“Touched by God”

Matthew 9: 18-26; Isaiah 6: 1-8

Have you been touched in some way in your life by God?

I really hope that answer to that question is “yes” and I hope the follow up is: “Let me tell you about the time when…”

Unfortunately many of us think about God as this far away entity Who is so holy as to be untouchable, unapproachable, unspeakable.

In some ways we are more comfortable with the throne room Of God and God being way up there- high and lofty.

Just look at the architecture of this sanctuary…

The person who speaks for God in this place Is set up on a high and lofty pulpit.

It seems that we are more comfortable with that idea of the word of God Coming from a high and distant place that we are to having The word of God coming from someone right next to us.

And yet that is exactly what God does in Jesus Christ.

God becomes one of us so that we can touch God and God can touch us.

And in the process we are changed by God’s presence in our lives.

In the Isaiah story God calls Isaiah by touching his mouth And Isaiah responds “Here I am: send me!”
And Isaiah went out into the world and preached boldly about this God

Even when it was the unpopular thing to do because...

God had touched him and blotted out his sin and guilt.

In the Matthew passage, God in Jesus Christ encounters two people:

A religious man of power and a women who was powerless & outcast

And God in Jesus Christ touched both of their lives and healed them.

“And the report of this spread throughout the district.”

I wonder who told the most people.

It would have been scandalous for the leader of the synagogue

To tell people that his daughter HAD BEEN RAISED from the dead

But it would have been equally scandalous for the women

Who had a flow of blood and was outcast to have

DARED TO TOUCH even the hem of Jesus garment.

And yet they told people because they couldn’t help themselves

When you have been touched by the grace of God you can’t keep silent.

You want to tell others. You want your friends to have that experience.

You want to support this man who has redeemed your life

And yet you know that it is God who has done the changing

God who has done the redeeming, the saving from sin,

The healing and the raising from certain death.
And so it is in our world and our time and our lives.

God is still touching our lives, changing our lives, molding and shaping us.

God called me to ministry when I was just 14 years old

When I was living in England and I remember the day & place

It was on base in a clump of tree near a gas station.

No throne room, no seraphim, just a small voice

Calling me by name to ministry.

And my response was to study math and science and become an engineer.

You see we don’t always (at least I don’t also) do what God calls us to.

And so it took me another 14 years to respond “yes” to God

And yet God didn’t give up on me,

and God doesn’t give up on you either.

As a result of being touched by God

I had the opportunity to touch the lives of others for God

and to see God’s healing, helping, holding hands in people’s lives.

It is indeed a privilege to say “Here I am, send me!” to this awesome God.

I have seen the blind receive vision as I went on an optical mission trip

To Honduras and we examined eyes and gave out glasses

With the words “Via con Dios”- Go with God!
(Of course a couple of us non Spanish speakers said “Via con Rios” which means Go with the River- We were hence forth known as the River boys- yet God still used us to give sight to the blind )

And I have seen the lame walk right here in Jefferson City as I visit in

The Capital Region Rehab clinic where God uses people

like Jennifer Hickman, to be part of God’s healing ministry.

And I have sat with families when doctors had to bring news

That someone would not survive and then I’ve seen that person

Recover and be healed and made whole by God’s spirit.

And I have had the privilege to preach God news to the poor in Africa,

In Mexico and Honduras and many weeks right here in Jeff City.

And I have seen glimpses of God’s kingdom throughout this world.

More importantly I continue to be touched by God.

When I was depressed and felt abandoned by a church in Texas

I heard the word of God in scripture speaking to me:

“You are my beloved son, in you I am well pleased.”

And that gave me the courage to re-enter ministry and to

Reclaim the calling of God from so long ago. And to serve

With creativity, energy, imagination and love

as a minister of word and sacrament.
At that time in my life I felt more like the outcast women in the Matthew story
Than I felt like the religious leader and yet God touched me and healed me.
And I take comfort that Christ is there for us when we are down and out
And God is there for us when we think we have power on this earth
And God is there for every experience in between.
So we’re back to the original question, not “Have you been touched by God?”
But rather “How have you been touched by God in your life?”
And the corollary question, “How will you respond to the healing
Touch of the Lord Jesus Christ upon your life?”
How will you express your gratitude to God?
Our Stewardship drive this month give us all an opportunity to say “Thanks”
By pledging our support to God who is at work every day in our church.
As painful as my time in Texas was I learned a valuable lesson there:
“You can’t out give God!”
One of the elders who tithed, gave 10% of his income to the church
told me that he thought he was doing pretty good until he realized
over and over that he only gives 10 % and God gave us the life of his Son,
So that our guilt might be removed, our sins forgiven,
That our disease and loneliness might be healed and our children might know life. That’s good news indeed. Amen