

The crowds are back. They had dispersed for awhile after they watched the boats sail off across the water to the other side of our sea. If the crowds are back, and they are, I can hear them, the loud, raucous din that seems to accompany our streets almost constantly now, then it must mean one thing...he's back. I had wondered, as that storm had rolled across the sea mere hours after their boats had left, if they had survived, if he was ok. But, of course he is...this man, this Jesus, this...hope, that has descended upon our world. A storm isn't going to stop him. Nothing it seems can stop him. His power...it seems to have no limits...

The question creeps into my mind almost unconsciously. Could I be the limit to his power? Could my body be his breaking point? Could he... No...it's foolish. I'm crazy to even think it. It can't be possible. Nothing has helped. Doctor, after doctor, after doctor. Twelve years of doctors all for nothing. I look around my hollow house, what once was beautiful and immaculate, a wasted shell of what once was, an apt metaphor I supposed for my life, my body. My house, just another victim of my completely drained bank account, handed over to these charlatans who claim they can heal people. Doctors...pfft.

In the beginning some of them at least listened. They let me talk about my symptoms even though I could tell I made them uncomfortable,

let's face it, no man wants to hear about women's troubles. It's too much for them, too fleshly, too close to the earth, too visceral and raw. They'd rather spend their time in their heads, not within the physical realities of a body that keeps telling me it's failing. Yet...no one knew what to do. There were medicines, suggestions, treatments, visit after visit, until finally one after another they gave up on me. Some didn't even care to listen, told me I was crazy, that it was all in my head, that my body was clearly reacting to something that was emotionally wrong with me. No one ever believes a woman when she says something is wrong, always looking for another explanation because clearly they with all their medical knowledge know my body better than I know myself. So much money...gone...and for what? For this? An empty, desolate house. A body that continues to bleed, pale and weakened by these hemorrhages that just...never...stop. I'm exhausted. I'm done. I have nothing left...just shells...a shell of a home, a shell of a body, a shell of myself and what once was when I was healthy...twelve years ago. Twelve years...it's been that long...

It's not that no one cares...some still do...but at this point, everyone's kind of tired of hearing about it. Let's face it, I'm tired of talking about it. My life was vibrant once...friends, community, activity, worship...but now...well now it's different. I know the law. I know there are times people

have to avoid me, because if they want to go up to the Temple and pray they have to be clean and being around me renders them unclean, but that doesn't happen all the time. People are still around. But I can tell...they're weary of me. At least they can still go pray...I can't...not like this. There's no telling what my body will do with each day, and so I have no hope of ever being clean enough to go worship. So, I keep to myself...and everyday everything gets a little smaller, my circle, my world, my faith, my life...me.

But him...he is not small. No...if anything he seems to keep getting bigger. The crowds seem like they've doubled since the last time he was here and that wasn't that long ago. I've heard the stories. He works wonders. He weaves stories. He talks about the kingdom of God like it's right there within reach. I heard him say something the other day about mustard seeds and the kingdom. It's an apt metaphor for my life because that's about how big it is now...the size of a mustard seed... I don't know maybe he could help. He's helped others. Why not me? But how do I even ask him? How do I even get near enough to him? All those people to push through. Yet...today is a good day...I don't feel as weak as usual. I actually feel like I have a little strength. Maybe that's a sign. Maybe I should. Maybe he could. Maybe... At this point what do I have to lose?

It's so hot and it's so loud and, my word, the people! By the time I worked up the courage to get out here they had started moving with purpose. I'm trying to maneuver as fast as I can, be as subtle as I can, but it's hard. I catch snippets of conversation as I move. "Did you see Jairus?" "That poor man." "I just heard the news..." "Thank goodness the teacher is here today." "Maybe he can help." "I've never seen Jairus beg before." What's going on? Jairus? The synagogue leader? What business could he have with Jesus? Another snippet of conversation behind me... "Yes...dying. She's dying. He asked Jesus to help."

