

ReDay

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...
(Mark 6:31)



Unless I touch...

Over the last two months we have reflected on seeing God and listening to God. This month, as the Lenten period draws to a close and we look to the celebration of Christ's resurrection, we focus on the role that touch plays in our relationship with God.

Both the unknown woman with the bleeding and Thomas the disciple had a strong need to touch Jesus. For both, this was an act of faith, hope and affirmation – and perhaps something even deeper.

Jesus seemed to specialise in touch: he touched the blind, the lepers, and the children. His hands held healing power. He seemed to invite touch, as we see in the woman who anointed his feet with her tears.

There is great power in touch. In the Old Testament there are strong warnings about touching both what is holy and what is unclean, for example Uzza, seemingly struck down for touching the Ark of the Covenant. (2 Samuel 6:7. See also Leviticus and Deuteronomy). Yet in Jesus we see the healing and wholesome power of Divine touch.

What can we discover for ourselves when we explore these encounters of people reaching out to touch Jesus?
What longing do we discover in ourselves to reach out and touch Jesus?

And how can we be the touch of Jesus to the hurting world around us?

<https://youtu.be/WIkTp1YtthI>

UNLESS I TOUCH...

Call to worship

Who formed humanity out of dust by the work of your hands,
Who touched the mountains and they smoked,
Touch us again.

Touch us with your healing hand.
Touch us with the breath of your Spirit.
Touch us anew with your love, grace and mercy.

Prayer

Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus
To reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him

Open our ears, Lord
And help us to listen
Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus



Scripture

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Mark 6:53-56

... the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Luke 6:17-19

Song

Give thanks to the Lord our God and King
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For the life that's been reborn
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

Forever God is faithful
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us, forever

From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God we will carry on
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

[2x]
Forever God is faithful...

Sing praise, sing praise [4x]

Forever God is faithful...

Forever You are faithful...

Scripture

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him.

He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹ "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Mark 5:24-34

Prayer

Sacred hands of Jesus, they were bound for me;
Wounded hands of Jesus, stretched upon a tree,
Ever interceding, mercy is their plea.
Their effectual pleading brings grace to me,
Redeeming grace to me.ⁱⁱ

Scripture

While they were still talking about this,
Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."
They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.
He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in
minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself!
Touch me and see..."

Luke 24: 36-39a

Although Thomas the Twin was one of the twelve disciples,
he wasn't with the others when Jesus appeared to them. So they told him, "We have seen the Lord!"
But Thomas said, "First, I must see the nail scars in his hands and touch them with my finger.
I must put my hand where the spear went into his side. I won't believe unless I do this!"

John 20:24-25 CEV



Reflection

Jesus was the living incarnation of God.

God's Word tells us:

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son...has made him known. (John 1:18).

Until Jesus was born in a stable, no one had ever truly seen, held, embraced or touched God.
Or looked upon him face-to-face in human form. Jesus changed all that.

Jesus was held as a baby, and likely embraced as a child. As an adult, he held children in his arms and
reached out and touched those who were sick, unclean, and unwanted.
He wasn't afraid to touch, and he recognised the healing power of his touch.

And people longed to touch Jesus, or even just the edge of his cloak.

Some were driven by the desire for healing.
Perhaps some, like the woman with the bleeding who had been so long deprived of human touch,
also longed for some physical sign that they *were* – that they existed and that they had worth.

Thomas longed for absolute proof that his beloved Lord was truly alive. He is often condemned for his lack of faith, but perhaps his love for Christ was so great he dared not hope until he could prove it for himself that Jesus was truly alive!

Jesus invited his disciples to reach out and touch him.
This was the affirmation that they needed that he was alive.

How does the longing to touch Jesus resonate in our hearts?
We cannot touch him as the disciples did,
or feel the touch of his hands on our bodies as the sick and dying did.
Yet we also long for that real connection with God.
We long to see him, hear from him, experience his nearness and his presence.

What does the invitation to “Reach out and touch me” mean for you today?

And how do we embody the healing power of Jesus to those around us?
How can you be the hands of Jesus to those who most need the touch of God?

Silence

Prayer



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

Scripture

²⁶ Eight days later, they gathered again behind locked doors; and Jesus reappeared.
This time Thomas was with them.

Jesus: May each one of you be at peace.

²⁷ He drew close to Thomas.

Jesus: Reach out and touch me. See the punctures in my hands; reach out your hand, and put it to my side; leave behind your faithlessness, and believe.

John 20:26-27 Voice

Song

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.



Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, touch our eyes,
as you did those of the blind;
then we shall see
in things that are visible
those things which are invisible.

Lord Jesus, open our ears,
heal our wounds and purify our lives,
as you did those who came to you;
then we shall hear and perceive what is true
amidst the sounds of the world,
and find wholeness in ourselves.^{iv}

Benediction

May you feel the loving arms of God the Father surround you,
May you know the healing touch of the hands of Jesus the Son upon you,
May you feel the renewing breath of the Holy Spirit move within you,
And in all you do, may the touch of the Living Creator God awaken, refresh and empower you.
May you then be the touch of God, Father, Son and Spirit, to all those you encounter.
In his name, Amen^v



See also:

Phil Laeger's "I'm in His hands". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dihH62UX42Y>

GOING DEEPER – Unless I touch...

We can think about the sense of touch in our relationship with God in different ways. Sometimes in prayer we have a sense that God is touching us, and it may be a very physical awareness. Sometimes another person places a hand on us and we are acutely aware that God has touched us. We may also feel God at work in us as we lay our hands in prayer on others or show compassion. Offering practical service may also give us that sense of God's hands working through us. There are many ways we can reflect on touching and being touched by God.

When we think about touch, we are also mindful that touch can be deeply intimate and tender, that we can long for that kind of touch in our lives and that such a longing for touch may reflect a deeper longing for greater intimacy. Take courage and explore what some of these deeper longings may mean to you.

Here are some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read through the Reflection again. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. Notice the words: what moved you? What was jarring? What was hard to read? How do you feel when you read these words? Where in your life do these words resonate?
- **The Bible** is full of examples of people who touched Jesus or were touched by him, both physically and metaphorically. Reflect on one of these examples, thinking about the context and what God is saying. How easy is it for us today to feel connected in such intimate ways with God? What things make it hard to recognise God's touch on our lives? What can we do about it?
- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Think of the story of the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus with perfume and her tears. (Luke 7:36-50), or the story again of the woman with bleeding (Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:42-48), or any other story that comes to mind. Slowly read the story through. After each verse, close your eyes and picture the scene being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like if you were there? What would that be like for you to reach out and touch Jesus, or to be touched by him? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone
- **Be creative:** think about a time when you powerfully felt the touch of God (physically, spiritually, or mediated through another person) on your life. How did that impact you? How did you respond? You might like to draw, paint, write, dance or sing about this experience to more deeply reflect on it.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you notice as you walk? Where do you see God's hands at work in the world around you?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences of seeing God's hands at work in unexpected ways or places. Share what God might be saying to you about this. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church
marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS

Forever – Chris Tomlin, 2001 sixsteps Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)

Take my life and let it be - Frances R. Havergal, 1874. Words: Public Domain
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ⁱ Robert Cull, 1976

ⁱⁱ Albert Orsborn (1886-1967) (SASB 129)

ⁱⁱⁱ St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

^{iv} Origen (185-254)

^v J. Brown