

*“But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.”*

She told him the whole truth.

The woman who was bleeding was slowly dying inside. She'd been forced to have no contact with people for 12 years, no one to share her thoughts with. No one who would accept her as a worthwhile, not even her family. Then someone saw her—really saw her-- and asked her what had happened.

And she told him the whole truth.

How many people in our lives can bear to hear the whole truth? Think about it. How many people could you confess the whole truth about yourself to?

I want people to think well of me.

I want people to think I'm kind and patient, that I am a capable leader. Hopefully that I can preach. What do you want people to think about you? So do you tell everyone the whole truth about yourself? If you do – you're a braver person than I am. There are very few people I've told everything about myself to. There are parts of my life that might surprise you.

It can cost a lot to tell the whole truth. I learned as a child that it's far easier to lie. I remember breaking a knick knack in my house when I was about 4. My mother asked me if I had done it. You would not believe the innocence in my eyes as I lied: "No, I don't know what happened.." I would do practically anything to get out of a spanking.

I got away with it-- so I became bolder, telling the occasional white lie to teachers—the dog ate my homework kind of stuff--to keep them from being disappointed in me, then to occasional friends to prevent them and me from being hurt.

We do it every day. Little lies, mostly. We're taught to tell the truth. Well, except when it would hurt someone, or be unkind. Because telling the truth can be difficult. Telling the truth makes you vulnerable.

This woman told the *whole* truth. She told him about her disease. She told him about the lack of human contact, she told of her poverty-- and her broken spirit. She may have even told him how she hated what she had become, hated those who treated her like a pariah. And she told him she wanted healing more than anything. It's such

naked thing-- to ask for what you want. To tell someone the truth of your life. To bare yourself like that.

And she told the truth in front of all those people who had cast her aside without a second glance, said she was evil, dirty, worthless—because of a physical issue she had no control over.

The truth is, she had a common bleeding disorder – of the feminine variety, which we understand today for what it is: a physical ailment, not a moral one.

The woman who bled for 12 years took a huge risk by touching Jesus' hem—she risked violent anger from the crowd. She risked public shaming—and no one in her society would have come to her defense. No one.

But what happened was Jesus. Jesus gave her the courage to speak the whole truth, even in front of the hostile crowd. And because he listened to her, they had to listen to her. I'll bet that was something they hadn't counted on.

It was probably hard to hear a different perspective. It may have caused them anguish to see their part in her misery.

What a horrible society—we think in our 21<sup>st</sup> century smugness. Imagine cutting someone off from human contact, love, ability to find a future—and worse, not even willing to listen to that person's perspective.

The Truth is—we all have the capacity to make people bleed, kill their spirit, tell them they are not worthy, because we don't want to hear the whole truth, from their mouths or anyone else's. Some truths make us uncomfortable.

The Truth is we still make decisions based on our sense of moral superiority.

We still cut off people from society, from jobs, sometimes even from respect because of something they have no control over.

Sometimes it's easier to repeat a lie --to save face; fudge the truth to make ourselves look better, than it is to be completely honest, or to listen to someone else be completely honest.

Perhaps bleeding wasn't the only disease that needed to be cured in the crowd that day. Perhaps Jesus knew that the **disease** was not being willing to hear the whole truth, because it could change *us*.

But like the crowd, we can learn this. We can bare the truth.

Jesus sees us, *really sees us*, and gives us the courage to speak our truth, even when it makes us uncomfortable. And Jesus stands with us, giving us the courage to hear other people's truths even when it makes us uncomfortable.

And when all is spoken and heard -Jesus will finally say to all of us, "*Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*"

Amen.