Good morning, Moon Valley!

Today I want to talk about something that we all experience to one degree or another at one time or another.

It is something that can have a profoundly negative effect on our relationships.

It is something that can disguise itself such that you don't realize you're experiencing it.

It is something nobody likes to talk about very much.

It is shame.

There are two kinds of shame: good and bad, healthy and unhealthy.

When I do something I know is immoral or hurtful, my experience of healthy shame can be a good prompter to make things right. Healthy shame says, “I made a mistake.” And that is good for you.

But I am not talking about healthy shame today. I am talking about an unhealthy shame that goes beyond saying , “I made a mistake.” Unhealthy shame says, “I *am* a mistake.” And that is bad for you.

While healthy shame focuses on a specific behavior as being defective, unhealthy shame focuses on the self as being irredeemably defective. Shame is the isolating fear of being uniquely and irreparably messed up.

A noted social researcher, Brene Brown, has described this unhealthy kind of shame as, "the fear of disconnection. . . . the fear that something we have done or failed to do, something about who we are or where we come from, has made us unlovable and unworthy of connection."

Shame adversely affects our connections with others.

Sometimes, we're not aware that we struggle with feelings of shame even though we have symptoms. Studies have shown that feelings of shame are linked to anger, ineffective conflict resolution, and an inability to effectively communicate in interpersonal relationships.

Shame has been shown to have a severing effect on interpersonal relationships. Which is a cruel irony. Shame, which is the fear of disconnection, often leads to disconnection. So, shame is a self-fulfilling fear.

Today, I want to study the interaction of Jesus with a woman who experienced shame.

First, we're going to enter into the situation experienced by the woman. My guess is that you're going to feel her shame. Your situation is different, but you're going to know the feeling. It's going to resonate.

Then, we're going to see how Jesus releases this woman from shame. In the process, we're going to gain some insight into how we, too, can be released from shame.

We are continuing our sermon series titled, "So You Can Know For Sure." It is a study through the Gospel of Luke. The text we're studying today is ▶ Luke 8:40-56.

Let me provide some background.

It is the fall of AD 30, in the second year of Jesus' ministry. Jesus and his disciples have just sailed across the Sea of Galilee and have come ashore

at Capernaum. By modern standards, Capernaum is a small town of maybe 1,500. Everybody knows everybody. ▶ Luke 8:40 says,

> ESV Luke 8:40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.

A crowd gathers around Jesus on shore, and Jesus is speaking to them. The woman is in the crowd. She probably lives in or near Capernaum. The woman is listening. She is watching. She has heard the stories of how Jesus has healed people. That is why she has come. She is waiting, hoping for her opportunity.

But before her opportunity comes, there is an interruption. ▶ Verse 41 says,

> ESV Luke 8:41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. . . .

Jairus is a well-known, highly respected Jewish man. As ruler, he probably heads up some aspect of worship programming down at the only synagogue in Capernaum.

Jairus is desperate. ▶ Verses 41 and 42 explain,

> ESV Luke 8:41 . . . And falling at Jesus' feet, he [Jairus] implored him [Jesus] to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. . . .

A lot of people in the crowd probably already know that Jairus' daughter is gravely ill. Capernaum is a small town.

No doubt, Jairus has heard the stories of Jesus healing people. So, he comes to Jesus, falls at his feet and begs him to come and heal his daughter. So, Jesus goes with Jairus. ▶ Verse 42 says,

> ESV Luke 8:42 . . . As Jesus went, the people pressed around him.

The whole crowd follows and presses in on Jesus. The woman follows, too, and winds her way closer to Jesus as they walk.

Now, the woman's story comes to light in ▶ verse 43.

> ESV Luke 8:43 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

The phrase, "a discharge of blood" describes some kind of chronic menstrual disorder or uterine hemorrhage. Think about this. How would you like to be the woman in the Bible famous for her gynecological problems?

The embarrassment of it is multiplied when you think of all the modern conveniences the woman did not have available to her in the first century. No feminine products, no plumbing, no washing machine. You get the idea.

This woman is almost certainly Jewish, and her plight is exacerbated by her religious and cultural background as it relates to something called ▶ ritual impurity. Let me explain what ritual impurity involves and how it is to be distinguished from moral impurity. Then we will relate this to the woman.

