

152 "she came trembling"

(This Reflection was written before news of the atrocities in Paris, which require of us a profound "waiting on the Lord" as to why He is allowing such vile deeds in these times. The poor woman we think of in this Reflection perhaps embodies a great deal of the Lord's answers to our questions).

"And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue" (Luke 8.41). For a man holding this senior position within the local community to come to Jesus at all took a great deal of "humble pie", especially as his coming, and his desperate plea, were in full view of the crowds: he and his wife had only one daughter, aged twelve, who was dying - that was why Jairus arrived. Jesus set out for Jairus' house, but progress was slow because of the crowds pressing around Him; we can imagine poor Jairus thinking, if not shouting, "Oh DO HURRY UP!".

And then - "Oh no, what now?"! For Jesus had stopped, and turned, and in the midst of the throng He asked - "Who touched Me?". No wonder the disciples thought that was a pretty daft question (verse 45), but Jesus knew that "power had gone out of Him" (verse 46).

What an extraordinary situation had suddenly come about: the jostling crowds, the synagogue leader, a child dying or already dead, and now a time-wasting question that surely would never get an answer.

We read in verse 43 about the poor woman with an "issue of blood" - a problem that had started twelve years before, in the same year that Jairus' daughter had been born. Over the years she had spent all her money on treatments that had done no good, and in that time she would have faced endless social rejection on all sides because of her "unclean" condition: "Oooh, you must have done something really AWful to deserve a punishment like this! So just don't come near us".

Yet this day, somehow, she found herself within touching distance of Jesus of Nazareth, perhaps by "chance", perhaps by a tip-off from a kind neighbour, perhaps by an inner sense that she should go down that way today. Her task was very simple as far as she was concerned - to push through the crowd and touch Jesus' garment. Perhaps through the looks of disgust and a few sharp elbows she drew nearer, and nearer.

And she got there. She did it - her arm stretching forth, and her fingers touching and clenching His coat for a moment. " Immediately her issue of blood was staunch" (verse 44).

She withdrew, becoming quickly hidden in the crowd once more - healed, filled with utter joy, and longing to burst forth with praise and then shout to all and sundry what had just happened to her. But then, what horror was this? Jesus was looking for her, His steady gaze going round the faces of the crowd - like a Head Teacher demanding before the whole school that the miscreant own up - only far, far worse.

Should she turn and make her escape? Or? We can only wonder at what went through her head in those moments, and how long was the interval between Jesus' question, and the woman's response.

But, "she came trembling" (verse 47), terrified that the blessings she had just been given - healing, acceptance, normality, hope - were going to be cruelly snatched back from her. Yes, she did announce what had happened, but not to the crowds in triumph. She fell at Jesus' feet, blurting out her story, fearful of a terrible dose of anger, rejection and humiliation that would come her way.

How would a Jairus-figure, or the big-mouths in the crowd, have reacted over her oh-so-irregular behaviour? But the words she heard from Jesus' lips were utter balm to her soul - "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace". And she did, departing from the story and the Scriptures, her life transformed by a moment's encounter with the Lord Jesus.

Since then, the same Lord Jesus has been crucified and raised, ascended and glorified, sending us the Holy Spirit so that we are as close to "the hem of His garment" as was that poor woman that day. In Himself He is unchanged, displaying just the same love, power and beauty as ever,

Not for us, at present, the ability to see Him or touch Him physically. Instead we are given something just as precious - the ability to see Him and touch Him spiritually. This spiritual touching has two huge blessings: we come to Him with not a crowd in sight; and we come to Him with not a whiff of trembling, but filled instead with gratitude, love and praise.