

Tangible Jesus

2019-11-17 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Luke 5:12-13

“Do not be afraid of emotion.”

Mingle Question: Are you a hugger?

- Play *Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand* by Diana Ross during Mingle.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmFnjuFR8TI>

Intro:

- Moses story: Walking around the park with Moses, from Uganda
- Sharon Bieber—What she heard from Jesus.

Tangible Jesus

- Let me pray Paul's prayer for those in the church in Ephesus over you, that you would know experientially the unknowable love of Christ.
- **Ephesians 3:14-21** ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and **to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 5:12a ^{12a} While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

- **REWORK THIS**—Leprosy—also known as Hansen's disease, as defined today. There are two type of leprosy: one begins with brownish-red spots on the face, ears, forearms, thighs and/or buttocks which later become thickened nodules and, losing their skin covering, become ulcers with subsequent loss of tissue and then contraction and deformity. This was the leprosy that was typically in view in the Biblical cases of true leprosy. The other kind is characterized by numbness of an affected area of skin and deformity such as fingers like claws resulting from paralysis and consequent muscle wasting (atrophy). The advanced forms of leprosy are not described in Leviticus 13, presumably because this chapter is concerned with early diagnosis. Advanced leprosy would only be seen in isolation outside the camp. —*Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*
- Nepalese hospital that treats leprosy— <http://www.nepal-leprosy.com/leprosy.html>
- “Unclean! Unclean!”
- Physically, socially, relationally, and spiritually isolated.

Luke 5:12b ^{12b} And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”

- What will Jesus do?
- Unintentional touching of a leper—Addressed in Leviticus 5.
- Laws concerning leprosy—Leviticus 13-14
- The leper in this story represents humanity, unclean before God because of our sin. The guilt and shame that we feel. The distance in relationships.
- The leper wore his messiness on his sleeve. Most of us keep our messiness well concealed but it’s there nonetheless. The leper was wise to understand his need for Jesus to heal him. Do we understand our need for Jesus to heal us?

Luke 5:13a ^{13a} And Jesus stretched out his hand...

- *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo
 - Slight difference between the fingers—God reaching out. God is most interested in reaching out.

Luke 5:13b ^{13b} ...and touched him...

- That insurmountable gap between God and man was traversed by the God-Man, Jesus Christ!
- Jesus came in the flesh, Jesus touched messy people, Jesus sends messy people into the world to touch other messy people!
- The religious leadership would’ve been shocked by Jesus touching a leper just as they were shocked when he healed on the Sabbath. But they didn’t understand that Jesus Himself was the Lawmaker and they didn’t understand the restorative nature of the Law. Jesus cut straight to the heart of the Law and brought about human flourishing through His tender, healing touch.
- Later, Jesus would undergo an unlawful trial and Himself be touched but in extremely harmful and inappropriate ways by men who tortured Him and put Him to death. All of that, on our behalf, the lawbreakers, so we could be restored to relationship with God, and one day, hug Jesus ourselves.
- **1 John 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have ***touched with our hands***, concerning the word of life—
- We’ve talked about how the disciples of Jesus heard the voice of Jesus with their own two ears, and saw the face of Jesus with their own two eyes, and now we’re talking about how they touched Jesus with their own two hands.
- And John is proclaiming the message about Jesus so that those he wrote to and all who would follow (like us) would be invited into that same intimate fellowship with God the Father and his Son Jesus that they experienced.

Our Fundamental Need for Touch

- Touch is more important than most of us realize.
- Touch is essential for babies’ development for their physical, emotional and eventually social health. In fact, touch is the first of the five senses to develop. The need for positive touch, the connection, and reassurance it can bring is literally in our DNA.
- We are wired for touch. Want proof? Easy. Take a close look at this picture.
- This baby has not been taught that she or he needs touch. In particular, note that this baby has not been taught to touch or hold their mother’s finger...and yet the baby is naturally grasping their parent’s finger. Wasn’t taught. Just naturally wanted the connection through physical touch.
- **MY STORY:** Orphanage in China

