

Mark 5:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Analysis

And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? The disciples' response reveals their limited understanding of the difference between physical proximity and faith-filled contact. 'The multitude thronging thee' (τὸν ὄχλον συνθλίβοντά σε, ton ochlon synthlibonta se) uses a verb meaning to press together, crowd, or crush—describing intense physical pressure from all sides. From the disciples' perspective, Jesus' question seemed absurd: countless people were touching Him in the crowded streets.

Their literalistic response missed the spiritual dimension Jesus referenced. They saw only physical contact; Jesus perceived faith's touch. This exchange illustrates a persistent problem in discipleship: confusing external religious activity with genuine spiritual engagement. The disciples walked physically closest to Jesus yet often misunderstood His teaching and mission. Proximity doesn't guarantee comprehension; physical nearness doesn't ensure spiritual intimacy. Many 'throng' Jesus—attend church, perform religious duties, maintain Christian cultural identity—without truly 'touching' Him through personal faith. Reformed theology emphasizes that saving faith involves not mere intellectual assent or religious participation but personal trust and communion with Christ (John 17:3).

Historical Context

Palestinian village and town streets were narrow, unpaved pathways where crowds created crushing conditions. When a popular rabbi or healer appeared, enthusiastic crowds pressed in from all directions seeking healing, teaching, or merely curiosity. The disciples' question reflected practical reality—in such conditions, identifying who touched Jesus seemed impossible. Peter's tone (Luke 8:45 reports Peter speaking) suggests mild frustration or confusion at what seemed an unanswerable question. This interaction reveals the disciples' ongoing education in spiritual discernment. Despite months traveling with Jesus, witnessing miracles, and receiving private instruction, they still thought primarily in physical rather than spiritual categories. This gradual learning process characterized the disciples' development throughout Jesus' ministry. Early church fathers used this passage to emphasize that mere church attendance or proximity to Christian community doesn't constitute saving faith—intentional, personal trust in Christ is required.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between merely 'thronging' Jesus through religious activity and truly 'touching' Him through personal faith and communion?
2. What does the disciples' confusion teach about the danger of familiarity with Jesus that lacks deep spiritual understanding?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	λέγεις	αὐτοῦ	οἱ	μαθηταὶ	αὐτοῦ	Βλέπεις	τὸν
And	said	unto him	G3588	his disciples	unto him	Thou seest	G3588
G2532	G3004	G846		G3101	G846	G991	
ὄχλον	συνθλίβοντά	σε	καὶ	λέγεις	Τίς	μου	ἥψατο
the multitude	thronging	thee	And	said	Who	me	touched
G3793	G4918	G4571	G2532	G3004	G5101	G3450	G680

Additional Cross-References

Luke 8:45 (Parallel theme): And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

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