

You can find lots of interesting things on the internet. The following was a reflection on the gospel words, "If I but touch...I will be healed." It's called, "Touch in church" - it describes a journey we all need to take:

What is all this touching in church? It used to be a person could come to church and sit in the pew and not be bothered by all this friendliness and certainly not by touching. I used to come to church and leave untouched. Now I have to be nervous about what's expected of me. I have to worry about responding to the person sitting next to me.

Oh, I wish it could be the way it used to be; I could just ask the person next to me: How are you? And the person could answer: Oh, just fine. And we'd both go home...strangers who have known each other for twenty years. But now the minister asks us to look at each other. I'm worried about that hurt look I saw in that woman's eyes.

Now I'm concerned, because when the minister asks us to greet one another, the man next to me held my hand so tightly I wondered if he had been touched in years.

Now I'm upset because the lady next to me cried and then apologized and said it was because I was so kind and that she needed a friend right now. Now I have to get involved. Now I have to suffer when this community suffers. Now I have to be more than a person coming to observe a service.

That man last week told me I'd never know how much I'd touched his life. All I did was smile and tell him I understood what it was to be lonely. Lord, I'm not big enough to touch and be touched!

The stretching scares me. What if I disappoint somebody? What if I'm too pushy? What if I cling too much? What if somebody ignores me?

"The peace of Christ be with you." I find now that I mean. Lord, I can't resist meaning it! I'm touched by it, I'm enveloped by it! I find I do care about that person next to me! I find I AM involved! And I'm scared. O Lord, be here beside me. You touch me, Lord, so that I can touch and be touched! So that I can care and be cared for! So that I can share my life with all those others that belong to you! All this touching in church -- Lord, it's changing me!

Touch is a rather imprecise word. It can mean a hug, a handshake, an act of kindness, a word of comfort. Right now our society is obsessed with inappropriate touching but we can't let the importance of contact with others and sharing our lives be corrupted by the few who have taken advantage of others.

A businessman became depressed. Things were not going well at work, and he was bringing his problems home with him every night. Every evening he would eat his dinner in silence, shutting out his wife and five-year-old daughter. Then he would go and read the paper, using the newspaper to wall his family out of his life.

After several nights of this, his daughter took her little hand and pushed the newspaper down. She then jumped into her father's lap, wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him strongly. The father said abruptly, "Honey, you are hugging me to death!" "No, Daddy," the little girl said, "I'm hugging you to life!" The little girl was great theologian.

I remember a seminary professor -quite stiff in his bearing and rigid in his theology, the type that probably wore a Roman collar with his pajamas. I can imagine that seminary professor saying something like this to the nameless woman in the Gospel: *"You just don't get it. Good theology centers not on what we can get from God, but on giving glory to God. Good theology is not a matter of using God for our own ends. Do you realize that you have made the glorious faith of our fathers into nothing more than magic? Do you really think that God will help you when you have such a childish approach to religion? Do you really think that you can sneak up on God from behind, get what you want, and depart without being noticed? Do you really think that Jesus will heal you because you touch his robe?"*

Surprise! Jesus does just that. He never even takes time to correct the woman's mistaken theology. He just heals her. He even commends her faith. What is going on here? God wants us to have the right ideas about him. He does not want bad theology which can only get us into trouble. But Jesus sees beyond bad theology to the heart of the woman. He sees faith, the power of believing.

In the war a chaplain might end up helping with triage – the process by which medical assistance was given. It amounted to placing the wounded in one of three categories according to their condition: One color meant hopeless - nothing we can do will save them. Another tag meant they'd make it whether they get help or not. The third color-tag indicated a doubtful prognosis - a chance to live only if medical assistance is given.

Since facilities could often be overwhelmed. . . assistance was sometimes given only to this last group.

Lou was badly blown apart, including one leg severely wounded. The doctor who examined him made the decision that Lou was a hopeless case and tagged him as such, leaving him to die. But a nurse noticed Lou was conscious and began to talk with him. They discovered they were both from Ohio. Getting to know Lou as a person, the nurse just couldn't let him die. She broke all the rules and changed his color-tag.

There followed months in a hospital. But Lou made it. He met a girl in the hospital who he later married. Even minus one leg he has led a full happy life, all because a nurse broke the rules of triage and changed a tag.

Maybe the task of the church is going around changing the tags – refusing to believe that life is hopeless. Maybe that's what Jesus meant to tell us when he healed the woman and helped Jairus. Jesus IS the Friend of the hopeless. He came to befriend and save the hopeless from despair. He gave His life on the cross and was raised from the dead for that very reason. He touched and changed lives and he wants us – like that old phone company ad – to reach out and touch someone.