The Monkey Experiment

- Psychologist Harry Harlow did an experiment in the 1950s that impressively exhibits the importance of physical contact. He put monkey babies in a cage and left them alone for a little while (without their parents or peers around). Once he took them out of the cage, he confronted them with two 'mothers' in order for them to decide between the two. Both 'mothers' were actually not monkeys, but objects. The first one was made of wire, and was holding a bottle of milk. The second one consisted of a soft and fluffy material, but no bottle of milk. Which one would the little baby monkeys choose? Would they choose the milk-carrying mother – essential for their survival – or the cuddly fluffy mother?
- To Harlow's amazement, the majority of the monkey babies chose the fluffy mother. Apparently, the cuddly feeling of body contact and closeness was more important to them than being fed with milk.
- We are similar to monkeys in these hunger for physical connection. Several similar, but less drastic, experiments with humans all pointed to a similar outcome. Humans suffer from social isolation but react positively to physical contact.
- Mother Teresa—“The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.”
- When we hug someone, the hormone Oxytocin is released in our body, which effectively reduces our stress levels. Additionally, our blood pressure sinks and we experience less anxiety during a hug.
- A Carnegie Mellon University study in 2014 showed that hugs can help us brave the chilly months and not suffer from colds as much, or only from minor ones. The findings revealed that participants who received hugs often or on a regular basis, experienced far less cold symptoms than participants who did not get as many hugs. This shows that regular hugs lower stress levels in our body and therefore the vulnerability to catch a cold.

Blue House Boyz & Hugs

- Triangle Park with the Blue House Boyz
- Zach wriggling out of my hug

Free Hugs

- Two campaigns that went viral, one in 2004 and one in 2014.
- Ken Nwadike Jr.'s super power is FREE HUGS!

Two Pathways

- We have two pathways in our brain for processing touch.
- Sensory pathway, which gives us the *facts* about touch—like vibration, pressure, location, and fine texture.
- The second pathway processes social and emotional information, determining the emotional content of mostly interpersonal touch using different sensors in the skin. This pathway activates brain regions associated with social bonding, pleasure and pain centers.
- So, touch can actually feel *physically different* based on the social context of the encounter.
- Consider someone's arm around your shoulder. Whether it's coming from a good friend, your lover, your boss, or a person you can't stand will change the way you experience that touch, even if the arm weighs exactly the same and your shoulder is being stimulated in the same exact way.
- Touch is one of the most primal connections.
 - People want to touch things when they see them. That's why things in museums are behind glass.
 - People want to touch pregnant women's bellies.
 - The elderly in nursing homes—grab a hand!

Two Tragedies

- Technology—Technology is rapidly replacing human interaction, including touch.
 - The Compression Carpet is a machine created by Los Angeles-based artist Lucy McRae that simulates a hug to a person craving intimacy.
 - Article—Sign of the times: Can hugging machines solve the touch crisis?
 - Or maybe we're all inevitably headed for a brave new world where machines hug us 'till they drug us. Who needs physical human companionship when smartphones are sheathed in faux flesh?
- Hypersexualized Culture—The hypersexualization of touch in our culture makes it difficult to have a healthy environment of human touch.
 - Sexual union, the two becoming one, is the most intimate form of touching and is supposed to point to the intimacy between God and humanity when Christ returns. But it's become twisted.
 - There is a great need for healthy relationships between men and women within the church AND outside of these four walls!
- God has known all along how important touch is. He created us with bodies that were meant to be close to one another.
- That's why we meet together at Central Gathering and in LIFE Groups. Watch Facebook Live if you can but show up in person, even better!

Luke 5:13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.

- Dave was revolted about leper's uncleanness. The ceremonial laws are pointing to the depth of sin.
- The symbolism and the actual healing.
- The leper is also invited back into community.
- Cleanliness part is unclean—medical and ceremonial unclean...

Touching Stories in Luke:

- Jesus allows the sinful woman to touch Him—Luke 7:36-50
- The bleeding woman touches Jesus' garment—Luke 8:44-46
- Jesus takes the little girl by the hand—Luke 8:54
- Jesus touches the woman with the disabling spirit of 18 years—Luke 13:13

Two Applications:

1) Be the hands of Jesus. We are the hands of Jesus

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Tallgrass Mission: Because God first loved us, we exist to love God and love our neighbors.

