



The Touch

By Ian Menzies

There are multiple instances in the Bible where folk strove to touch Jesus, an obvious example being the woman who had suffered haemorrhages for 12 years.

From the midst of a crowded mob she touched 'the hem of his garment' and immediately he knew.

He was aware that something significant had happened. Exploring that story, most considerations I have heard tend to focus on the miraculous cure, on the 'your faith has made you well' blessing, on the woman and her courage.

But what about Jesus? That he somehow knew he had been touched straight away is surely significant.

That it was 'the hem' of his garment – by implication his Jewish prayer tassels – that she touched even more so.

Skated over is the consequence that being touched by someone so obviously unclean would have made Jesus himself unclean – and so too the hem of his garment, those significant prayer tassels.

Yet despite these public affronts, he responds. What's more, his unexpected, now-unclean status is seemingly ignored: by his disciples and the crowd, and certainly by the Gospel writers.

So why does all this minutiae of what would normally be a nuisance, that the specific detail of his 'hem' – symbolising his public, visible Jewish propriety – being touched, still hang over this story?

Is there a significance here that our modern sensibilities now miss? That reaching-out-in-faith touch, those deliberately recorded details echo through time and challenge us still.

Reflection:

A woman who had a flow of blood for 12 years came from behind and touched the hem of his garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch his garment, I shall be made well'. But Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well'. And the woman was made well from that hour.

Matthew 9: 20-22 NKJV

Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.

Numbers 19: 22 NKJV