

"What Makes Your Fingers Itch to Touch?"
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Selections from Matthew & Mark
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Call to Worship

There is a peaceful space in the heart of God. Hear God's people may rest after their labors, not as a reward, but a freely given gift.

There is a mountain of renewal rising clear before us as our souls and bodies tire. It is cool in the clouds of its heights and gentle in its green valleys.

There is a laughing Spirit who calls us on to play and dance in the lightness of being, released from the burdens of the journey and to share in the joys of recreation.

This is our God the giver of life. Through God we can touch the sky!

Prayer of Invocation

We raise our voices, we look on high, God who rules heaven and earth, but we forget that sometimes you speak through the humblest, and that out of the minds of others comes wisdom. Today as we gather in your name we pray for your word to be spoken directly in our hearts, and for the discernment to recognize your good news not only in those who speak, who pray, who lead, who sing, who play, but in everyone who shares and has shared in this gift of worship, with us today. Amen.

The Word

Now when Jesus had come down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. A man with a skin disease came, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do want to. Become clean." Instantly his skin disease was cleansed.

Jesus went home with Peter and saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and served them.

That evening people brought to Jesus many who were demon-possessed. He threw the spirits out with just a word. He healed everyone who was sick.

Then a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of his clothes. She thought, If I only touch his robe I'll be healed.

When Jesus turned and saw her, he said, "Be encouraged, daughter. Your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that time on.

When they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. When the people who lived in that place recognized him, they sent word throughout that whole region, and they brought to him everyone who was sick.

Then they begged him that they might just touch the edge of his clothes. Everyone who touched him was cured.

As Jesus and his disciples were going out of Jericho a large crowd followed him. When two blind men sitting along the road heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Show us mercy, Lord, Son of David!"

Now the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But they shouted even louder, "Show us mercy, Lord, Son of David!" Jesus stopped in his tracks and called to them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

"Lord, we want to see," they replied. Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they followed him.

He had healed so many people that everyone who was sick pushed forward so that they could touch him.

Living the Word

What is it that makes your fingers itch to touch? The sense of touch is the faculty by which external objects or forces are perceived through contact with the body (especially the hands); "only sight and touch enable us to locate objects in the space around us". cutaneous senses, skin senses, touch modality, touch.

Tactile learners best learn through the sense of touch. These learners love to use their hands to learn new information. Students who are tactile learners may become easily distracted or frustrated with material presented in visual or audible lessons only. The tactile learner will learn best when using their hands. Tactile learners also tend to be very emotional and sensitive individuals.

Do you think you are a tactile person? There were many responses this week that tell me there were a number of us tactile people in the building this week... If you did or didn't get to share yours, just sit back and imagine these as I go through them. So here is your list, with a few comments, a bit of scripture and possibly some sermonizing, as I share about 'What makes your fingers itch to touch:

Feathers, moss growing by the lakeshore, the first snowfall of the year (hopefully that one will be a while yet!), petals of a flower to see if it is real – or not! A smooth sea shell – some people collect smooth shells and stones and gently rub them for a moment of calm during the day. Someone expanded from fingers to toes - Cool tile floors on a hot day, those same tiles, heated in the winter.

Beautiful fabric, soft clothing, velvet, fabric, when I touch a silk scarf. Someone told me they went into a clothing store in another country and got in trouble for touching the clothes...Homemade playdough, cookie dough - different intent between those two – one to play, one to eat? Mechanical things that were made to be touched in order to work.

The pages of a good book – who ever wrote this one may have been touching it in thanksgiving to God for the enjoyment of the book or because the book was becoming a good friend on their journey together. From playdough to books, these kind of answers speak of exploring and learning and can even lead people to creating.

What makes your fingers itch to touch? One response was Soap bubbles – I always had to dry the dishes when I was young, because I couldn't be trusted not to take a whole handful of the bubbles and clap them together, just for effect... another wrote: 'Something I'm not supposed to touch...'

Do you remember going to grandma's house and being told "Don't touch the glass knickknacks?"

Some don't touch signs or warnings are for our protection, but some are not. The Romans ruled in Jesus' lifetime. The Jewish people were controlled by greedy leaders who took almost everything they had and made laws to their own liking to Hebrews oppressed. They also controlled the Temple leaders who were corrupted Jewish people, while they indulged themselves with the things that they desired to taste and touch.

The Apostle Paul wrote in [Colossians 2:20-23](#) *If you died with Christ to the way the world thinks and acts, why do you submit to the rules and the regulations as though you were living in the world? "Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch!" All of these things cease to exist when they are used. Such rules are human commands and teachings. They look like they are wise with this self-made religion and their self-denial by the harsh treatment of the body, but they are no help against indulging in selfish immoral behavior.*

It is a call to action and justice to give God's people direction and encouragement in the name of Christ. It acknowledges who Christ was as a radical leader to confront the established practices of that day. It isn't easy

to be a radical and change the ways of the world. It is often easier to just go along being oppressed. What in our culture today would you stand up to change?

Do you remember Shadrack, Meshack and Abednigo from the fiery furnace who came out unburned? King Nebuchadnezzar also sent Daniel into the Lions den for the same charges of not bowing down. He also came out untouched. Daniel 6:22 My God sent his messenger, who shut the lion's mouths. They haven't touched me because I was judged innocent before my God. I haven't done anything wrong to you either, Your Majesty.

