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**What Jesus Felt**

**The Rev. Deborah Woolsey**

**Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens OH**

She had just met someone who was nothing like anyone she had ever met before. Someone who seemed larger than life, who invited danger, yet who also seemed to care deeply even as he appeared to push people away. She couldn't figure out if she should be afraid of him, stand up to him, admire him, follow him, or forget him. The source of her confusion about this person was she didn't really know who he was. When she asked his name, he had given a ridiculous answer. So, she asked him: "Okay Doctor, really now, who are you?"

When the character Rose asked that question in the first episode of the newly rebooted BBC science fiction series *Doctor Who*, she wasn't asking just for herself. She was asking for the viewers all around the world who were curious, skeptical, and hopeful about an old time favorite TV show's return and to a whole new audience who had never met the character with the ridiculous name The Doctor before. So there were lots of breaths held as The Doctor answered Rose's quite reasonable question.

"Do you know like we were saying about the earth revolving?" The Doctor began, "It's like when you were a kid, the first time they tell you that the world is turning, and you just can't quite believe it because everything looks like it is standing still. I can feel it. The turn of the earth. The ground beneath our feet is spinning at a thousand miles an hour. The entire planet is hurtling around the sun at sixty-seven thousand miles an hour. And I can feel it. We're falling through space, you and me, clinging to the skin of this tiny little world. And if we let go.... That's who I am."

To punctuate his answer, The Doctor took hold of Rose's hand and then let it go, showing a connection he has with every living being clinging to the skin of the earth that is falling through space. Typical of the series, there was no longer any time for fleshing out the answer, as the next exciting moment happened just then, but the task had been completed: The Doctor had attempted to say who he is. He is someone who is aware; aware of the biggest and smallest things, all the time, and this awareness makes him care deeply, it reminds him of his connection to a planet not his own, and the people on it. Instead of labeling himself, his answer represents his relationship to the earth and its inhabitants, and intrigued Rose so much she decided to travel with The Doctor and in so doing transformed from a person with no interest or passion in life into someone who learns to see and feel a deep connection to all of life.

That deep connection – or one quite like it – may be what the author of Mark’s Gospel was referring to when they wrote about Jesus feeling power going out of him when in the midst of a pushy crowd, a woman lightly touched the hem of his clothing. It’s sort of an odd little line in the midst of two very dramatic stories in today’s Gospel lesson about Jesus restoring two women to life. Jesus was on his way to save a little girl’s life at the request of her father, surrounded by a crowd that apparently was so big Jesus could barely move. And as he walked along in the midst of the jostling, the sounds, the irrelevant small talk, and the smells of that crowd – all of which could be distracting and consume all the attention of anyone’s five senses – Jesus suddenly stopped. Surrounded by all that energy and activity he felt something happening in the middle of it all that no one else did. Well, not quite no one, because someone else felt something too.

The woman who had been suffering felt restored to wellness and wholeness at the exact same time. And maybe in that moment, she felt better than she had in the last 12 long years or maybe her whole life. So in the midst of that clueless, vociferous, smelly crowd, two people felt something no one else was aware of: the restoration of the life, and perhaps felt connected to each other.

There has been a lot of ink spilled, as they say, about this woman whose name has not been recorded as part of this story. But her ailments certainly were. The author of the Gospel was careful to record those details: that she had been hemorrhaging, or bleeding uncontrollably for 12 years. And that was just part of her suffering: she had spent money on doctors whose prescribed cures instead of easing her affliction only produced more suffering. So we could assume she was suffering poverty as well as pain and the continual bleeding. There are those who like to go on and on about that bleeding, believing it to be menstrual, which would make her ritually unclean according to religious and cultural laws of the time, even though there is nothing in the text to support that assumption. Sometimes we have to be careful to avoid the temptation to use characters from the Bible to promote our agendas or interests instead of stepping back and seeing their story for what it is.

While there is no mention that this woman was not welcome to participate in normal society because of her ailment, we can notice that she was alone. Unlike the father of the little girl who begged Jesus to heal her, this woman had no one to speak for her. We don’t know why. The author doesn’t give us that detail. All we are told is she is alone, and maybe that can be enough for us: a long-suffering woman, alone in a crowd, who should have given up hope long ago, but had heard of Jesus and somehow sensed or believed or trusted there is something about him powerful enough to give her the relief she still longed for so that she could return to living unhindered by the tiring, depleting illness in her body.

