

“Allowing Jesus To Give You A Hand”

Mark 3:1-12

Mark 3:1-12

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Introduction

I remember giving a communion and offering meditation once during church service. I

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

was prepared. The order of the service was fairly common. Someone always gave a welcome, music and singing, communion and offering, the sermon, a closing song and usually announcements somewhere towards the end. It was standard protocol, that was the usual order. For the communion meditation I was given five minutes to talk about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Something about the five minutes does not seem right but oh well.

It was suppose to be a standard service. The welcome is given and the worship begins. I was up on the platform with the minister and the choir. I had done this before. No surprises! The worship is just about over and time for the preacher to begin the hospital/prayer list which was right before my communion meditation.

The preacher stands up and begins to talk about who is in the hospital and who needs our prayers when all of the sudden I notice in the far back of the church through the entrance door windows some bright flashing lights. I see a little commotion towards the back, and a small group of about 10 people just standing up or looking not at the preacher but at the pew behind them. I then see 3 Paramedics walk in with a cart. At this same time I hear the preacher ending a prayer clueless about what is going on. Ironic that during a time of prayer for healing an Ambulance shows up at the church. The preacher sits down and nods his head at me to get up to give the communion meditation.

I quickly nod my head indicating to him to look at the back row, he looks, takes 2

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

seconds to think about it and nods his head at me to stand up and speak. Talk about an awkward moment. I stand up and take to the pulpit. By this time half the church is aware something is going on and most are looking back wondering what has happened.

I pretend as if nothing is going on and proceed to give my communion meditation. There is nothing like talking about the blood of Jesus and hearing 'Clear' yelled in the background. I did my best to make it through the meditation. I prayed and as I sat down the preacher got up to say a few words about what was going on before the communion was passed around. I quickly learned that my meditation was mere 'fodder' while the preacher took a few minutes to leave and find out what was going on.

Turns out the man died. He expired. To expire. To pass on. To perish. To peg out. To push up daisies. To push up posies. To become extinct. Curtains, deceased, Demised, departed And defunct. Dead as a doornail. Dead as a herring. Dead as a mutton. Dead as nits. The last breath. Paying a debt to nature. The big sleep. God's way of saying, "Slow down. To Cash In Your Chips. Funny that guy spent 50 years always sitting in the back row and in just a few days he'd be laying up front.

Why did I share that story?

Things happen in church! Sometimes the service is disrupted. Things happen! People die, always someone causing some distraction in church. Opening a candy wrapper, a baby crying, someone flipping pages of the hymnals too loudly, a baby crying, sitting behind someone with a huge head and trying to maneuver around them, a cell phone

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

ringing, did I mention a baby crying.

In fact to help make the service more efficient we have rules before you enter the sanctuary. Please turn off cell phones, a crying room off to the side, no food or drink allowed, no running in the aisles. In fact the order is so precise, in most churches you cannot just walk up and start talking, no open mic Sunday mornings. In order to be on the platform you have to dress and look a certain way.

All of those rules are for our benefit but often we forget that life happens even in the middle of church service. This is precisely what is going on in our text. In our text right now Jesus walks in to shake things up a bit. Let's listen in, to Mark 3:

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

What unexpectedly happens in our text? Flat out: Jesus picks a fight. It was not the teaching that bothered Jesus, it was not the hymns being sung that bothered Jesus, it was not the families gathered that bothered Jesus. What bothered Jesus? This is the only text that we have that describes Jesus as angry. What bothered Jesus? There was a man sitting among the crowd that had a withered hand and nobody seemed to want to help this guy.

In our previous text, last week we saw how the Pharisees taunted Jesus' disciples and Jesus declared that the sabbath was made for man but Jesus takes it all one level further by declaring that the Sabbath was meant to be an opportunity to do good to other people

This brings me to the first point of what we need to be reminded about Jesus:

Jesus: Our Teacher

Jesus is our teacher. Jesus is the great teacher. Jesus knows all things. All wisdom is found in Jesus Christ. One greater than Solomon as Jesus declares. Jesus is God Incarnate, and right now in the middle of Synagogue service, Jesus begins teaching.

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

Jesus asks this question: Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?

The Oral Law was clear in its regulations for the Sabbath. You could provide medical assistance that would save a life but that was all. If you fell off a mountain and cracked your head, you could stop the bleeding but you could not fix any broken legs until the next day. This man had a withered hand. Since it was not life-threatening, it was illegal to give this man any help or to heal him. One of the earliest commentaries on this text from church father Jerome says that this man was a mason. Thus this man had no longer any way to make money and lost all his dignity.

Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?

The answer is very obvious? But the zealots were blinded because of the Oral law. Look at the text with me: He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

Since the Pharisees and Herodians would not answer Jesus will. The Oral Law made provision for rescuing animals that fell into a pit on the Sabbath. Jesus builds on what they already know and builds a case moving from lesser to greater. Unless you work for PETA, you will get this analogy. If you can rescue an animal, surely you can rescue this man. Which is more valuable? Here's the deeper point of Jesus' argument. If a man is more valuable than an animal, it must be lawful to do good for people on the Sabbath

beyond just saving a life. But Jesus takes his teaching one step further. Not only is the Sabbath an opportunity to work for another's good, but to do nothing in the face of human need is evil. If you must do good on the Sabbath and do not...what is the obvious conclusion: Your behavior is evil.

Jesus is our Teacher but He is also our Healer

Jesus: Our Healer

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

The man stood up at the request of Jesus and shows the crowd his withered hand. At the command of Jesus he is healed. Everything about his hand was healed and restored. It was as healthy as the other hand. The Pharisees who say do not work on the Sabbath quickly stand up, leave and begin plotting how to kill Jesus. They were furious. This is the first official mention not how to arrest Jesus but how to kill Jesus. They begin doing work on the Sabbath the exact opposite of what Jesus just taught. Doing good, these men get up and plot evil together. Notice the Pharisees go to the Herodians to start the plot. They knew they would need the authority of Herod to have Jesus killed, Israel at this time was not allowed to institute the death penalty on their own. The Herodians

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

hate the Jews and vice versa....but on this issue they work together.

Jesus is our healer. Let me say just a few things about this. Does your church take time to pray for the sick and the hurting? Does it offer it to you to have so that you can pray? Let me go one step further. Does your church allow for not just community prayer but also healing? Does the church gather around the one whom is sick, to pray, to plead, to ask God for healing? Perhaps it happens in the home, perhaps though during the service like our example here?

Does your church pray for healing for the person in the service? Why not? Do you have rules, an oral law within your congregation that – that sort of thing does not happen here? Understand this is the only time we have a word that describes Jesus as literally angry. What is he angry about, church? Nobody is willing to pray for healing for this person in the middle of the service? If I might say something – I believe the majority of churches in America do not offer a time of prayer or healing in the service on a typical Sunday. I would also draw the conclusion that Jesus might be angry over that fact.

Now let me say a few disclaimers. We do not want to have healing and prayer become an institution in itself that is done weekly and becomes as ineffective as a typical altar call. But Shepherds should know their flock. If there is a need, perhaps physical healing, whatever the need, part of what the church is about is helping people, dare I say meet needs. If that need needs to be meant during the Sunday morning service then that is when you should do it! This is echoing the book of James that says when you see the

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

good you ought to do and don't do it, you sin! As Jesus says, therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Lord's Day. Let me replace lawful with another word, expected: Therefore it is expected that you do good especially on the Lord's Day. Now I did mention the book of James. James does prescribe something that churches that sometimes are afraid to heal and pray for people quote:

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Let me say a few things about this: this is obviously someone who is unable to make it to church. 'raise him up'...that's death talk folks, close to the death bed. Also the context allows for the meaning 'sickness as a result of sin'. He should call on the elders indicates that repentance and restoration is being given to this individual. The context also says, if he has sinned, it has the word...therefore if anyone has sin...this sickness described here is both something as a result of sin that caused you to both break fellowship perhaps and are unable to go to church as well. The sealer is the word 'well'; it means to save from judgment rather than the word 'restored to health'. There is more going on in James 5 than just a shriveled hand.

Conclusion

Jesus must be our teacher and our healer. I didn't even talk about how as Christians we often go to the doctor before we ever ask for prayer. That is another sermon. But I want to make this point. Jesus must be our teacher first and our healer second.

Let me say that again, Jesus must be our Teacher first and our healer second. A lot of faith healers and churches that go overboard with healing services often whether they realize it or not make Jesus Healer first and Teacher second. If we are a disciple of Jesus Christ our first priority as a disciple is to learn, end of discussion. Healing is a grace of God, Learning is expected for those that call Jesus Lord. Why do I say that I must have Jesus as Teacher first and Healer second. Because when the day comes, not if the day comes, but when the day comes that you or a loved one has something serious health wise occur and you pray, your family prays, your church prays, and that person is not healed, how do you think you will respond when you place the teaching of Jesus in your life secondary to Jesus The Healer. You place yourself in a very difficult situation that opens the door to a lot of bitterness, anger, and hatred.

