

The Touch of Jesus

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the touch of Jesus in history, human lives, and the symbolic meaning of His touch, and encourages listeners to seek the touch of Jesus for healing, cleansing, and assurance.

Scripture: Luke 22:51

Topics: "Divine Healing", "Jesus Christ"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about the transformative power of Jesus' touch, emphasizing how His touch healed, blessed, and brought assurance to those who sought Him. He highlights how Jesus' touch changed history, exalted places like Bethlehem and Capernaum, and glorified childhood. Chapman reflects on the significance of Jesus' touch in human lives, symbolizing His immeasurable power, proximity, and intimacy, and how it meets the deep needs of our souls for present reality and assurance.

Transcript

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13).

And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him (Luke 22:51).

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened (Matthew 29:30).

And he touched her hand and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them (Matthew 8:15).

And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed (Matthew 8:3).

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid (Matthew 20:34).

The touch of Jesus makes all the difference in the world. In ancient times men were uncertain from what occurrence to date the beginning of time. The Jews calculated from the Exodus from Egypt. The Greeks dated from certain of the Olympic games. The Romans counted from the founding of their city or from the ascension of some emperor. The Egyptians tried to calculate from the arising of certain dynasties. Other nations made their kings the basis for beginning calculation of time. There was confusion everywhere, because men could not agree that any occurrence was of sufficient importance to make it the beginning of

chronology. Then Jesus came and touched the calendar, and soon, without any formal announcement or authoritative decree, men began to count history in its relation to the birth of Christ. Things before His birth were "Before Christ;" and those after were "In the year of our Lord." Not Christians only, but skeptics and pagans date their legal papers and their social correspondence in relation to the one universally acknowledged occurrence -- the appearing of our Lord on this earth of ours.

A little while ago I was driving through the southern part of the state of Michigan when I saw a roadside sign reading, "Battle Creek, best known city of its size in the world." But without hesitation I rejected the claim, for I know a town not one-fifth the size of Battle Creek that is much better known. Battle Creek's claim to notoriety is based upon its preparation of foods for the bodies of men. But Bethlehem is the true "House of Bread," for it was there that Jesus was born. The ancient prophet marked Bethlehem as small among the towns of Judah. But one starlit night an angel announced to wondering shepherds, "Today there is born unto you in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," and Bethlehem became the best known city in the world. Its fame and glory reached even to heaven from whence came an angelic choir to sing the first Christmas carol, "On earth peace and good will to men." Today three hundred million people turn their hearts to that little town at Christmas time and say, "Let us go up to Bethlehem." We were there at Christmas time in 1937. We helped to sing the carols in the "field of the shepherds," and returned to the Church of the Nativity for the celebration of the only birthday that the whole world knows.

Palestine itself, although of great meaning to the Jews, really never became "the holy land" to the world until Jesus touched it, walked on its roads, prayed in its mountains, preached in its fields and died on its cross of wood.

I stood one day at Sychar's well while the attendant placed candles in the bucket and let them down to show us the depth, and then drew up water that we might take a draft. But I felt that it was unbecoming me to drink that water, for on the curb there once sat a dusty Traveler who offered living water to the woman and to all who will take it at His hand. Hot Springs, Warm Springs, and all the watering places of the earth pale in importance in comparison to Jacob's Well at Sychar, just because Jesus touched that well.

The old synagogue at Capernaum is in ruins now. We visited it late in the evening and tarried until the shadows were long. We have seen the Taj Mahal, of India, the Temple of Heaven, in China, Karnak in Egypt, St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey in London, the great Shinto temple at Kyoto, the famed cathedrals at Lima and Buenos Aires, and famous mosques over much of the Mohammedan world. But none of these compare with the ruins at Capernaum, for those walls and pillars once echoed the voice of One who "spake as never man spake." Just the fact that Jesus touched that place exalts it above them all. He walked on those paving stones and called Levi from the place for collecting customs between the synagogue and the lake shore, not more than a hundred yards away. The whole region would be poor and unknown, only Jesus touched it and that exalted it.

But the touch of Jesus shows up best in human lives. He touched the little children. Mothers were anxious to have Him do so. It is not said what effect that touch had; but I believe it had more than a symbolic meaning. Perhaps that touch healed any ailing child. Perhaps it made any dull child bright. Perhaps it took away any unusual naughtiness. Any way it made a difference, and the mothers pressed up to get that gentle hand laid upon their little ones -- and it made a difference. I know they say we should not look back, but when I review that scene I instinctively say: I think when I read that sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men: How He called little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with them then.