- Because we, messy people, have heard, and seen, and touched Jesus, we exist to be the Body of Christ, connecting our messy neighbors to Jesus.
- Because we are experiencing Jesus, we are sent into the world to help others experience Jesus.
- Hug one another!

Mother Teresa

- Why is Mother Teresa so amazing? Because she went and touched the lepers! She was the hands of Jesus!
- We may not need to move to Calcutta, India to be the hands of Jesus because we've got hurting people all around us, maybe in the pew right next to you.
- Mother Teresa with patients at a mobile leprosy clinic near Kolkata, India, in 1960.
- Mother Teresa—"Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work."

2) Long to hug Jesus. We will touch Jesus one day!

- Unfortunately, like eyesight and hearing, our sense of touch is vulnerable to the effects of age. The touch sense steadily deteriorates as we get older, starting around the age of 18. Every year, we lose around one percent of our tactile sense.
 - One of the things I look forward to with physical resurrection is having my sense of touch fully restored so that hugs will feel that much better!

Testimonies:

- Me—What I've heard from Jesus the last few weeks. "Relational capacity" "Declutter" "Allow others to love you" "Don't be afraid of emotion"
- Friend—Felt Jesus hand on his shoulder during listening prayer.
- Dave Geldart—Touch as a top Love Language.

PRAY

Reflection Questions:

1. What does Jesus want you to hear? See? Feel?
2. How can you intensify your longing to be physically present with Jesus?
3. How do you need to experience the Body of Christ more tangibly?
4. Who does Jesus want to touch through you?

Tangible Jesus Wrap-up

- Our deepest longings are for nothing less than being physically present with God.
- Part of scratching where that itch exists is being physically present with one another.
- Some wins
 - Sitting in solitude and silence
 - Sharpening your hunger for God
 - Becoming more of a hugger

The Chopping Block:

Mother Teresa Wikipedia

On 7 October 1950, Teresa received [Vatican](#) permission for the diocesan congregation, which would become the Missionaries of Charity.^[43] In her words, it would care for "the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone".^[44] By 1997 the 13-member Calcutta congregation had grown to more than 4,000 sisters who managed orphanages, AIDS hospices and charity centers worldwide, caring for refugees, the blind, disabled, aged, alcoholics, the poor and homeless and victims of floods, epidemics and famine.^[45]

In 1952, Teresa opened her first [hospice](#) with help from Calcutta officials. She converted an abandoned [Hindu](#) temple into the [Kalighat Home for the Dying](#), free for the poor, and renamed it Kalighat, the Home of the Pure Heart (Nirmal Hriday).^[46] Those brought to the home received medical attention and the opportunity to die with dignity in accordance with their faith: Muslims were read the [Quran](#), Hindus received water from the [Ganges](#), and Catholics received [extreme unction](#).^[47] "A beautiful death", Teresa said, "is for people who lived like animals to die like angels—loved and wanted."^[47]

She opened a hospice for those with [leprosy](#), calling it Shanti Nagar (City of Peace).^[48] The Missionaries of Charity established leprosy-outreach clinics throughout Calcutta, providing medication, [dressings](#) and food.^[49] The Missionaries of Charity took in an increasing number of homeless children; in 1955 Teresa opened Nirmala Shishu Bhavan, the Children's Home of the Immaculate Heart, as a haven for orphans and homeless youth.^[50]

The congregation began to attract recruits and donations, and by the 1960s it had opened hospices, orphanages and [leper houses](#) throughout India. Teresa then expanded the congregation abroad, opening a house in Venezuela in 1965 with five sisters.^[51] Houses followed in Italy (Rome), Tanzania and Austria in 1968, and during the 1970s the congregation opened houses and foundations in the United States and dozens of countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.^[52]