So she reached out; she snuck up behind him, and barely grazed the hem of his clothing. An act that most likely would not be noticed when there was so much more direct contact happening all round Jesus.

But we heard it was noticed, Jesus noticed the power that left him at the same time the woman noticed her restored wellness.

We might wonder about what that power loss of Jesus means. In our cultural context, we might easily imagine that Jesus felt the loss of power because we see Jesus as a giver of life and healing and in order to give, you have to have something. But after you give whatever it is, you don't have it any more, so you might sense or feel the loss. Like how a person can feel tired after a long day of work or any time you give energy to a task, like taking a difficult exam. We only have so much to give, and when we've given it, we feel the loss.

Maybe it is tempting to think of Jesus as only having so much power, and therefore he needed to conserve it, or use it wisely. And if we look at this story this way, it can become easy to vilify the woman suffering from hemorrhaging as selfish, greedily taking life for herself at the expense of the little girl, whose life was still ahead of her. But that is not how Jesus responded in the Gospel. There was still plenty of life for the little girl, even after the crowd said it was too late. The problem with an economy of scarcity is the constant fear and worry that there won't be enough of whatever the resources are for everyone. So we start to make judgements about who is worthy to receive the resources: the young or the old, the rich or the poor, the skilled or the unskilled, the healthy or the sick. This line of thinking could be applied to try and understand why Jesus didn't heal every person he came across, or restore everyone who died to life, because he only had so much power.

But that would be reading our cultural economy into the Gospel, not seeing Jesus for who he is. Jesus didn't come to cure the sick, he came to restore people to a right relationship with God. So when the woman felt restored, and he felt the power go out of him, maybe it wasn't because he had a limited amount of power to give. Maybe what they both felt was similar to The Doctor who feels the dynamic spin of the earth as it hurls through space, they were feeling or sensing that connection to all of life and to God.

That is why Jesus called the woman out, not to shame her, not to chastise her, but to honor the connection between them, the relationship that had begun with the touch of a hem. Did you notice, this woman the author of the Gospel didn't bother to name was given one by Jesus? In addition to lifting up her faith, he called her

daughter. So, the woman who had been alone was now part of Jesus' family. Now she had a name that was more than her new identity, it named her relationship and connection to Jesus and the world and can give new meaning to life.

Maybe the author of Mark's Gospel wrote about these events in order to show us God's economy of love, where there is plenty, and it is never too late. I know we often think of an economy as something that is about jobs and wages and prices and goods produced and goods sold because that is the type of economy humanity has chosen to create. But God has a different kind of economy in mind for us; one of profound connection and participation. One where we all contribute what God has given us with the intention of building that relationship with God and each other.

That is one of the opportunities with our new coffee shop ministry we are calling CrossRoads Café. One of the things I noticed during our soft open was how the customers who came into the café wanted to give, wanted to contribute because they wanted to help create something with us. Even though we only sold drinks for \$1, almost every day there was twice as much money in the tip and donation jar as drinks we sold. And there were the well wishes, the invitations by our neighbors at the Alumni center and folks who work uptown to help us advertise by putting up fliers and helping spread the word in addition to buying coffee. Through CrossRoads we've felt some powerful connections with our community this month.

Sometimes, I wonder if it can sound contradictory for those of us used to giving away things as part of ministry to start charging money for something like a cup of coffee. But one thing I observed was charging for a cup of coffee invited the customer into a deeper relationship with us. I heard parents of new students who came for a cup of coffee talk about a student working orientation who told them to stop by and said CrossRoads is their new favorite coffee shop. That's feeling a connection and participation that is creating more than a business, it's creating a good place in the community.

That's something I need to remember on the days when it can feel like there is more going out than is coming in; because that is when I've fallen into a different economy mindset and need to reconnect with the one Jesus showed in today's Gospel. That can be a helpful reminder for all our ministries here at Church of the Good Shepherd. That they can be opportunities for us to live into God's economy of love where the focus is on our connection to God and each other, which is how even in the midst of a cultural economy crowded with the sounds and smells and pushing and shoving of fear and scarcity we can with God's help create the Kingdom of God in the hope that maybe more than two people in a crowd will feel the deep connection of love of God and see the world as it could be.