

Weekly Newsletter: 21st March 2023

Reflection: Let's talk about being clean!

By Lorna Ferguson

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Mark 5:34

If you come to Japan and visit a Shinto shrine, you will notice near the entrance a wooden roof covering a stone basin filled with water. Water is flowing into the basin from the mouth of a dragon statue or bamboo pipe and some ladles are neatly placed on the edge of the basin. This is a "temizuya" – a place for ritual purification before entering a shrine. Visitors wash their hands and rinse out their mouths to purify themselves from impurities before approaching and praying to the Shinto gods.



Ritual purification is probably not something that many of us think much about today, but for the Jews in Jesus' day it was a familiar and very relevant concept. The Mosaic Law in the Old Testament listed many conditions or acts which made someone unclean, together with the different purification offerings which an unclean person needed to make to become clean again.

In Mark Chapter 5 we meet a woman who is unclean because she is subject to bleeding. According to Leviticus 15:25-27 someone in her position was unclean for as long as she was bleeding, which for this woman was 12 years. Her condition is not only physically debilitating, but also socially isolating. People avoid her, because anyone who comes into contact with her becomes ceremonially unclean themselves and has to complete the necessary purification ritual to be clean again. But this woman does not have that option. As long as she is bleeding there is nothing she can do to become clean again and so she is ostracised from her family, community and the temple.

She has persevered, trying everything to get well again. She has used up all her money going to different doctors but rather than get better, her condition has worsened. I am sure she prayed regularly too. It is hard to imagine what her life was like day in and day out for those 12 years, desperate to be made clean again, but finding no answers.

And then one day she hears about Jesus, probably about his healing miracles. Suddenly she has hope. But she is unclean. She can't just approach Jesus and ask him to heal her, and anyway he is always surrounded by a crowd. But she is desperate and so makes her way through all the people, probably crouching down to avoid being spotted. "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed," she thinks. She comes up behind Jesus and touches the edge of his cloak.

Then something amazing happens. After all those years of illness and persevering, her bleeding stops and she is instantly healed. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean when she touches him, she has been made clean by touching his cloak. She wants to remain anonymous but Jesus has other ideas. Sensing that power has gone out of him he asks, "Who touched my clothes?" The disciples think he's crazy to ask this in the middle of a jostling crowd, but Jesus perseveres. "Who touched me?"

The woman now realises she can't go unnoticed and comes forward trembling, falling at Jesus' feet, telling him her whole story. And then Jesus says something amazing, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Her faith has healed her, her simple faith based on hearing some stories about Jesus.

She came to Jesus sick and left healed. Instead of making Jesus unclean she was made clean. She pushed through the crowd unnoticed, but left publicly affirmed. She started that day ostracised from her family and community and ended it being called "daughter" by the Son of God. Her world was literally turned around. I think that this story challenges us in several different ways. Firstly, there is the challenge of perseverance. This woman persevered for 12 years seeking healing. Surely there were days when she felt like giving up, but she didn't. God had something planned for her which was far better than just physical healing, but she had to wait for it.

Secondly, the challenge of this woman's determination to reach Jesus, even though she was physically weak, despite the crowd, and even though she was unclean and risked people's displeasure if seen. She didn't let anything stand in her way.

We are also challenged by her faith. She didn't fully understand who Jesus was. She didn't have all the answers. Her faith was simple, even mixed with superstition, but it was real. What was important was who her faith was in – in Jesus.

This woman came to Jesus because she had heard about him. In those days that presumably meant that she heard other people talking about him, about what he had done. And so we are challenged- are we talking about Jesus, believing that some who hear will then seek him out for themselves?

And finally there is the challenge to remember how Jesus values each individual person. He persevered in finding out who had touched him because he wanted to speak with that person, to restore and affirm them as "daughter", a child of God.

We do not need to do purification rituals to be made clean. Our faith is not based on what we do, but on what Jesus has done for us. Jesus took our uncleanness and made us clean, acceptable in God's sight, and to be sons and daughters of the king. And that is worth talking about.

