

# Meet Jesus Amidst a Busy City

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[ 0 : 00 ]     What a reminder there that Jesus Christ gave to his church, isn't it? Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

That's words of reassurance in times like our own. If you'd like to open the Bibles, we're looking at Mark's Gospel and we're into chapter 5.

It's on page 840 in the Visitor's Bibles, page 840. And Andrew Dunipace has kindly agreed to come and do the reading for us.

Andrew works at the passport office here in Glasgow. I guess it's a busy time of year, Andrew. It's the busiest time of the year. Really? And in the average year, what sort of number of passports do you...

What's the throughput of the passport office? About 5 million, give or take. Wow. 5 million passports. Well, I didn't need mine when I came past Greco and Green up here into Scotland anyway.

[ 0 : 59 ]     So, Andrew will bring our reading to us. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for 12 years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse.

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 garment, I will be made well. And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garments? And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, Who touched me?

And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace, and be healed of your disease. Thank you. Well, here in Scotland, near Loch Lomond, high above in the Glendow estate, there's a hydroelectricity power plant under construction at the moment.

[ 2 : 24 ]     It's a 140 million pound project. Apparently, it's the biggest project of its kind for 40 years. Now, this is interesting.

I found it interesting when I was listening to Radio 4. Unlike conventional forms of electricity generation, you know, like coal-powered power stations, and oil-powered, and nuclear-powered, which pretty much generate a constant level of power, hydroelectric power is very much impulsive, according to the demand.

It can... The electricity authority, they can book slots of power at an anticipated time of peak demand. You know, like, for example, when there's a soap opera on the TV or something, and it's time for a break, and everyone puts the kettle on.

Well, they can look ahead, the planners, and book the electricity for those times. Or in the morning, when we're getting up to boil a kettle. And apparently, a hydroelectric power plant can remain dormant for 80% of the time, while the reservoirs are filling back up.

And then they can, during the 20%, they can sell their electricity at their highest market prices. Do you see? I found it fascinating listening to that. Well, the construction's underway, and as I speak, they're blasting through the rocks with high explosives to create a water tunnel, which will be 8 kilometres long.

[ 3 : 57 ] And above the mouth of this tunnel, there's a little alcove. It's one foot wide, 18 inches high, with an arched top.

And standing in this alcove is a statuette of the Santa Barbara, who is the patron saint of tunnelling.

I found this shocking. It's a 140 million pound project. Here in Scotland, from February of 2009, you'll be boiling your kettle from its power in the mornings, and some religious superstition all mixed up in with it.

It's a bit like the idol of Dagon in the Old Testament, I think. And a similar thing is when families, you know, they've never ventured near a church, they've got no understanding of why Jesus came, and, well, they suddenly want a Christian funeral service.

And friends, I want to show you this lunchtime how this woman approached Jesus with a similar, confused understanding of Christianity. Yet she went home.

[ 5 : 03 ] What did she go home? Verse 34. Do you remember it? She went home, didn't she? A daughter of the living God. Yes. The great thing, I think, about this incident is that the woman gets a second chance, and isn't that good news, you know, when we think of our own fumbling faith and our approaches to Jesus.

So there's two approaches, and here's the first. I've called our first point, a desperate woman sneaks up to Jesus, and she is desperate, isn't she? Verses 25 and 26.

What a plight. She has a hemorrhage. I've got a friend in Houston who's a haemophiliac, and he was telling me last week that at one time he went to the dentist to have a wisdom tooth removed, and he seemed to have gotten away with it.

So he got in his car to drive home, and as he started driving, it began to bleed, and it got worse and worse and worse as he drove home. So when he got home, he quickly picked up a towel and set out to the hospital.

He arrived at the hospital, the towel was wet through, dripping onto the floor as he tried to talk to the woman behind the glass screen in accident and emergency, his face covered in blood, blood all down his shirt, and this woman, well, she's had 12 years of it, hasn't she?

[ 6 : 23 ] Verse 25, 12. 12 years of suffering, 12 years. Think about it. Put yourself in her shoes. 12 years of saving up money to go to the doctors, hoping that her next appointment would bring a cure.

Perhaps 12 years of seeing her friends, getting married, and having to walk home all alone. The stigma of it all. You know, doctors, they're trained to speed recovery, aren't they?