The Lord God himself is morally pure. He is without sin. He is holy. And he called his chosen people, the people of Israel, to embody this ethic as the

ideal. As much as possible, the Jewish people were to pursue moral purity in every area of life.

In ▶ Leviticus 19:2 and elsewhere, the Lord says to his people,

> ESV Leviticus 19:2 ". . . You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

God chose to teach his people about moral purity in at least two ways.

First, he gave commands about moral behavior: Do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, love your neighbor, etc. The Israelites were to distinguish between the morally impure and the morally pure as a basis for separating themselves from the impure so they could be holy.

Second, God gave as an object lesson a host of laws about ritual purity—not *moral* purity, but *ritual* purity. God gave the people of Israel ritual laws concerning food, sexual practices, sickness, and health. The Israelites were to distinguish between the ritually impure and ritually pure as a basis for separating themselves from and dealing with any ritual impurity.

The process of having to deal properly with *ritual* impurity on the outside was intended to be an object lesson and constant reminder of having to deal properly with *moral* impurity on the inside.

It is important to distinguish between ritual impurity and moral impurity. A certain condition may render someone ritually impure without making them morally impure. The woman in our story is a case in point. Her discharge of blood made her ritually unclean, but it did not make her morally unclean. It is not the woman's fault that she has this discharge.[1] She certainly didn't choose it. She is not culpable.

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[1] Sklar, Jay, *Leviticus: The Lord's Holy People Living out His Holy Character*, ed. by Daniel I. Block, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 308-309.

Nevertheless, in her day and culture, she was considered *ritually* unclean because of her condition. ▶ Leviticus 15:25-30 explains the ritual uncleanness of the woman. Gird your loins. It's a little cringy.

> ESV Leviticus 15:25 "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. ▶ 26 Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. ▶ 27 And whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 28 But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. ▶ 29 And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. ▶ 30 And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge."

This is not a popular passage for family devotions with the kids.

If you've ever read through Leviticus, this is probably one of those parts that seemed weird and senseless and unfair. Nevertheless, in that day and culture, the general concept of ritual purity was well known and practiced in one form or another, not only by the Israelites, but also by Egyptians, Persians, and Arabs.[2]

[2] Cabal, Ted, Chad Owen Brand, E. Ray Clendenen, Paul Copan, J.P. Moreland, and Doug Powell, *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 175.

God took the then well-known concept of ritual purity and adapted it for his purposes. His laws relating to ritual purity were given to the people of Israel as an external reminder or prompter to deal with the weightier, internal issue of moral purity.

With the death and resurrection of Christ, these laws have been done away. They no longer apply to us. We don't need the external prompters; we have an internal prompter in the person of the Holy Spirit.

But the woman in our story lives in a different place and time.

She is ritually unclean by virtue of her discharge of blood.

In ancient Israel, a ritually unclean Jew was barred from entering the Jewish Temple, barred from participating in religious sacrifices, barred eating certain sacred foods, barred from sexual activities, and barred from joining in some communal worship events, until undergoing the prescribed purification.

The uncleanness of the woman did not keep her from having a close relationship with God. It only kept her from participating in certain religious rituals.

Nevertheless, her uncleanness had cultural consequences that would have contributed to her shame.

We have learned that ritual impurity is not the same as moral impurity. This woman is not to blame for her condition. Nevertheless, the distinction between ritual and moral impurity was often blurred in the eyes of people. Back then and today, people are fully capable of misunderstanding and misapplying the word of God.

Uncleanness was considered the opposite of holiness. So, uncleanness had a vague but unmistakable connection with sin and guilt. If you were unclean, the prevailing view was that it was probably because there was something sinful and unholy about you.

Uncleanness was also considered a threat to the wholeness or completeness of Jewish society. Clean people belong; unclean people do not.

Uncleanness was also considered highly contagious. Simply touching an unclean person made you unclean. Even sitting in a chair used by an unclean person would make you unclean.

The woman in our story had been unclean for 12 years continuously. She has been unclean for as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. It is hard to keep this kind of thing a secret in a small town.

Can you imagine the shame this woman feels?

Unclean, unwanted, unattractive, uncomfortable, untouchable, unfertile, uninvited, unpopular, unsuitable, unholy, unwelcome, unloved, unworthy.