Book Group – this Saturday

The book group meets this Saturday (25th March) at 3.30pm and we are reading *Weight of Glory* by C S Lewis. Or you can listen to an audio version of the book on YouTube. For further information, speak to Anncris.

Scripture Union Easter Adventure – this Saturday



We are hosting the **Scripture Union Easter Adventure** on Saturday 25th March from 2-4.30pm.

It is open to all P4-P7 children. 'Join us to explore the Easter Story together and discover why it's so important. The afternoon will include games, crafts, snack, songs and time to look at the Bible together.' If you would like any more information, please contact edinburgh@suscotland.org.uk and go [here](#) to book'.

Sunday Services – 2nd April

Joe will be on annual leave on Sunday 2nd April and we're looking forward to Cory Brock (Minister at St Columba's Free Church) taking our morning service at 10.30am. Caleb Shocklie (Church Planter in Meadowbank) will take our Equip Session at 6pm.

Our Communion Service will take place on Easter Sunday (9th) instead of 2nd April.

Baby & Toddlers Update



Give thanks for happy Monday mornings in the church this term! We normally have about 18 families coming along each week and we've enjoyed playing with the toys, running under the parachute, our story and song time, eating snacks and chatting to the parents and grandparents who come along. We shared the Easter story on Monday and will do it again this coming Monday. Give thanks for all these opportunities and for a great team who serve joyfully each week.

Our last session is this Monday and then we have a two week break for Easter. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement.

Scottish Reformed Conference

Kevin De Young and Sinclair Ferguson are speaking at the Scottish Reformed Conference on Saturday 13th May (10am – 3.30pm) at Hamilton College, ML3 0AY. For more information, go [here](#).

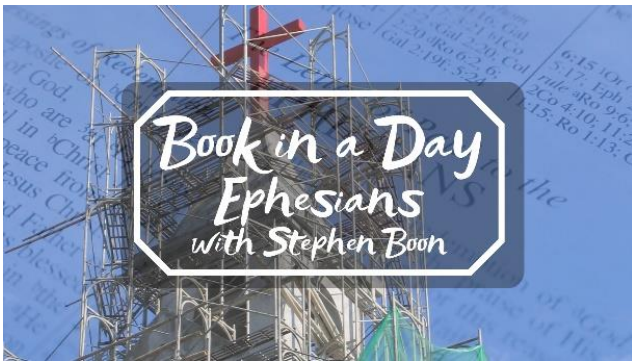
Easter Events

As Easter approaches there are a number of events to highlight –

- Christ Church, Britwell Crescent are organising an **Easter Event** for kids on Saturday 1st April from 2-5 pm. Come along for games, crafts, drama and stories of the first Easter. For all primary aged kids and contact liz@holyroodevangelical.org for more info.
- We are all warmly invited to join with **Meadowbank Church for a Communion Service** on Good Friday (7th April) at 12 noon. It will be conducted by their Interim Moderator, Rev Bill Wishart.
- **Origin Scotland** have their annual Easter concert 'Resurrection' on Easter Sunday (9th April) at 7.30pm in the Usher Hall. The concert brings together Christians from all over the central belt to celebrate the greatest event in history. Special guests Allan McKinlay, Steph Macleod, Fiona Crow, and guest speaker Peter Anderson (City on a Hill). Tickets can be bought [here](#).



Cornhill Book in a Day - Ephesians



Any more takers?! On Tuesday 25th April (from 09:30-16:30) we are invited to join Cornhill (Bath Street, Glasgow) for the day to spend time digging deeper into the book of Ephesians together. Stephen Boon will be teaching and he is the Associate Vicar of St. John's Tunbridge Wells, Kent and also a tutor at Cornhill London. The cost of the day is £20 per person or £10 for students or un-waged. Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you are hoping to come and we'll book a group ticket.

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space from 12.30 – 4pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday: Men's Discipleship in person at 7.30am or 10.30am
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Home Groups. Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) for more information,



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