At least I hope they are. Her doctors are the opposite. It's sort of a contradiction in terms. Just look there at verse 26, you'll see that. And to have suffered much under many physicians.

This is a contradiction. She suffered under many physicians. That's a thought there. It's supposed to alleviate suffering. And had spent all that she had and was no better.

It's going the wrong way, isn't it? No better, but rather grew worse. She's been paying to suffer more. Do you see that? Poor woman. Just imagine what her life's like.

[ 7 : 29 ] She must be drained of energy. She must think to herself in the morning, well, what's the point of getting out of bed as a shaft of the morning sunshine tries almost in vain to rouse her from her sleep.

And then suddenly, the news reaches her. Someone must have told her. He heals the sick. He calms the storm. He casts out evil. There might be hope for your condition.

So she's heard, hasn't she? And her focus, what is it? The focus is her illness, yes. But also Jesus. Think about it.

She's been combining her illness with doctors for 12 years, hasn't she? And now she's got a plan to combine her illness with Jesus.

And this is going to be a rendezvous. Think about it. A rendezvous with he whose word nature hears. I wonder if you've ever been at cross purposes with somebody.

[ 8 : 34 ] I know I have on plenty of occasions. Ask the paralytic. Do you remember the paralytic in chapter 2 when he was lowered down through the roof? Ask the paralytic, well, what's your biggest problem?

And he would say, well, it's obvious. Isn't it? It's my paralysis. But Jesus went straight for what? His sin, didn't he? Which is also our biggest problem. Ask this woman what her biggest problem is and she would say, well, read verses 25 and 26.

It's all written down there for you. It's clear. It's obvious. It's controlling my whole life. And so her whole existence is dominated by a medical condition, isn't it?

Her problem. But she's got a plan. She's got a plan. A plan as she sets out yet again from home. There's probably roots worn in the road towards Harley Street.

A familiar pattern. Maybe the neighbours are looking out from behind the curtains. They see that pattern again. But on this day, there's no coins in the vase on the mantelpiece to empty out.

[ 9 : 39 ] Nothing in her hand to bring. All she has really, it's in her heart, isn't it? There's a little glowing ember of faith in her heart as she sets out.

Verse 27. And with her desperation, just notice how long she takes to make her mind up. You know, have a look there at verse 27.

Does she procrastinate? She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. Do you see? It's instant, isn't it? Like a flick of a switch, she's there touching his garment.

Now, I find this interesting. Yes, she's got faith, but I suggest that her faith is sort of in the healing machine of Jesus Christ. I suggest to her, Jesus is very, much like a magic stone or something.

Something superstitious, like that statuette in the mouth of the tunnel. Like religion. We have control. So she sneaks up, doesn't she?

[ 10 : 42 ] Do you remember verse 27 behind? Did you notice that? And then she doesn't have personal contact. This isn't a relationship, friends.

And here's a shock. Pornography is like that. She's distant. Yes, I know we all feel sorry for her. I know it's awkward. And according to Old Testament law, it's something that's unclean.

There is all that. She does have that ember of faith, but at this stage, think about it. At this stage, her approach is outside of a relationship. Am I right? I fill the car up with petrol in just the same way.

You know, I don't have a relationship with the petrol pump. I just want the energy. That's all I want when I fill the car up. And that's what she wants. And she gets it, doesn't she? Verse 29. And immediately, the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

And we could finish here, couldn't we? At verse 29, she got what she came for, hit and run, we could finish. But we're not. There's more to it. Two points of application and then we'll look at our second point.

[ 11 : 53 ] Firstly, I wonder if we sometimes concentrate on the benefits of being a Christian. I know I do. I'm all the time thinking about eternity.

And so I can be a little bit like this woman. You know, I've got what I want. And my relationship, think about it, with Jesus can be contextualised by its benefits. Do you see? I don't know if you're with me on this.

We can sort of go to sleep in our salvation and forget our Saviour. Forget that relationship. And it's the Old Testament pattern, if you think about it.

Forgot became a byword, didn't it? A motif for Israel. Listen to this. You forgot the God who gave you birth, Deuteronomy, chapter 32.

And this woman, she's in danger, isn't she, is forgetting. But her little ember of faith, if you think about it, it'll cost Jesus his life, won't it? Do you see?