Other factors multiply her shame.

- She is anemic and weak.
- She is broke, having spent everything she has on doctors.
- And we learn from the parallel account in Mark that her condition is not improving; it's getting worse.
- And it is a chronically painful condition.

This poor woman had heard the reports about Jesus, how he had healed people of various diseases (Mark 5:27).

But approaching Jesus directly and publicly to explain her situation, as Jairus did, would be too risky. After all, she is unclean.

People would be upset by her nearness and audacity. And she probably reasons that Jesus might refuse her because of her uncleanness. And, if he refused her, she's not sure she could take it. Jesus' rejection and the ensuing public scorn would be unbearable.

So, she decides to blend into the crowd, to press in toward Jesus, and to simply touch him. Perhaps she will be healed. And no one will notice. It's worth a try; the woman is desperate. ▶ Luke 8:44 says,

> ESV Luke 8:44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, . . .

But even this is risky. Touching Jesus would make him unclean. And everybody she touched in the crowd would be unclean. If she were discovered, this could be a shame storm.

But her plan works. At least at first. ▶ Verse 44 says,

> ESV Luke 8:44 . . . and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

This is a wonderful outcome. The woman is healed. The bleeding and pain stop.

But as good as this is, and as good as this feels, it is a set up. This sets her up for even deeper feelings of shame. You see, Jesus notices. ▶ Verses 45 and 46 record,

> ESV Luke 8:45 And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are

> pressing in on you!” 46 But Jesus said, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.”

It is not surprising that Jesus notices. He is God. God knows stuff.

You might think that, because Jesus knows what’s going on, he would let this woman be healed and go on her way without drawing humiliating attention to her. But he doesn't.

Jesus knows what's going on. He is not lacking information about the identity of the woman. And so, asking the question seems almost cruel. Why does he do it? What is he up to?

Even his disciples seem flummoxed by the question. A lot of people are crowding around and touching Jesus. So, asking “Who was it that touched me?" sounds weird to them, maybe even compulsive, almost like Jesus has a thing about touching.

And put yourself in the woman’s sandals. How do you suppose she feels right about now? Jesus says, “Who was it that touched me? . . . Someone touched me.” And she is right there behind him.

She feels like a Category 5 shame storm just hit. And there is nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

And something else is added to her shame.

She has now interrupted Jesus on his way to the medical emergency where Jairus's 12-year-old is dying. The little girl might die because of this interruption.

The woman struggles within herself. Should I confess or remain silent?

She feels compelled to confess, but the thought of confession strikes so much fear—fear of complete disconnection, final rejection, utter shame—that she begins to tremble. ▶ Verse 47 continues.

> ESV Luke 8:47 And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

We can only imagine the specific words the woman used. "I am unclean. I've been bleeding for 12 years. And I am so selfish. I wanted to be healed, so I touched you. And I am afraid I have accidentally touched others here. I am sorry I've made you unclean. And I am sorry to have detained you from the little girl. And yet I sense that I have been healed and I am so grateful."

The woman is face down on the ground, trembling, waiting for her judgment.

I imagine the jury of her peers has already reached a verdict.

You can almost hear the gasp of the crowd.
You can almost see them step away in disgust from the uncleanness.
You can almost see the veins bulge in Jairus' forehead because the woman is keeping Jesus from his daughter.

The woman has been healed, but her shame has only heightened.

But Jesus has a plan.

This is exactly what Jesus wanted: for the woman to reveal the whole truth—her full story of shame.

Why?

Not because he didn't already know her story; he did.

It was because she needed to know that he knew everything about her.

Why?

Here's the ▶ big idea: To be released from shame, you must be fully convinced that you are both fully known and fully loved.

Two things are required to be free of shame. First, you must realize that Jesus knows everything about you, and second, you must grasp that he loves you completely anyway.

One out of two won't work.

If you think you are fully loved but not fully known by a person, shame tells you that the only reason you're loved is because that person doesn't know the whole truth about you. Shame says if they really knew you, they wouldn't love you anymore.

Jesus wants the woman to be fully convinced that she is fully known.
It's a set-up. Jesus wanted the woman to tell the whole truth all along.

Funny thing: In 2014, the American Psychological Association released the results of a study. It shows that, in the face of shame, telling the whole truth is necessary for release from shame.