The Missionaries of Charity Brothers was founded in 1963, and a [contemplative branch](#) of the Sisters followed in 1976. Lay Catholics and non-Catholics were enrolled in the Co-Workers of Mother Teresa, the Sick and Suffering Co-Workers, and the Lay Missionaries of Charity. Responding to requests by many priests, in 1981 Mother Teresa founded the Corpus Christi Movement for Priests^[53] and (with priest [Joseph Langford](#)) the Missionaries of Charity Fathers in 1984^[54] to combine the vocational aims of the Missionaries of Charity with the resources of the priesthood. By 2007 the Missionaries of Charity numbered about 450 brothers and 5,000 sisters worldwide, operating 600 missions, schools and shelters in 120 countries.^[55]

Mother Teresa Quotes:

- "The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread."
- "Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work."
- "The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God."
- "People have forgotten what the human touch is, what it is to smile, for somebody to smile at them, somebody to recognize them, somebody to wish them well. The terrible thing is to be unwanted."

Free Hugs: Benefits of Hugs

- Free Hugs Campaign (2004)—The **Free Hugs Campaign** is a social movement involving individuals who offer [hugs](#) to strangers in public places.^[1] The hugs are meant to be [random acts of kindness](#)—selfless acts performed just to make others feel better. International Free Hugs Month is celebrated on the first Saturday of July and continues until August first.
- Free Hugs Project (2014)— In 2014, Ken Nwadike Jr. launched the Free Hugs Project to spread love in response to the bombing of the Boston Marathon. The Free Hugs Project gained popularity in 2016, as Nwadike made major news headlines for his peacekeeping efforts and de-escalation of violence during protests, riots, and political rallies.

Articles

- The human touch: a neglected feeling—<https://www.neuronation.com/science/human-touch-neglected-feeling>
- Why physical touch is so important in relationships—<https://drgarybrowntherapy.com/physical-touch-important-relationships/>
- How our sense of touch affects everything we do— https://www.huffpost.com/entry/neuroscience-touch_n_6489050
- Is technology killing the human touch?—<https://www.cNBC.com/2015/08/15/gy-killing-the-human-touch.html>
- Sign of the times: Can hugging machines solve the touch crisis?—<https://bigthink.com/technology-innovation/can-machines-solve-touch-crisis>
 - Or maybe we're all inevitably headed for a brave new world where machines hug us 'till they drug us. Who needs physical human companionship when smartphones are sheathed in faux flesh?

The Body of Christ Touches

- Peter takes the lame man by the hand—Acts 3:7
- The hand of Jesus is the hand of the disciples—Acts 4:30
- Laid their hands to receive the Holy Spirit—Acts 8:17
- Ananias laid his hands on Paul—Acts 9:17
- Jesus is the church, the one Paul is persecuting—Acts 9:5
- Paul took up Eutychus in his arms—Acts 20:10

Human Need for Touch

- We are social beings who in the long run, are only happy if we have other people around us. In an experiment regarding social relations and health, the scientists Louise Hawkley and John Cacioppo collected all related research findings of the past years [3]:
 - The risk of suffering from cardiovascular diseases as a young adult is higher with people who were often lonely during childhood and youth.
 - A study conducted with retired elderly people showed that loneliness is the most accurate indicator for an individual's life duration.
 - Furthermore, there is a connection between loneliness and depression. It is not fully clear yet whether loneliness is a trigger for depression or depression a cause for loneliness. But there is more and more proof that depression is a consequence of feeling lonely.
 - Mental abilities of a person deteriorate with increasing loneliness. A study showed that the risk of developing symptoms of Alzheimer's is significantly higher with people who feel lonely.
 - According to married researchers and authors, Dr. Charles and Dr. Elizabeth Schmitz, touch outranks sex in characteristics of a successful marriage.
 - Simple, practical marriage help: Daily 20 Second Hug! Set a timer.

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- Touch can also be influential. Studies have also shown that individuals who have been touched are more likely to agree to participate in mall interviews, slight touches yield bigger tips for waitresses, and bus drivers are more likely to give a passenger a free ride if they touch them while making the request. And what about that unexplained urge to touch a pregnant woman's belly?! It's instinctual. We literally want to connect with others, even the unborn! *THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD TOUCH THE PREGANT WOMAN'S BELLY, FELLAS!!!*