

## WELCOME 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 – All Saints' Sunday '20 A

Matthew 9:18-26

Welcome again this morning! I'm glad you're here. I pray you experience God's grace in abundance in this brief time together. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study times & other important information & updates.

We're continuing w/ our adapted worship...so as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources right there in your hands. *Special welcome to those who have jumped in on-line. Please make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning so that you experience at home what we're experiencing here. Our aim is to equip you so God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives & then out into the city to share what God has done for you.*

Remember all the great things we need to do to keep each other as safe as we can in this unending season of "the virus." Hand sanitizer. Masks. Sign in. Distance.

Offering. Communion. Special thanks to our set-up/clean-up folks!

### **As we move into this week...**

Telemedicine. Of all the adaptations to emerge during this time of SARS-Cov-2...That has to be my **least** favourite. I've spent enough years watching Drs touch, thump, tap manipulate, palpate & rotate...to know that's important. You can't do that from a screen. You can't feel flex poke or prod...Sometimes you have to touch.

Touch is an amazing thing. We were made **BY** it. We were made **FOR** it. We crave it. We miss it when it's not there. It communicates compassion comfort welcome celebration encouragement support discipline love. Without it we feel isolated, cut off, alone, drained...We somehow feel like we've become less human when we can't touch.

When God takes on our flesh in Jesus, he touches. He holds. He hugs. He lifts. He carries. He came to touch & be touched so we could be embraced forever by the Father's saving love. He touches & heals. He touches & restores. He touches & gives life to the full. After the resurrection, Jesus left physical signs of his salvation so that we would always be within touching distance of his grace & mercy...his healing & restoration...his forgiveness & abundant life. By his hands he re-writes the story of human life...from death to life in his presence forever.

Because Jesus has already written you into his story of eternal life & unfailing love & abundant joy; you can trust that when Jesus touches you it is to bless...to heal...to comfort & restore...to raise up & make strong. When Jesus touches, there is always transformation & new life...today he touches us again...

We'll explore & experience that together today. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

*O Living God of all our days and days yet to come, we praise you for this present moment. Fill us with your joy and empower us with your Holy Spirit, that our strength may be renewed to sing a new song of your glory in a world which longs for your justice and peace, and craves without knowing your healing and relief. All this we ask in the name of Jesus, in whom we become your new creation. Amen*

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Can you recall a time when God healed or restored something in your life?
2. Where would you like Jesus' healing touch in your life? Can you share that in 1 minute or less?

**BIBLES**

### All Saints' Sunday '20 A – HIS STORY – YOUR LIFE: HIS HEALING

"In this ward...you touch." After the introductions were out of the way, THAT was the start of my orientation to Pediatric Critical Care @ St Luke's Children's Hospital © 1985. My Chaplaincy Supervisor evaporated out the door as the Ward Nurse led me around introducing me to staff, parents & patients...although the patients were too small/sick to really notice...which is why she insisted I wash my hands & start touching...anything w/ needle, bandage, tape or monitor...I held touched, rubbed...She told me often what I had been told b/4: the last senses we lose are hearing & touch. Of course I talked...but mostly...I touched. Patients in their small cribs/beds, parents in their chairs & a few staff on their shoulders or arms when the work was wearying...like every shift...

"You're the first person from outside to shake my hand." He was a Viet Nam veteran. In 1995 AIDS was still a death sentence weighted w/ social stigma & he was in an AIDS hospice in a grubby hidden corner of Dallas, Tx. I had taken a small group of teens on an immersion experience...He talked about his military experience, but mostly about the loneliness of being abandoned by family & friends who were afraid to be near him...that simple handshake that human touch meant the world.

If a picture is worth 1000 words, then touch is worth 10,000X that. There are more than 2 billion nerve endings in the outermost layer of human skin alone...We are made for touch. We don't live fully w/ it. A few weeks back there was an uprising in a senior citizen care facility in the US...Why were they revolting? They were sick beyond measure of isolation They held up signs that read "We'd rather die of Coronavirus than loneliness." Many had not had physical contact w/ their families in over 8 months or skin-to-skin w/ another human for 6. We feel less than human when we can't touch.

The very essence of the incarnation...of God in Jesus Christ taking on human flesh is that God became touchable: *We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard & seen. We saw him with our own eyes & touched him with our own hands.* - 1 Jn 1:1 Acc to the OT humans weren't even supposed to look at God but in Jesus we didn't just "behold" his glory...we **TOOK HOLD** of him. Today's account from Mt's biography/gospel is about the results of getting w/in touching distance of God...What happens in our lives when Jesus, God with all those nerve endings, touches us?

What Mt gives us is really 2 narratives broken into 3 parts...where one intrudes & inserts itself into the middle of the other account...like children talking over each other at a dinner table...book inside a book *As Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came & knelt before him. "My daughter has just died," he said, "but you can bring her back to life again if you just come & lay your hand on her."* When you read the Bible don't read too fast...As Jesus was saying **this**...what's "this"? **BIBLES**

*One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus & asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like we & the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, & then they will fast. "Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink & rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine & ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved."* Jesus is in the middle of a conversation proclaiming the arrival of a new epoch in human affairs. The long-promised Kingdom has broken into the world in him, the BRIDEGROOM...THE ONE the world's been waiting for since forever is right now right b/4 their eyes & now is the time to celebrate to break into festal joy & *as Jesus was saying THIS* the local synagogue leader bursts through the crowd, collapses at Jesus' feet & pleads for Jesus to come bring his daughter back to life. There's a new era dawning but the old one's still here & still claiming lives & breaking hearts same as it ever was ...same as it ever was...It's a new day but the old one just claimed another victim...death reared its ugly head...