Jesus is setting up the woman not only to be fully convinced that she is fully known, but also to be fully convinced that she is fully loved and accepted.

I want to show you how Jesus shows the woman that he loves her by what he says in ▶ verse 48.

The woman probably expects Jesus to call her “unclean” or worse. Instead, Jesus addresses her in an unexpected way.

> ESV Luke 8:48 And he said to her, “Daughter, . . .”

This is a tender, affectionate term of endearment.

While it is true that this woman has the dubious distinction of being the only woman in the Bible famous for her gynecological problems, it is also true that she has the distinction and honor of being the only person in all the Bible whom Jesus calls, “daughter.”

It’s a term that says a lot about how Jesus feels about the woman. She is not unclean; she belongs; she is family. Jesus loves her like a daughter. She is counted worthy to be called his daughter.

And there’s an object lesson standing right there. Jairus is there, the father who loves his little daughter so much that his heart aches for her to be healed. Jesus is saying to the woman, “I love you like that.”

In ▶ verse 48, Jesus says to her.

> ESV Luke 8:48 . . . “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

Here, Jesus emphasizes his relational connection with the woman. She has not been healed by some blind, impersonal power. She's been healed through her personal faith connection with Jesus.

It's as if Jesus is saying, "No need to fear disconnection. We're connected and your wellness is proof."

Jesus bids the woman to "go in peace." The Jewish concept of "peace" carries the idea of completeness or wholeness. Remember, uncleanness was considered a threat to the completeness or wholeness of Jewish society. Clean people belong; unclean people do not.

Jesus is saying that the woman is no threat to the wholeness or completeness of society. She herself is, in fact, whole and complete, not defective. She belongs.

And Jesus has orchestrated this event not to rehearse her shame, but to release it—and to release it in a way that is publicly honoring.

The woman exemplifies our ▶ big idea: To be released from shame, you must be fully convinced that you are both fully known and fully loved.

Are you fully convinced?

No theoretically convinced.
Not hypothetically convinced.
Not partly convinced.
Not occasionally convinced.

Fully convinced.

The story of the woman might leave the impression that release from shame is instantaneous. It's not. It's more like a process of release. There can be major breakthroughs in the process, like the one the woman experienced. But it's still a process.

In fact, I imagine the woman may have felt an aftershock of shame from what is described in ▶ verse 49.

> ESV Luke 8:49 “While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler’s house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.”

While Jesus was interacting with the woman, the daughter of Jairus dies. The instant the woman heard this, I imagine she may have blamed herself. “If I hadn’t detained Jesus, he might have reached the girl in time to save her.”

Shame is so sneaky like that. It can come back on you even after a healing experience.

And what about the girl who died? The story has a happy ending, which begins in ▶ verse 50.

> ESV Luke 8:50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.”
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:51 And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:52 And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.”
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> ▶ ESV Luke 8:53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.
>
> ▶ ESV Luke 8:54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.

▶ ESV Luke 8:56 And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

So, Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter is raised from the dead. And, in the story within the story, Jesus' twelve-year-stricken daughter is raised from the deadness of her shame.

Which brings us back to our ▶ big idea: To be released from shame, you must be fully convinced that you are both fully known and fully loved.

We might wish that we could experience a miraculous healing and a face-to-face encounter with Jesus in this life, as the woman did.

But we have some advantages the woman did not.

The depths of God's love for us are now revealed in historical facts unknown to the woman. Jesus died and rose again for us, proving that we are fully loved. We need to remember that over and over.

We have the Scriptures that tell us over and over again about a sovereign God who knows us fully and loves us anyway. We need to read these Scriptures over and over.

And if you have believed in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit within you crying "Abba Father," acknowledging that you are indeed his daughter. Or his son. We need to quietly listen to him and reflect on this over and over.

And we the people of the church are to be conduits of Christ's love such that the church is a safe place to be known and loved. God created the church to be the primary place where his love can be experienced in community. So, we need to be vulnerable enough to put ourselves in a position to be known and loved in the church.

And as we do, we will become more and more fully convinced that we are fully known and fully loved.

And we will be released from shame.

Let's pray.

Lord, thank you that I am fully known and fully loved by you. Help me to become fully convinced of this so that I may be released from unhealthy shame. Amen.