

A Little of that Human Touch

Mark 1: 40-45

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And I want
And you got it
So much
I'm crazy for
Your touch
Your touch Your touch Your touch
And I'll be good
Like I should
Waitin' is such
Misery, I need your touch
Your touch Your touch Your touch
Hey
A little louder now
I've got to shout it now
Please rush
I need your touch
Your touch Your touch Your touch

The Black Keyes

I love the song, *Your Touch*, by the Black Keyes. What first struck me about the song, what hooked me immediately, wasn't the lyrics but the groove. The electric guitar and drums shock me like electricity and jerk my legs, my arms, my back, my neck, my whole body to the song's raunchy rhythm. I can't stand still while listening to it. But the lyrics are good too, good ol' primal rock 'n roll poetry, the unbearable crazy erotic longing for another's touch.

Your touch.

But we don't have to limit the lyrics to the erotic longing for human touch. The lyrics can express anyone's longing for human touch. For any reason. Because they're lonely, sick, sad, socially invisible, untouchable, illegal, whatever.

I wonder, how deep and for how long did the leper long for human touch? The leper, the untouchable human, how long had it been since he'd felt human touch? For how long was he prohibited from receiving human touch?

Was it unbearable? Waiting is such misery. Please rush, I need your touch.

Did it drive the leper crazy? I'm crazy for your touch.

Jesus, I beg you. *I beg you. I BEG!* Heal me, so I'll no longer be untouchable. So I can once again feel human touch.

Jesus touches untouchable skin, restoring the man's life.

Natalie Merchant's haunting song, *My Skin*, is about feeling untouchable.

Take a look at my body
Look at my hands
There's so much here
that I don't understand...

I've been treated so wrong
I've been treated so long
As if I'm becoming untouchable...

I'm a slow dying flower
Frost killing hour
The sweet turning sour
And untouchable

Oh, I need
the darkness
The sweetness
The sadness
The weakness
Oh I need this

I need
A lullaby
A kiss goodnight
Angel sweet
love of my life
Oh, I need this

What suffering to feel one is becoming untouchable. Unloved. Unwanted. Unneeded. Un-kissed. Un-sung to. A slow dying flower. A heart turning sour. In need of that human touch.

Bruce Springsteen sang about the need for that human touch.

I ain't lookin for praise or pity
I ain't comin round searchin' for a crutch
I just want someone to talk to
And just a little of that human touch
Just a little of that human touch

Ain't no mercy on the streets of this town
Ain't no bread from heavenly skies
An't nobody drawin' wine from this blood

In a world without pity
Do you think what I'm askin's too much
I just want something to hold on to
And a little of that human touch
Just a little of that human touch

I'm not looking for mercy or pity. Not looking for praise. But while my life's jerked around by forces bigger than me, I want something to hold on to. Just a little bit of that human touch.

That human touch. It may be the literal touch of skin. Jesus touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus touched the leper. The skin of one touching the skin of another can be very powerful in lots of different ways and for lots of different reasons. Humans need that touch.

But it can also be something other than human bodies touching or embracing. It can be any number of human acts, big or small, that touch another person's life in some way. Something that someone finds touching or moving. "Wow, I found it very touching, very moving, when you did that for me." That human touch. Whatever touches another person's heart or soul. The act of love, kindness, compassion, or wisdom. The helpful response to a need or to a request for help.

And leave it to The Boss to incorporate a Eucharistic theme into his longing for that human touch. There's no bread falling from heaven. No blood that's holy wine. But what will save me is a little of that human touch.

Maybe that's one aspect of Holy Communion. Maybe we live in *holy union with* one another by touching one another's lives with that human touch. A Christ-like human touch. And not just one another's lives, but other people's as well. The touch of love, kindness, compassion, wisdom. The liberating, healing, reconciling touch.

The physician, Albert Schweitzer, who touched many people's lives with a Christ-like human touch, wrote, "In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flames by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit."

The inner fire goes out. The flower slowly dies. The sweetness turns sour. I'm beginning to feel untouchable. Sometimes, just a little bit of that human touch can rekindle the fire, revive the flower, re-sweeten life, let one know they're not untouchable.

Jacob Nordby writes in his book, *Blessed are the Weird*, "I can't change the world or solve its problems. That's too much. Too big. But I can turn and honestly face my own problems, fears, and pain. I can learn to love and serve those who are within my own arm's reach."

Nordby calls us, "the fingertips of 'God' touching the earth." A beautiful image.

Obviously, when responding to other people's needs, we need not limit ourselves to the reach of our own arm. Modern technology enables us to extend our reach all around the globe. We can touch the world, make an impact on people's lives, almost anywhere. Right now, people in Houston and the Gulf Coast are desperate for our help. Next week, Dreamers all across Texas and the United States may need our help. There are many ways for us to touch the earth in Christ-like ways beyond the reach of our arm.

But I invite you to pay close attention to how you live with the people who are more or less within arm's reach of your life. The people you actually see and with whom you interact, whether its family members, friends, work associates, people at the grocery store, the homeless

people on the street, the drivers in the next lane on MOPAC, the Trump supporter across the street, the Muslim worshipping down the street. As you interact with other people, whether it's with words, just a glance, or an actual touch of skin, see if you can offer them a little bit of that human touch. That Christ-like human touch.

How do you drive on MOPAC in a Christ-like manner? *How would Jesus drive?* “Wow, person driving the car behind me, I found it touching when you slowed down for me, waved to me, smiled at me, and let me into the lane in front of you. Thank you.”

Can you see yourself as “the fingertips of ‘God’ touching the earth,” wherever you are, whoever you’re with, whatever you’re doing?

“This is my body.” These words of Jesus Christ are foundational to our Christian spirituality. “This is my body.” “The Word became flesh.” The divine, the holy, here on earth as a human body. A human body touching other human bodies, other human lives. And making them, in some way, better.

We’re the disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. Called to follow his way, and sent into the world to be as he was and do as he did. To touch the world the way he touched the world.

What if we were to get up every morning, look at ourselves in the mirror, and say, “This is my body. With my body, I will touch the world today with a Christ-like touch. With my body, I will touch other people’s lives with a Christ-like touch.” What if that became our daily aspiration, our daily vow, our daily spiritual practice—to be a Christ-like presence in all our encounters, to offer other people that Christ-like human touch?

I think the world is desperate for that Christ-like human touch. I think many people, deep inside, long for that Christ-like human touch. Why so much misery in the world? Not enough of that Christ-like human touch touching the world. People are going crazy for that Christ-like human touch.

For *your* touch.