Talk about your worst nightmare. No parent should lose a child. There's nothing like the desperation of a parent w/ a child in pain or danger. He is an important respected figure in the community...a man w/ great authority, & he's on his face at Jesus' feet. He's got nothing. You know he's tried everything & all that's left is desperation...and...faith...She's dead, I'm dying inside **BUT YOU CAN BRING HER BACK TO LIFE AGAIN** if you just take a few of those 2 billion nerve endings & lay them on her.- *So Jesus & his disciples got up & went with him.* Now I don't know what he was expecting...but that immediate response? No question. No comment. No anything...just stood up & started walking. Now the intrusion...

*Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, for she thought, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed."* This 2<sup>nd</sup> story stuck inside the 1<sup>st</sup> is actually the same story...desperation...and...faith...Ok...I know there's a difference b/t a young girl & an older woman...one's dead & the other feels like she dies again every day when the

bleeding won't stop...when she's once again not allowed to touch anyone not allowed into the worship of the community not allowed to live in the presence of others. 2<sup>nd</sup> only to leprosy, blood was the next worst thing to get you kept outside of town...away from anyone else so you didn't defile anyone else...so you didn't infect the rest of us w/ your uncleanness...impurity. *Jesus turned around, & when he saw her he said, "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment.*

In that moment 3 things happen...1. Daughter... She's spent the last 12 years being told she has no place among God's people defective defiled damaged & in 1 touch/1 desperate grasp of faith Jesus speaks her back into the family. Why do you think when *WE* bless each other it is so critical we use the name we receive in baptism: Child of God? Because that's who we are! That's our identity given by Christ that nothing can take or shake. She's been given her life back - given her identity back. She's been restored to the family. The prodigal son welcomed home before he can bluster out his proper confession is given a ring & a robe & a feast...befitting a son home from battle...he's been MIA & now he's back. She's been kept outside the gate & now she has a place at the table.

2. Made well/Saved...*Your faith has made you well...*The word is literally "saved". *sodzo... SAVED YOU* Mt could have used *therapeuo* or *iaomai* but he knows that when someone believes in their heart in the saving restoring power of Christ & lives that faith in their life more than physical transformation occurs...she has been moved from death to life. (Jn 5:24) Paul wrote & Luther rediscovered that we are saved by grace through faith...faith lays hold of the promise freely extended in Jesus Christ & she has laid hold of his promise.

3. Healing the whole point of her faithful pursuit of Jesus through the mob was also realized...the bleeding stopped & her body restored to wholeness. Pain shame fear tears loneliness ostracism...gone. It was not a magic cloak that brought her to life again but the Only Son of God & Saviour Jesus Christ who saved her & made her whole.

Back to the original narrative...*When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house & saw the noisy crowd & people playing pipes, he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in & took the girl by the hand, & she got up. News of this spread through all that region.* Jesus arrives to full-blown mourning rituals & overwhelming grief. It was Jewish custom to hire professionals to do the job right...& they weren't going to lose a day's pay

because some renegade rabbi arrived too late to do any good & was working on trickery & deceit. So they mocked & hurled scorn @ Jesus & likely the grieving Father/Mother...But a touch from Jesus raises her to life – restores her to the world of the living & returns her to her family. It's worth noting that I have done something Jesus has never done...I did it Thursday...preached a funeral sermon. Jesus broke up every funeral he ever attended by raising the guest of honour.

Let's go back quickly so we see what we need to see... *As Jesus was saying this...* what's "*this*"? The Kingdom of life is now here in Jesus...yes the old reign of death still claims its victims. Death is a mighty enemy but in Christ death is a defeated enemy. Jesus gives us a glimpse of what he intends for each of us...full & complete abundant & eternal life w/o impediment hindrance hurt or impairment... Jesus; who has authority over everything, wants to save & heal & restore everyone who understands the depth of their need & the expanse of their desperation...the overwhelming power of death staring them in the face & the super-abundant triumphant power of life present in Jesus' touch.

*"Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them."* (Mt 5:3) Need & desperation, like poverty of spirit, are often the first steps in the pathway of faith. You can't fall beyond the reach of his saving grasp. You can't be dead beyond the reach of his raising grip. Wherever you are you are w/in touching distance of healing - hope - restoration - renewal - new life - blessing beyond measure & love beyond your wildest imagination & joy unsurpassed

Because Jesus has already written you into his story of eternal life & unfailing love & abundant joy; you can trust that when Jesus touches you it is to bless...to heal...to comfort & restore...to raise up & make strong. When Jesus touches, there is always transformation & new life... By his nail-pierced hands he re-writes the story of human life...& your life from death to life in his presence forever.

Let's pray w/ that in mind: **Heavenly Father...in a world that thrives on uncertainty & delights in doubt, we remember that to doubt or challenge your intention for all creation is to be lost in sin & confusion. Today, anchor us in your gift of salvation & eternal life delighting only in you. Bring your healing restoring power to bear in our lives & let Jesus reign in all we are. Grant us your peace so that in your good time we see your plan & purpose reach its completion & your Kingdom grow. In Jesus' Name...Amen.**