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Reaching out to Jesus

- **Do you know this Jesus is really Something?**

Having just celebrated Christmas if you have been with us at our services or if you are familiar with Matthew's writings then you will know from the outset that Matthew wanted his readers to recognise that Jesus is Emmanuel God with us, the one promised in Isaiah 7, and that he is also the one born to save his people from their sins, that is all that would separate them from God and all that they could be. The account of Jesus' life continues and reading through Matthew in the Summer I was struck by a passage in Matthew 14.35-36.

And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. Matt 14.35-36

Two verses that have been there all the time but I must have just skimmed through them.

Some of you will recognise this place. GWH- The Great Western Hospital. Now many of you will recognise this newer area, the Brunel Treatment Centre. You may also know that you can get to it through the building. Until this year I didn't realise that. I always walked around the outside and thought how strange it was that there wasn't a way you could walk on the inside. It was there of course I just hadn't seen it.

Back to Matthew 14 let's read these verses together.

Matthew 14 shows us that Jesus has performed two incredible miracles. The first the feeding of the 5000 Jesus taking the lunchbox of a little boy which contained 5 loaves and two fishes. As the one who is the Bread of Life he feeds the thousands that are there. So much so that at the end there are 12 basketfuls of bread and fish. That's not a meal you would quickly forget. It's similar to Jesus turning the water into wine in John 2, Jesus made so much wine available for the wedding guests.

Then we also have recorded in Matthew 14 Jesus walking on water. Why? – well certainly because he could, which singles him out from you and I, but perhaps for Jesus in his humanity it was his stepping out in faith as the Son of God. Did he recall at such times his involvement in creation, the fact that even now he is the One who holds all things together – which is in itself a comforting thought for the New Year, or was it that he regularly did things that we are unaware of but this was just one of those incidents.

All the miracles are like the signs in GWH pointing you to the Brunel Treatment Centre, only the miracles point you to the person of Jesus.

Without this realisation church becomes a social club, Jesus becomes one great man among many, yet for those disciples who witnessed these things, as they saw Jesus feeding the crowds, as they see Jesus encourage Peter to do some water walking and as he picks him up as the physical realisation entered his brain, then after all that the disciples say ... "Truly you are the Son of God."

So do you know this Jesus is really something or to be more grammatical really someone.

And then in just a few lines Jesus heals many people, they ask permission just to touch his clothes and he grants that and they reach out to him in faith conscious of his healing power and his permission to reach out and they are healed or saved.

I've been aware of the lady in Mark 5 who for 12 years had suffered with terrible hemorrhaging and how she spent so much money on doctors with no success and how she was excluded from mixing freely with others because of her illness, she was viewed as being unclean. She touched Jesus and she was healed. Yet Mathew 14 throws light on this healing, for Jesus was not like some healing bumper car if you understand the imagery. It wasn't that if you simply bumped into Jesus – his power flowed into you. Indeed the problem for the residents of Nazareth where Jesus grew up was that they thought they knew Jesus too well. He was the son of Joseph the carpenter.

Mark 6 ¹Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Have we become too familiar with Jesus, do we take him for granted, is he like our best mate but not the Lord of Creation.

Do we live at a time when people are immune to Jesus, or is it that they need to discover just how incredible Jesus really is. The disciples were overawed by Jesus. I long that this coming year may be a year when that becomes our experience and the experience of more people who bump into us day by day.

For the lady in Mark 5 it was as she owned up to touching Jesus for her healing, that she received greater healing Jesus says to her, **Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."**
Mark 5.34

It is as we tell our life stories of how Jesus has touched our lives that people will begin to realize that that this Jesus is really something.

- **What are you reaching out to Jesus for in 2010?**

I was drawn to this passage of scripture because it seemed to me a very good place to begin a new year – reaching out to Jesus.

- Reaching out to Jesus in worship. *Yesterday was a glorious day a thin layer of snow on the ground, a beautiful blue sky and sunshine. How good that each day is a gift from God.*

As we meet together it is an opportunity to remind ourselves who Jesus is and why we do gather to worship – because he is worth it. He is our risen Lord, he is the one who journeys with us day by day. He is the one who has made his home within us. If there is anyone who has never invited Jesus into the home of their lives there is no better day to do it.

He is the God of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

A scriptural gem is found in the book of Joel in the Old Testament it is a promise of God's restoration of His people as they turn to him and it reads

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²⁵ "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm
my great army that I sent among you.

²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed. Joel 2

- Reaching out to Jesus in Hope

God's economy is not the same as ours, as we commit our lives into his hands he can make our lives full.

Jesus himself said I have come that you may have life in it's fullness.

What are your hopes for 2010, what are your hopes for USBC.

- Reaching out to Jesus for healing

Our world, our nation, our communities, our families ourselves we all need more of God's healing. We cannot predict what God will do but we can be sure that God will keep his promise. These two verses in Matthew 14 highlight the importance of reaching out to Jesus, believing that he cares. As he gave the crowds permission so they reached out simply to touch Jesus and they were healed.

Many years ago John Wimber who himself has long since gone to be with the Lord was offering a training day in London. John Wimber was a good theologian he emphasized the importance of the Kingdom of God, the rule of God, that is the place of God's influence and he encouraged us to pray for one another. He acknowledged that not everyone he prayed for got better but clearly there were those who did. He encouraged people to be honest as to what God was doing, whether that was healing, whether that was bodily sensations, sometimes people feel heat when they are being prayed for, sometimes they feel nothing.

I believe that we have in Jesus one who heals. I believe that Jesus is always good but I confess I do not always know what he is doing. I believe we are always to barbing to him those things that weigh us down.

Peter the one who in Matthew 14 walked on water the only human being apart from Jesus who did this wrote

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God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him.

1 Peter 5.7

I am confident that God wants us to be a praying community. I appreciate those who pray for USBC, I appreciate those who come together to pray. How wonderful if as a whole church we wanted to come together and pray. How wonderful if as a whole church we reach out in our communities, how wonderful if we see say 10 people become Christians in 2010, I'd love to see a lot more but ten would be great. How wonderful if when we meet together the sense of God's presence and his love is so evident that all feel welcome. As a church we have at least as many Christians as there were on the day of Pentecost, let's pray that God would give a fresh outpouring of his Spirit, let's pray that USBC sees more of God's glory. Let's pray that we

learn how we can effectively reach out to Jesus, that we would hear what he is saying and that we would act upon this.

There is an old prayer made famous by the musical Godspell

Day by day
Day by day
Oh Dear Lord
Three things I pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day

The whole prayer goes like this.

Slide 9 Lets pray it together.

Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
For all the benefits thou hast won for me,
For all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.

O most merciful Redeemer, Friend, and Brother,
May I know thee more clearly,
Love thee more dearly,
And follow thee more nearly:
For ever and ever.

--St. Richard Chichester (1197-1253)

A moment of silence as we make our response to God.