[ 12 : 49 ] It's wrought through a relationship. And so, with that relationship, Jesus can't just let her go. And he wants us, doesn't he? He wants us. He wants our whole lives, friends.

Hundred percent. Because how much of his life did he give for us? Gave his life, didn't he? Hundred percent of his life for us. Secondly, think about this.

You know when we sin, we're sort of excluding Jesus. Yes, we want him, but at arm's length, like an insurance policy in the cupboard at home or something.

There's a distance. And so, consequently, in our Christian lives, there can be distances with other people, can't there? We're not very hospitable. It seems like our houses can have a moat around, and we just turn up to touch his garment on Sundays.

And so, friends, let's go with this woman now into our second point. See what we can learn from her experience with Jesus. So, our first point was a desperate woman sneaks up to Jesus, and our second point is a daughter of the living God goes home.

[ 13 : 59 ] And this is really good news. Well, I suppose the woman, she wanted to finish her encounter at the end of verse 29, didn't she? She might have thought, well, let me get out of here. She didn't want the next few verses.

Like the paralytic, he just wanted the healing. And maybe we would like just the excitement of Christianity and not its implications. What does Jesus say in this passage?

Who touched me? Doesn't he? Says Jesus, into my own selfishness, into our own tidy, compartmentalised Christianity. He felt his power drain, didn't he, in the passage.

Chapter 15, he felt his father's wrath as he took delivery, friends, of our sin. Do you see? The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Not who touched me, but my God, my God, he said as he suffered on the cross. And suddenly it's personal, isn't it? It's a relationship with the living God. Have we bitten off more than we can chew?

[ 15 : 00 ] And it's all terrifying, this poor woman. Verses 30 to 32, just look there. And Jesus perceived in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garments?

And his disciples said to him, You see the crowd pressing around you and you say, Who touched me? Sort of virgin on insolence, isn't it there? Verse 32. And he looked around to see who had done it.

Jesus looks around, I imagine the woman glows red. It's a little bit like when I set the alarm off here in this building one day. Or you go through the detector at the airport and some lights start flashing and you feel the guilt, don't you?

Your heart burning. And Jesus is looking around, he's looking to and forth, like a ship's radar, back and forth. He's looking for who touched him. Verse 33.

And now, think about this. This is the second approach of this woman. And it's altogether different. Look there at verse 33. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear.

[16:03] Do you see that's the second came in the passage? The first is 27. Verse 27. She came up behind. Here, she came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

Is that a picture of you and Jesus' friend? Have you got that sort of a relationship? Is it him serving you like some sort of spiritual vending machine?

Or have you fallen down before him and told him the whole truth like this woman here? Have you done that? Just listen to this. Who touched me?

It's a poem. T'was the voice of the master and the woman's heart beat faster and faster. Trembling, she came and bound her head. I touched thee, Lord, was what she said. But the master answered, Go thy way.

Thy faith has made thee whole this day. And verse 33. I suppose she's like Isaiah as he comes into the presence of the living God.

[17:04] She's like Moses at the burning bush. They met God, listen, as he is and that's inside of a relationship. And verse 30 onwards. It's the Reformation.

It's Martin Luther as he realised that human approaches to God are from the wrong end. We meet Jesus as he comes to us and meets us and communes with us.

We meet him on his terms, not our terms. So here it is then, friends. She came up behind, didn't she? Verse 27. But then fell down before him.

Verse 33. She approached him. She came to him. A woman. Verse 25. And she went home. What? A daughter, didn't she? Verse 34.

And so as God's word probes our inner selves, exploring the relationship that we have with him. C.S. Lewis writes this.

[18:08] We trust not because a God exists, but because this God exists. And we meet him here, don't we, through this passage.

Here he is. He's a person, not a power. Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he came in the form of a human being that we can relate to. we thank you for that deep mystery of the incarnation. We thank you that he calls us into a relationship with him, that he fits us like a glove because he's human like us.

And we thank you, Father, because of that deep mystery he was able to absorb the sin and the punishment that would otherwise be ours as he died on the cross. And we pray, Father, that we'd sense the deep privilege that we have as Christians to be in a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ.

We pray that we wouldn't concentrate on the benefits of being a Christian, but that we'd concentrate on all that it is to be in Christ and in a relationship with him as he is in a relationship with you for all of eternity.

[ 19 : 33 ] So we pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be with us now this day and forevermore.  
Amen.