Many of our generation were a trial to our parents because we wouldn't put up with some things in our lives 'just because it was 'a common practice.' We touched playing cards, when it was still taboo, we touched our partners when dancing, which was taboo. We said 'no thank you' toward pinched cheeks and uncomfortable hugs, even when it might offend Uncle so-and-so."

There are touches that are wrong. There is something definitely wrong with a culture that has 25% of the female population reporting sexual misconduct and rape, especially when you know that there is as much as another 25% who don't report it. There are parts in our culture and other places in the world that need an unspoken, but lived by, sign that says "Do not touch!"

Genesis 3:3 ...but God did say "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you **must not touch it, or you will die.**" This story says that Adam and Eve couldn't handle the desire to touch and a part of them died in the process.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. It is the second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world. Victims are trafficked by force, fraud or coercion primarily for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation. Human Trafficking is a significant problem in Wisconsin, where domestic and foreign victims have been identified in both urban and rural communities. From 2000-2006 160 cases were identified in Wisconsin, but many go uncounted.

You should be horrified to know that Hwy 63 Corridor from Superior to Eau Claire is ripe for the picking, as slave traders come through the Great Lakes and take unsuspecting victims. Victims are also brought in from other countries to serve people in this country. Next month there is a group coming in to use our building to assemble human trafficking kits to be distributed throughout our area. If you are interested in helping, watch the September Good News Letter for more information.

Part of the point of this week's question is that we need to learn in life what we want and what we can have aren't always the same thing. *Proverbs 6:27-29 Can a man scoop fire into his lap and his clothing not get burned? If a man walks on hot coals, don't his feet get burned? So is the man who approaches his neighbor's wife; anyone who touches her will be punished.*

Let us get back to positive things you wrote, that make your fingers itch to touch. The number one response: The fur of a fluffy kitten or puppy, kitten fur, puppies and kittens, from my childhood – newborn kittens, a cute little puppy wagging his tale. And thus the bulletin cover this morning...

On to the human element: What makes your fingers itch to touch? Someone's hair – a hairdresser perhaps? Baby's toes, a newborn's head, babies - period! What parents of newborns can hardly wait for the nurse to leave them alone so they can unwrap their new family member and examine it. Those little feet, and the toes; the little tiny fingers, including fingernails!

Soon after the birth they can touch their mother and grip the little finger of their father and they begin to learn the importance of touch in their lives. They suck out of instinct and they are fed. They cry for the attention, wanting to be held and cuddled. As they grow they learn to touch back, not wanting to let go.

Then the day comes when they are moved from the parents room or the parent's bed and they seek the touch of something else. My grandson, Oliver has had a pacifier, his Nuk, since he was very little. For a long time he either had the bottle or the Nuk in his mouth. Both have become a comfort and security. He is now over 2 ½ years old and can only have his Nuk at nap and bed.

At this age they move from toy to toy, game to game on short intervals. At grandma's house he will be playing with excavators, skid steers and tractors, then in a moment of pause he will announce that it is time to go to bed. This game includes grandma finding the Nuk up in the cupboard and we head to the guest room - twin bed for a few minutes rest.

Before he puts the Nuk in his mouth we both have to be under his blankie and he insists that I take my glasses off. This whole procedure takes longer than any rest. A few minutes to enjoy the Nuk, and he announces "Gramma, it's morning, wake up!" The Nuk goes up on the dresser and it is back to the skid steer, pausing at the counter to eye up the cookie jar "Gramma, have some?" *1 Kings 19:5 Elijah and an angel: Then he laid down under a bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said "Get up and eat."*

It is easy to get frustrated by the fuss of the whole activity, and I always wish the 'nap' was longer, but he gets a few moments of comfort and is ready to get back to work. We can learn a lot by taking note of the importance of finding something to touch that gives us comfort and taking the time to be with it. This also can work human to human: What makes your fingers itch to touch? You wrote: Hugs and kisses, a hug from my granddaughter, hugs from great grands.

From the book of Psalms - *Psalms 69:1-3 Save me God, because the waters have reached my neck! I have sunk into deep mud. My feet cannot touch the bottom! I have entered deep water; the flood has swept me up. I am tired of crying. My throat is hoarse. My eyes are exhausted with waiting for my God.* How many of you remember a time when your feet could not touch the bottom? In reality or figuratively, we all go through those times. Having someone who can give you comfort without judgement, often without words, can be the touch you need for your spirit to be encouraged to go on waiting.

The Word this morning told of many different ways that Jesus used touch to change the lives of others by healing them. He told the disciples that they could and would do even greater things than he did. The Apostle Paul, though a later disciple was healed in his heart and soul by God and also went out to heal others.

Acts 19:4-7, 11-12 Paul explained, "John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus." After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and prophesying. Altogether, there were about twelve people.

God was doing unusual miracles through Paul. Even the small towels and aprons that had touched his skin were taken to the sick, and their diseases were cured and the evil spirits left them.

What might we be able to do? Two weeks ago, we laid hands on and blessed Ryleigh, Tapanga and J.J. before they left for their trip out east, just as we did at the Confirmation Service. This is a Christian practice, that we don't use often enough. Even the shaking of hands passing the peace or a hand on someone's shoulder with kind word, and of course hugs, are a gift of comfort and encouragement. When you feel the hands of others touch you in caring, friendship and God's love, you will find the comfort and support of God and a part of you lives again.