

NO LAUGHING MATTER

Mark 5:21-43 *"They laughed at Him. After He put them all out, He took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with Him and went in where the child was."*

Do you like being touched? Now, that can be a touchy subject, but think about it! A new study, reviewed by Jessica Schrader in the April issue of *Psychology Today* says touch is one of the first senses a human develops. Long before children can talk and understand language their parents hold them to make them feel better when they're stressed. And *consensual touch*? That's when someone willingly agrees to have physical contact with another. Before a stressful job interview or test, a hug from a loved one can help calm you down. After a challenging day, a nice hand massage provides much-needed relaxation.

Today, many people feel they're continually struggling with stress and anxiety. We're obsessed with producing things. Meeting goals! And the steady stream of news and information on TV, computers, and cellphones? It's enough to exhaust you! More and more, inactive lifestyles are contribute to the stress so many are feeling. That article in *Psychology Today* about the power of human touch? It talks about the devastating effects on infants if they are deprived of human touch. That's true for adults. We all long to be touched. Loneliness is a complex human emotion. Loneliness is a major problem in aging. It arises when you feel disconnected from others. You're here! Your family's there! Either physically or emotionally. And it can be painful! But it's necessary for you to recognize, you're not alone. A lot of people struggle with feelings of loneliness in their lives. And that makes the healing power of human touch a fascinating subject.

Our lesson today is the story of two touches. They're found in Mark 5:21-43. It's about Jesus' healing two people with different needs and backgrounds Their meetings with Jesus show deep truths about faith and community. An unnamed woman, suffering for 12 years sought healing. She reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment as He was passing by her. He hadn't noticed her. She thought just touching the hem of His garment would heal her. And it did! Instantly, she was healed! Jesus asked, *"Who touched Me?"* The woman came forward, trembling, and Jesus assured her that her faith had made her well. It's a reminder that our faith can lead to transformation and restoration proving that even those on the margins of society, the outcasts and forgotten can find healing and acceptance in Jesus.

Then, there was Jairus, a synagogue ruler in Capernaum who held a meaningful position within the Jewish community. He was a respected leader who oversaw religious activities at the local synagogue that included worship services and other activities. His deep faith led him to Jesus for help when his daughter faced a life-threatening illness. His painful plea to Jesus was, *"Come and lay Your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live."* Mark and Luke wrote in their Gospels that Jesus went home with Jairus and *"saw a commotion of people crying and wailing loudly."* (Mark 5:38; Luke 8:52 NIV) In Matthew's version of this story Jesus *"saw the noisy crowd and people making music"* (Matthew 9:23 NIV) and informed them that the girl was not dead, just asleep. And He told the crowd to *"Go away"*. But the crowd laughed at Him! Mark says Jesus then put the crowd outside and went back inside to take the little girl by the hand and say, *"Little girl, I say to you, get up!"* It was as simple as a physician feeling the pulse of a patient. She got up! And Jesus instructed her parents that the girl should be fed to show that as she had been dead, now she was alive and needed food and was able to eat. He also said Jairus, and his wife should not tell anyone what had happened. But Matthew's Gospel says: *"News of this spread through all that region."* This story of the *Two Touches* shows how Jesus meets you at your deepest need. Even when it seems impossible Jesus invites His touch, just as you, too, can care for those around you.

A healing touch can move communities. Our actions as a church can affect others. So, let us help bring healing and hope into our community. It's no laughing matter! Churches in action play a vital role in communities. It goes beyond having religious services. It involves community outreach. It's support for those in need. Whether through food banks, shelter programs, or other efforts, churches contribute considerably to positive change. The *touch of Jesus* does carry deep meaning. Jesus healed people through touch. His hands became channels of divine love, authority, and power. When Jesus laid His hands on someone, it was out of His concern. He reached out to the broken. The sick. The weary. He offered them hope, renewal, and salvation. And that matches our spiritual journey. Sometimes we experience God's touch in stages.

First, we have an initial awareness of Him. Then it's followed by a deeper understanding of Him. Everyone knows that human beings have five senses. But not everyone knows that each of those senses is carefully and specifically designed by God to serve as a doorway into His divine Spirit. The opening verse in 1 John, which

is a letter of love, light, and fellowship from John the Apostle, refers to three of our five senses. It says, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”* (1 John 1:1-2) Then, the Apostle Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 2:15 the sense of smell. And Psalm 34:18 refers to taste. That’s all five senses! It’s as if you were designed like a Geiger counter finely tuned to crackle with God’s holy presence and divine power working in you.

When John emphasized the sensory experience of meeting Jesus by saying *it’s through touch that you enter into fellowship with God*, Jesus’ touch is His willingness to restore and transform lives. It bridged the gap between humanity and divinity. Whether healing physical ailments, or touching hearts, Jesus’ touch demonstrates love, grace, and the promise of eternal life. He brings joy and honesty to your brokenness. Jesus’ touch shows His willingness to restore and transform life.

Jesus wasn’t afraid to touch others. Decaying leprous skin didn’t repulse Him. He didn’t hesitate to touch and wash the dirty feet of His disciples before the Last Supper in the Upper Room. Jesus used His hands to show a powerful message of love, humility, and acceptance. The Psalmist said of God, *“When You open Your hand, people are satisfied with good things.”* (Psalm 104:28) And then in Psalm 145:16: *“You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”* That’s the touch of Jesus! Jesus used His hands to show that His power can flow through your hands when you are surrendered to His Spirit. When you extend your hand to touch someone in prayer, or to minister to their needs, you’re being an instrument of God’s love and power. Your hand becomes a channel of His grace. It brings comfort, renewal, and deliverance to those in need. It’s a physical expression of your faith when you touch someone. It’s a demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit within you. Throughout the Bible you can see the importance of hands in various acts of worship. From the lifting of hands in praise and adoration, to the laying on of hands for commissioning and ordination, the physical touch of hands shows connection to, and union with, the passing on of spiritual grace.

Don’t underestimate the power in your hands. When they are surrendered to the Holy Spirit, your hands can minister to others with love, compassion, and do miraculous work. And when you do, you will witness the miraculous power of God flowing through you as you touch the lives of those around you.

Jesus healed many people of many sicknesses and disabilities in many situations. Sometimes, we credit His healing to His words. And at other times to His touch. People said, *“On the Sabbath He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to Him? How are such mighty works done by His hands?”* (Mark 6:2) Each touch carried deep spiritual significance revealing Jesus’ love and compassion.

Healing in your own life involves treating your whole person. Your mind and your body. Not just the injury or disease. Focus on blessings. Even in challenging times, be positive. Have things in your life that will uplift your spirit. Remember, healing is a journey. It’s okay to seek professional help. Or to seek help in your faith community. You’re not alone. Challenges can be painful. But they also offer opportunities for deeper learning and personal growth. Hardships can help you develop your inner strength. Obstacles are not just barriers. They can be steppingstones. Facing what hurts you can lead you to discovering important truths about yourself and your abilities.

Use the **surrender prayer** so you can let go and let God have His way in your life. The Surrender Prayer is a powerful statement of trust and surrender to God. It helps you find comfort during tough times. When you let go of your worries, your desires, and yourself-centeredness placing everything in God’s hands, you say, *“Jesus, I surrender myself to you. Take care of everything.”*

But remember surrendering doesn’t mean giving up. It means trusting that God’s plan is better than yours. Having this mind frame will create space for healing and growth. Whether through prayer, meditation, or just being with your faith community, the **surrender prayer** can help you turn difficulties into opportunities.

It’s called healing! And it’s no laughing matter!

AMEN