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Desperate Households: Desperate for a Fix

October 2, 2005

Mark 5:25-34

By Matt Hook

We all want to feel better. We all want a “fix” whether it’s from pain, or the loneliness, or the bitterness, or the emptiness...

(Jesus was on his way to heal a young girl, with crowds all 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."

When he was 3 days old, he saw his first football game. He learned to count by 7's almost before he could count by 1's. He learned his geography based on where the sports teams played. When he was 4, he knew there were 3 kinds of football: “backyard, college, and phonetional.” I’m talking about my 12 year old son Hunter. This past Wednesday, Hunter had a great football game, even though his “Men in Black” team lost the game in the last quarter. He had several key tackles and a few sacks. Even Mark Whitley said “I can’t wait to have Hunter on my team!” After the game Hunter came up to me, and I could tell he was upset. One of the opposing touchdowns was on a play when Hunter thought the receiver was going one way when he wound up going the other. And a teammate and “friend” lit in to Hunter that it was all his fault. And he was on the edge of breaking, though he held it together (except for a few lip quivers) until we passed the last of the folks. Then the thin veneer of holding-it-together began to crack as he shared what happened with me. I was wishing, like the commercial years ago, that I had a lifesaver at that moment. As we walked across the field toward home, Hunter put his head on my shoulder and whispered “Can you sew up my blankie?” It was a moment I’ll treasure my whole life.

Sometimes don’t you just want a blankie? What a wonderful world we would live in if we all had blankies at home to go to. It seems we all walk around holding it together, putting on our game faces (at home, or at the office, or at school), when in reality just underneath the thin veneer of composure lies a hurricane of desperation ready to blow us apart. Even the most together of us! But what about when you can’t hold it together? That’s what creates our own reality TV series’ of Desperate Households.

Here are some things I believe about every one of us:

1. We are genuinely trying to do our best...but,

2. If you really knew my faith, you would not respect it. And if you really knew my thoughts, you would not be my friend.
3. (Of course, if I knew your faith, or your thoughts, I wouldn't respect you or want to be your friend either.) J
4. I heard a great church leader say "I'm 24 hours away from being the most wretched man on the face of the earth." I have to agree. "There, but for the grace of God, go I."
5. Every one of us lives in a desperate household, desperate for a "fix". So what do you do?

In the scripture account Mark wrote about an unknown woman who joined the crowd following Jesus. She suffered bleeding for 12 years. Her condition excluded her from normal social relations, because according to Jewish Law, she was unclean. Her condition defined her life.

She suffered greatly at the hands of various doctors. The treatments must have been awful. (Imagine what it must have been like in the first century.) She had spent all she had in a desperate attempt to get well. Nothing worked. She was getting worse. She was desperate...desperate enough to find the Man who people said was a great healer.

Until recently, I thought being desperate was a bad thing. The world sees desperation as a weak place to be. The reality is that **We, as Christians, need a heart that is desperate.** We need to realize that it is a good thing to be desperate. When you are desperate, you do whatever it takes to get to Jesus, and get the touch of Jesus. If we could just touch his cloak, he could heal us. Our desperateness for Jesus comes only when we come to the end of ourselves. For some of us, who like to have it all together, who are comfortable living in our veneers, it is a rare occurrence.

When will we learn?! We will try anything and everything, like this woman did, before we run out of options and turn to God. She tried every doctor and spent all her money. Her life was defined by this one illness. She had no other options, no other hope. What area of your life is defining you right now? In what area of your life have you come to the end of yourself? Handling an addiction – communicating with your spouse – guiding your children – giving yourself over to your work schedule – competing with the Jones's – or some hidden sin that's eating you up. Are you desperate? That may be just where God can help you the most. Are you desperate enough to buck the crowd and get close to Jesus and allow his healing touch to change you? You and I need a heart that is desperate.

We usually try to go through life under our own power because we can handle so much of it ourselves. Look around you, you see competent people. If we aren't competent, you certainly won't see it! We build security into our lives and our circumstances by hiding our failures, covering our weaknesses, burying our fears, and laughing through our pain.

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk (who said "How long O Lord, will you remain silent?") ends his writings with a word of praise because of his faith in God. *"Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fall, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, (That's what I call a bad day!) Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord is my strength, And God has made my feet sure-footed like a deer's, And makes me walk on high places."* Hab. 3:17-19.

Basically, even when your life is awful, even when there is no evidence of God's blessings, you are to put your faith in God. Your faith *can't* be about your circumstances, it needs to be in Christ alone. You and I need a heart that is desperate-desperate enough to cry out to God for His help.

Not only do we need a heart that is desperate, **we need a heart that is daring.** To experience God and God's purpose for our lives, we need to risk. The woman who was bleeding risked a lot to get to Jesus. She faced the scorn of the crowd and the rejection of her community because she admitted her problem and her desperate need for help. Had she not risked, she would never have been healed and never would have experienced Christ and his power. When we become daring, we give God room to work. If we only dare to do what we know we can do in our own strength, we don't leave any room for God to work in our lives. We will only experience God when we dare attempt something that we know will fail apart from God moving in our midst.

Church, can we be desperate enough to risk looking foolish or weak by admitting we have a problem or need? Can we have a daring heart to stand up against some of the wrongs in our community? Can we be daring enough to not be worried about what others say? Do you have the courage to take the lead in doing good and putting others' needs before your own? Daring enough not to bite back when somebody bites your head off? Daring enough to invite someone you love to come to church with you next week?

In addition to a heart that is desperate and daring, **you and I need a heart that is free**. When the woman touched Jesus he knew the power had gone out of him. He turned around and looked for the woman in the crowd. The woman came and fell down before him, trembling and fearful, and told him the whole truth. She was free to be honest. After encountering Jesus, she could be real. Jesus response is warm and caring. He calls her "Daughter", (its only recorded use by Jesus), showing her that a new relationship has begun with him. Jesus says it is her **faith in Jesus' ability to heal her**, not the hem of his garment that healed her. Faith, confident trust, derives its value not from the one who has it, but from the object in which it rests. Unlike the Humanists, who say faith itself is what is important, sort of the "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe something" idea, Jesus says it is the *subject* in which the faith rests. Either God is God, Jesus is who he said he is, or not. There is no magic in faith itself.

Only Jesus sets a heart free. Jesus said to the woman, "*Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.*" Literally, in the Greek, it means "be healthy". This assured her that her healing was permanent and complete. She had been a desperate, living-dead person, hemorrhaging for 12 years. Her incurable illness and social and religious isolation **allowed her a desperate and daring heart which was now free**. She was restored to wholeness. The same power of Jesus is available to you and me by the Holy Spirit. When your heart is touched by Jesus, your heart is set free. We are free to live. By following Christ, we are free to serve, free to be who God created us to be. Our past has been redeemed, and our future is secure. Like this woman, we are freed from our past. Because of Christ, our past does not have to equal our future. Talk about a fix! Through Christ, you *can* change! We're free—free to reach out to a desperate and dying world. This is the good news! When we are desperate, daring, and freed to love and witness, people will notice and respond to the life-giving restoration message of the Gospel!

It is my fear that the people of Pinckney, Chelsea, Ann Arbor, and Dexter will live full, but meaningless lives, never escaping the veneer. They are missing God's call to be in relationship with Him and to go to work for God's Kingdom, unless we bring them to Jesus. Jesus calls us to a life of significant self-giving for his sake. He is ready to heal, to help, and to restore them wholeness. Don't run from your desperateness. Don't flaunt it. Embrace it. Bring it to Jesus' touch and let him have it. Have you responded to the opportunity to receive his touch? Have you helped lead another to him?