Reality seeps into my bones with cold, dark reality. The crowd, Jesus, they're moving towards Jairus' house. His daughter...I had heard she was sick, but dying? That poor man...of course he would ask Jesus for help. I can't interrupt him now! He has to save this little girl. But...if he can save her...if even Jairus believes he can stop death from arriving, then maybe, maybe there's enough faith in the world for both of us. Maybe...maybe if I just get close enough to touch his cloak, maybe that will be enough. I won't draw attention to myself, I won't delay him, I won't get in the way. Just one touch, maybe that's all it would take. There's something about knowing that Jairus, a man of deep faith, one of our leaders, has asked for healing help from Jesus that makes my hope seem real, seem possible. Yes, I'm going to

do it. He's so close now...I just have to reach out. I see the fringe of his prayer shawl, the wind is pushing it behind him. If I just touch those...

It only takes a second. My fingers brush his clothes, and I can feel it. Instantly. Some sort of cosmic change in my body, in my very soul. It's stopped. It's stopped. *It's stopped!* He healed me. I'm healed! Oh no, he's turning around...no, no, no...keep moving! Jairus' daughter! He's asking who touched him. This can't be happening. There are hundreds of people and he felt *that?! My one little touch?! Should I run away? Should I admit what I did? If I tell him, then he can get back to focusing on Jairus. He needs to move, so I might as well just say it. He clearly wants to hear it, to know what happened. And he just healed me, so who am I to deny him the truth? To deny him my story of what he has done for me?*

"It was me..." My voice is louder than I anticipated. The dirt feels hot and rough against my knees as I kneel before him, the crowd parting around me like the Red Sea before Moses. He looks at me, you can see the questions in his eyes, he wants to know what happened, what I did. He's not moving. He's stopped in his tracks. He's not going to go to Jairus until I talk. "It was me, teacher. I'm sorry. I've...I've been sick, for years, no one could fix me. I...I had heard, what you can do, what you've done. I thought, maybe, if I even got close enough to touch your clothes you could

heal me. So, I reached out and I grabbed your cloak. I'm sorry, but it worked! I'm healed...you...you healed me." I can't look at him, I'm expecting him to yell, to curse me, to say I acted without his permission. I see his feet come closer, settle right in front of me, and then...he's speaking. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease." And just like that he's gone...moving again, jostled by people in the crowd who have come for Jairus, but I don't hear any of it. I just kneel there. Daughter...he called me daughter...he...he wished me peace. He saw my faith...he heard my story...without judgment, without reproof. He listened to me. He stopped what he was doing and listened to me. That's never happened before. He heard me. He believed me. He believed *my* story. He saw me, for who I was, a sick, desperate daughter of Abraham who just wanted her life back. And he healed me. Thank you, Jesus. You have made me whole...body, mind, and spirit. Thank you, Jesus.

Jesus could have kept moving. He had a vital place to be, with a time crunch on him. A little girl was dying, he was acting on behalf of one of the Jewish leaders whose support or disapproval could alter Jesus' life and ministry drastically. And yet he stopped. He wanted to hear this woman's story, to know what happened, to hear her. He gave her story, her life value and validation. For so long, she had been on her own, an island unto herself,

distanced because of her condition, her worsening economic conditions, and the emotional trauma of her situation. *Jesus restored her to life*. Not just physically, but completely and wholly. He gave her emotions, her experience validation. He saw her as the whole person she was, someone who believed, someone who was ill, someone who was so determined to advocate for herself that she put her trust in one simple touch. He saw her. He showed her that her story is important. It had value. Her whole story. Her whole person. It was meaningful. It was worthy. She was worthy.

Whose stories have we silenced? Whose stories have we refused to hear? Who have we ignored or treated like they aren't worthy because we think we know their situation? Who do we need to see for their whole selves? Because at the end of the day, aren't we all like this woman? Wanting to be seen and heard and loved for our whole person, our whole experience? Don't we all want our story, our truth to be cherished? To be accepted? Us, exactly as we are. That's what Jesus did for her. He honored her truth. And if we are meant to be Christ's body in the world, his hands, his feet, his ears, then whose stories do we need to hear? Whose truth do we need to honor? Whose hands are reaching out to touch the fringe in the small hope they will be restored to life? Who needs to hear your faith has made you well, go in peace? May we be Jesus to them. **AMEN!!!**