That touch upon children exalted and glorified childhood, and wherever Jesus has gone little children have been touched and blessed. The weakness of childhood appeals to Christ and finds its answer always in His gentleness and power.

Then there was the touch of Jesus upon deaf ears that caused them to hear, and His touch upon blind eyes which caused them to see. His touch upon a woman's fevered hand which caused her restlessness to cease. His touch upon the leper which brought him healing and cleansing. His touch upon the troubled disciples on the mount of transfiguration which brought them relief and assurance. Yes, the touch of Jesus makes all the difference in the world. We all need our ears touched that we may hear the voice of God. We need our eyes opened that we may see with clear vision. We need His touch upon our fevered spirits that we may have rest. We need His touch upon our hearts that they may be made clean. We need His touch of assurance that we may not fear in the gathering clouds -- clouds of either sorrow or glory.

The ancients accounted the touch of the leper defiling, and modern people shun this touch for hygienic reasons. Anyone would draw away from any attempt of a leper to reach and touch him, but Jesus reached out His hand on purpose and touched the leper. The fountain of purity in Christ was so much fuller than the fountain of impurity in the leper that instead of Jesus' becoming defiled, the leper was made clean. There is cleansing in His touch.

In what unfamiliar surroundings those disciples found themselves on the mount! Here was their own Master transformed into the likeness of resurrection glory, garments whiter than any fuller on earth could whiten them, and face shining with such light as was never seen on land or sea. Here, too, were Moses, representative of the resurrection, and Elijah, representative of those who shall be transformed without seeing death, and the three talking together calmly of the things yet to come. The disciples were mortal men in the vestibule of heaven, earth -- weighted saints in a miniature Second Coming of Christ. They were conscious of their incongruity, were anxious and afraid. Then the Master came and touched them, and they were assured. Since Jesus knew and acknowledged them, they were no longer affrighted. His touch drives fear away.

But let us come now to think of the symbolic meaning of the touch of Jesus. In the first place, the fact that it was but a touch suggests the immeasurable power that was behind the touch. The tasks were difficult, so difficult indeed as to be considered impossible with men. That one born blind should be made to see; that one deaf and dumb should be made to hear and speak; that a leper should be healed and cleansed -- why the very mention of such things causes men to draw back and ask to be excused. Joram, the king of Israel, considered the request that he should recover a leper but a pretense for trouble between Syria and his nation, seeing none but God could cleanse a leper. But it was normal for people to ask the impossible of Christ. They did not appear embarrassed to come and say, "This cannot be done, O Lord, but please you do it." And Jesus did it with a touch. There are few instances in which He used even one full hand, and none where He used both hands or asked for help from others. His touch is enough to accomplish the impossible, for behind that touch are the infinite and inexhaustible resources of the eternal God. "Nothing is too hard for Jesus, no man can work like Him." There is the show of untapped resources in Jesus in that no task demanded more than the touch of His fingers. His touch upon a few loaves and a few small fishes was enough to multiply them sufficiently to feed an army. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form and the touch of His fingers is enough for any task assigned.

In the second place, the fact that He touched was a symbol of his proximity and intimacy. He did not simply look or motion, He came right over to where they were and singled them out with His touch. Jesus

made small mention of nations and of crowds. His concern was for the individual -- the individual in need.

Sometimes the very vastness of things and the multiplicity of people are discouraging. David looked at the star-studded heavens above him and then fell to wondering how and why God should give any attention to man. I have often had the same experience. The universe is so broad in its scope and so perfect in its finish that I feel lonesome in it and am depressed by my sense of insignificance. Then I like to go back to Galilee and stand on the fringe of the crowd while the preacher from Nazareth inquires about the value of a sparrow, and is told that one sparrow is worth only one-half of the smallest coin in current use, and that it takes two sparrows to register in the scale of values. But the Master says, "Not even one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father's care." And I gain courage, for if God takes account of that which is worth only half of the first step in the scale of values, then perhaps He will take notice of me. And when my strength is depleted and my courage is weak, I do not get much help from the giant redwoods of California, or the sturdy oaks of Virginia. Rather I long to go again to Galilee and hear the Nazarene say of Himself, "A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench till he send forth judgment unto victory." I am that bruised reed and that smoking flax, and I find in Him promise of healing and restoration and victory. In a universe so large the telescope cannot trace its boundaries, and so delicate and perfect that the microscope cannot reveal its essential content, I am assured by the fact that He stoops to touch the insignificant and the lowly.

But history, even though true, and symbols, be they ever so beautiful, cannot meet the deep needs of our lives. Our souls cry out for present reality. We need the touch of Jesus now. We need His touch upon our spiritual ears that we may distinguish the voice of God in His Word and in His providences. We need His touch upon our eyes that we may have that true perspective that will enable us to distinguish the transient and passing from the permanent and eternal. We need His touch upon our minds to make us wise unto salvation. We need His touch upon our hearts that they may be quickened and cleansed. We need His touch of assurance that shall make us restful in either the place of trial or the vestibule of glory.

Paul was commissioned to be a witness, as well as a minister, and I feel that I am likewise entitled to testify. I cannot boast of my early religious training nor of my ecclesiastical pedigree. I have no good works to commend me either to God or men. I do not glory in any degree of penitence I may at any time possess or of any measure of consecration to which I can justly lay claim. All these are human qualities, and I pass them over. The thing of which I boast today is that when I came to Jesus Christ as a lad of fifteen He touched me in pardoning mercy and made me know I was His own. When I came in full consecration He touched me in cleansing fullness and gave me a pure heart, and he has touched me with frequent assurances all down through these forty years since the time when I knew Him first. This is my solemn and true testimony. I thank God for clear recollections of His touch upon my heart. That touch has allayed my restless spirit, as it did the fever-tossed woman in Simon's house, and I have been soothed and assured and rested.

I have heard that a wise general never attempts to defend too long a line. Forty years is a long time, as men count, and there are abundant reasons why the accuser can file charges against me for thoughts and words and actions in this interim. I have never been a formal backslider. There has not been an hour in all these years that I did not profess my love for Jesus Christ and my faith in Him as Saviour and Lord. But the line is too long, and I am not content to let my present standing and future destiny depend upon an unbroken linking up with that first touch He gave my unworthy heart. Ah, no, He touched me twenty years ago, ten years ago, one year ago, last month, last week, this morning. Yea, I say it to the praise of His mercy, He has touched me today. At the morning watch He came along and laid His hand upon me.

Closer still, and praise be unto His matchless name, He touches my spirit now. I refuse to defend any yesterday whatsoever. He assures me now. I account all the past as cleared and approved by the fact that this side of everything else I have felt and known His tender touch, and if I have ever done anything for which a reward is due, I am paid in full and up to date by the sheer joy my poor heart feels and knows in this moment of assurance and rest.

O blessed Jesus, I ask no other favor than this, Thy approving, assuring touch. In the realization of this blessed moment every earthly value is swallowed up. I ask not for riches or for popularity or for pleasure or even for bodily comfort and health. If any of these are given they are Thy free gifts, and as such I shall accept and use them. But as between poverty of property and riches of spirit, I unhesitatingly choose riches of spirit. Make me as poor in purse as Thou wilt, but do make me rich in Thy grace. I utterly disregard the standing men give. If men love and approve me, let it be for Thy sake and for Thy glory. If they vote against me and despitefully use me, let that too be for Thy sake. Whichever comes I shall be glad, and as to creature comforts, O blessed Jesus, let these be entirely as Thou wilt. If I can prove Thy faithfulness better in a tent or in a grass hut than in a house of wood or brick or stone, O give me that which will give me the best chance to advance Thy kingdom. Like Livingstone in Africa, I would count nothing as having value except in relation to Thy kingdom. Food and clothing! ah, these I would not regard, and, thank God, I do not have to be happy. I would pass over this too as incidental. Health, after which so many strive, I would possess only so much of it as I can use in extending Thy kingdom. I would account both pleasure and pain as incidental impostors, and would exchange them all for holiness of heart and purity of thought. Even heaven itself I would subject to Thy presence and fellowship. No matter how much that fair world may vary from the picture I have drawn, I shall know it is heaven, and I shall love it as it is, if only Thou art there. Come now once more, O blessed Christ, and touch me with the touch of healing, cleansing and assurance. Touch me now, I sincerely pray, and touch me often along life's way, and when I come at last to heaven, as I assuredly plan to do through Thy wonderful grace, and when I stand bewildered amidst the glories of that glad morning, come Thou, as Thou didst to Peter and James and John on the holy mount, and touch me, and immediately I shall be at home. Thy recognition shall drive away all my sense of strangeness and I shall be happy forever. Amen and amen!

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