what Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly” (John 10:10b).

Jesus became man so that man could touch God, could fellowship with God in a real and tangible way. His being conceived by the Holy Spirit, His birth by the Virgin Mary, His suffering under Pontius Pilate, His dying by crucifixion at Calvary, His being buried in Joseph’s tomb, His being raised from the dead, and His ascension into heaven, were all accomplished so that you could be in touch with God, so that, as Scripture says, “the brokenhearted would be bound up, captives would find liberty,” “the blind would receive their sight, the lame would walk, lepers would be cleansed, the dead raised, the poor would have good news preached to them,” [Is. 61:1; Lk. 4:18; Mt. 11:5] and the Lord’s favor would be proclaimed to all [Lk. 2:14]. All the preaching and teaching of God’s inspired Word is meant to draw you to Him, that you may be touched by the incarnate Christ – God in the flesh – who, by His Holy Word and Sacraments, continues to dwell among you with and by His grace. For without His touch there can be no healing, no salvation.

When have you been touched by God? Some would say they felt touched by God while viewing His awesome creation. This is hard to deny. When standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon, or on a mountain peak in Colorado, or gazing at the Milky Way out where the lights of the city won’t impede your vision, or looking out across the ocean or one of the Great Lakes and seeing the endless expanse of water. These and many other sights in God’s marvelous creation, inspire a person to feel as though they’ve been touched by God.

Some would say that they felt touched by God in the embrace of a loved one, when holding a baby, or seeing wonder in the eyes of a child. Certainly, to experience the love of another human being is akin to being touched by God.

Some would say that it’s in the act of worship, singing the liturgy and hymns, sharing in the prayers, and reciting the Introit, Gradual, and Psalms, that they feel touched by God. And this is getting nearer to the truth. To *feel* touched by God and to *be* touched by God



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are distinct, though connected realities, for being touched by God in the Divine Service goes beyond feeling and beyond any action we may undertake. For, like the woman who touched the robe of Christ and was healed, you are touched – indeed covered – by the robe of Christ’s own righteousness in Holy Baptism. Just as the little girl who was at the point of death, you too were brought to life at the font, where Jesus laid His hands on you and bid you rise to a new life in Him.

In a similar way, you are touched by God when His Word touches your ears and quickens your faith, just as Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, was moved by the words of Jesus to worship Him and beg Him to come to his home to heal his daughter. And, just like Jairus, you hear Jesus say to you, “Do not fear, only believe.”

And, of course, in the Lord’s Supper, you continue to be touched by God in the very flesh and blood given and poured out for you in the suffering and death of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith.

For this is what He has come to do in His holy Church, and it’s why He is here this very day: to touch you and to make you whole.

So, what would you do in the presence of God in the flesh? Given our sinfulness, and like Jesus’ own disciples, our wavering faith, perhaps the better question is: What would Jesus, the incarnate God in the flesh do if He were here in *your* presence? He would invite you to come to Him, to be present with Him, He would lay His hands on you to bless and heal you, He would wrap His garment around you to guard and protect you, He would tell you to rise, lifting you to new life, He would give your famished soul something to eat in His Holy Supper, and He would send you back out into the world to live as the forgiven, restored, strengthened, holy, eternal children He has raised you out of death into life to be – those who have received and can now share the saving touch of Christ. So He would, and so He does, for He is here, and He has touched you today, beloved. So rise, you saints of God, you who have been touched by the Savior and raised to new life, you who have been granted eternal life in the forgiveness of your sins, by and through His touch of grace and love. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen