

**I have heard that there is a phenomena called ‘phantom pain’...  
It is experienced when someone has an arm or a leg amputated,  
and they still feel the amputated limb...they still feel the pain of their disease  
even though the actual arm or leg is no longer there...**

**This phantom pain phenomena is also true for lots of us in lots of different ways...  
Lots of us carry pain—emotional and psychological pain—  
from past situations, old relationships, even old identities...**

**In our reading today,  
the woman has been bleeding for 12 years...  
This number, alone, tells us that this is a very important healing story...  
In scripture the number 12 is significant ...there are 12 tribes of Israel, Jesus chose 12  
apostles, he was teaching the teachers in the Temple at the age of 12.  
In the book of Revelation the New Jerusalem has 12 gates, 12 guardian angels and 12 stone  
foundations...The Tree of Life in that same book bears fruit 12 times a year...  
The number 12 symbolized the life force,  
wholeness and completion all those Scripture stories.  
So, it was not by accident that Mark says this woman bled for 12 years...**

**And it was also not by accident that the woman had an issue of blood....  
During Jesus in time, blood was both sacred and frighteningly mysterious.  
It was sacred because blood was recognized as essential for life...  
When you lost too much blood, everyone knew that you would die.**

**Blood was mysterious because women would bleed each month and yet, they did not die...  
How could this be?  
This mysterious power of women actually greatly frightened the men and that is why,  
scholars believe, there were so many rules restricting women  
during their monthly cycles...**

When a woman bled, by law, no one could sit on her chair, sleep in her bed...  
She could not go to town for she could touch no one and if someone touched her...  
they would be made unclean.  
Then they had to go to the Temple priest to perform certain actions and say certain prayers  
so that they may be made clean again...

A bleeding, living woman terrorized the men who made the rules her society...  
and so for 12 long years she was shunned and isolated.  
For 12 long years others saw her as contaminated and as someone to avoid...  
For 12 long years, she lived a desperate life...

Think about what that must have done to her psyche, to her sense of who she knew herself  
to be... what she thought about her neighbors and towns people....our reading tells us that  
she spent all that she had trying to get better, but she lost all her money and only got worse.  
I have to believe that she prayed and prayed and prayed and offered sacrifice and did all  
the right things...and still she bled...

So when Jesus, the healer came into her town, she was desperate.  
She took a risk to do something she was not supposed to do...  
She risked severe punishment because a life lived in such isolation  
was probably worse than anything more they could have done to her...

So...she touched the hem of his clothes....  
and beyond her wildest hopes and dreams...  
she was cured!

and she knew she was cured when her bleeding stopped  
which she felt immediately in her body.  
She got what she came for, so I would have to imagine she just wanted to slip away...  
but it didn't happen that way...

**Jesus now calls out to the crowd: “who touched me”?**

**Did she consider not admitting to what she had done? Perhaps...**

**But Mark tells us that she came forward in fear and trembling and fell down before him.**

**In my mind's eye, I see her with her forehead in the sand, prostrate at his feet.**

**The crowd is holding their breath: waiting, watching...what would Jesus do do?**

**What he did, next, was totally incomprehensible to all everyone.**

**No one would have imagined what he did next...**

**He calls her Daughter!**

**Daughter!**

**Once again, she is a daughter of Yahweh...**

**Once again she is a Daughter of Israel,**

**No longer is she that unclean, scum of a woman...**

**No longer is she possessed by a demon who defies the law of life...**

**SHE is, once again... a human person being.**

**and to top it all off...**

**Not only does Jesus not seek her punishment for disobeying the Law,**

**but He desires her peace.**

**Although she is already physically cured,**

**HE desires that she be healed of her dis-ease.**

**For 12 long years this woman had been known by everyone in the village as THAT woman.**

**THAT woman that you shouldn't touch or be with.**

**THAT woman that the children should avoid...**

**THAT woman who brought disgrace and embarrassment upon the village...**

**Now Jesus desires her healing from being THAT woman...**

**She was already cured of her bleeding, but now he desired her healing.**

**I have heard healing defined as:**

**“The restoration of meaning to one’s life, no matter what their physical condition might be”.**

**In order for her to be healed,**

**she needed to co-operate with his grace and let her baggage go .**

**How many times have people said to us: oh...let it go! Don’t worry! All shall be well...**

**In order to find peace and to be healed of her dis-ease**

**she needed to let go of knowing herself as THAT woman.**

**She needed to accept the peace that he offered to her...**

**She needed to let go of the past 12 years of suffering, the past 12 years of condemnation and move into a new life of meaning and purpose...**

**She needed to once more know herself**

**once again, as a beloved Daughter of Yahweh...**

**Did she? was she able to do it?**

**Was she able to co-operate with his grace and his desire for her?**

**We don’t know the end of the story!**

**All of us carry our own baggage of hurts,**

**missed opportunities and injustices we have suffered...**

***If* we are not in those specific circumstances that were hurtful to us.**

**then in a certain sense, we have been cured:**

**it is like the diseased limb that has been amputated...**

**and that’s beautiful, well and good...**

**Yet perhaps, many of us are still hanging on to old grudges, old identities, old memories that are no longer real and true.**

**Perhaps some of us are still feeling like the victim years after the particular event.**

**While we may have been ‘cured’: we may not be in that particular situation or relationship... we are not yet healed...we have no peace...**

**We still feel the phantom pain of long gone events...**

**I’m dumb, They’re mean. I’m worthless, They’re bad...I’m a goof off...**

**They did this to me...They did that to me...**

**Poor me.....**

**Does any of this sounds familiar to you?**

**If you are hanging on to anything keeps you stuck in the past..**

**If there is something from the past preventing you from really being alive at this moment in time,**

**.... it is time to be healed.**

**Healing often seems impossible, and often times it is,**

**all by ourselves but we don’t have to go it alone.**

**That is where our Faith and our God and grace comes in...**

**But....we have a role to play in our healing...**

**We must be willing to be healed...**

**We must be willing to let go of old hurts and identities go...**

**We must be willing to let Divine Grace in to heal us...**

**Our willingness, then, co-operates with Holy Grace and healing happens.**

**Sometimes all at once...often times it is bit by bit.....**

**So may I invite you now, to hear Jesus say to you:**

**“Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your dis-ease”**

**“Son, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your dis-ease”**

**All of us are invited to be healed of the phantom pain of our old lives...**

**All of us are invited to be healed, to really be alive at this moment in time**

**All of invited to go forth and live our lives in peace.**

**The question, of course, is: are we willing?**

**Amen.**