Let me share with you this closing story:

“On this particular day I was walking in a hallway that I had not visited before, looking in vain for a few who were alive enough to

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

receive a flower and a few words of encouragement. This hallway seemed to contain some of the worst cases, strapped onto carts or into wheelchairs and looking completely helpless.

“As I neared the end of this hallway, I saw an old woman strapped up in a wheelchair. Her face was an absolute horror. The empty stare and white pupils of her eyes told me that she was blind. The large hearing aid over one ear told me that she was almost deaf. One side of her face was being eaten by cancer. There was a discolored and running sore covering part of one cheek, and it had pushed her nose to one side, dropped one eye, and distorted her jaw so that what should have been the corner of her mouth was the bottom of her mouth. As a consequence, she drooled constantly. I was told later that when new nurses arrived, the supervisors would send them to feed this woman, thinking that if they could stand this sight they could stand anything in the building. I also learned later that this woman was eighty-nine years old and *that she had been here, bedridden, blind, nearly deaf, and alone, for twenty-five years.* This was Mabel.

“I don’t know why I spoke to her—she looked less likely to respond than most of the people I saw in that hallway. But I put a flower in her hand and said, ‘Here is a flower for you. Happy Mother’s Day.’ She held the flower up to her face and tried to smell

it, and then she spoke. And much to my surprise, her words, although somewhat garbled because of her deformity, were obviously produced by a clear mind. She said, ‘Thank you. It’s lovely. But can I give it to someone else? I can’t see it, you know, I’m blind.’

“I said, ‘Of course,’ and I pushed her in her chair back down the hallway to a place where I thought I could find some alert patients. I found one, and I stopped the chair. Mabel held out the flower and said, ‘Here, this is from Jesus.’

“That was when it began to dawn on me that this was not an ordinary human being. Later I wheeled her back to her room and learned more about her history. She had grown up on a small farm that she managed with only her mother until her mother died. Then she ran the farm alone until 1950 when her blindness and sickness sent her to the convalescent hospital. For twenty-five years she got weaker and sicker, with constant headaches, backaches, and stomachaches, and then the cancer came too. Her three roommates were all human vegetables who screamed occasionally but never talked. They often soiled their bedclothes, and because the hospital was understaffed, especially on Sundays when I usually visited, the stench was often overpowering.

“Mabel and I became friends over the next few weeks, and I went to see her once or twice a week for the next three years. Her first words to me were usually an offer of hard candy from a tissue

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

box near her bed. Some days I would read to her from the Bible, and often when I would pause she would continue reciting the passage from memory, word-for-word. On other days I would take a book of hymns and sing with her, and she would know all the words of the old songs. For Mabel, these were not merely exercises in memory. She would often stop in mid-hymn and make a brief comment about lyrics she considered particularly relevant to her own situation. I never heard her speak of loneliness or pain except in the stress she placed on certain lines in certain hymns.

“It was not many weeks before I turned from a sense that I was being helpful to a sense of wonder, and I would go to her with a pen and paper to write down the things she would say. . . .

“During one hectic week of final exams I was frustrated because my mind seemed to be pulled in ten directions at once with all of the things that I had to think about. The question occurred to me, ‘What does Mabel have to think about — hour after hour, day after day, week after week, not even able to know if it’s day or night?’ So I went to her and asked, ‘Mabel, what do you think about when you lie here?’

“And she said, ‘I think about my Jesus.’

“I sat there, and thought for a moment about the difficulty, for me, of thinking about Jesus for even five minutes, and I asked, ‘*What*

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

do you think about Jesus?’ She replied slowly and deliberately as I wrote . . . :

I think about how good he’s been to me. He’s been awfully good to me in my life, you know. . . . I’m one of those kind who’s mostly satisfied. . . . Lots of folks wouldn’t care much for what I think. Lots of folks would think I’m kind of old-fashioned. But I don’t care. I’d rather have Jesus. He’s all the world to me.

“And then Mabel began to sing an old hymn:

Jesus is all the world to me,
My life, my joy, my all.
He is my strength from day to day,
Without him I would fall.
When I am sad, to him I go,
No other one can cheer me so.
When I am sad He makes me glad.
He’s my friend.

It is my prayer that we learn the lesson the Pharisees never figured out that day about Jesus. They never learned what Mabel knew....Jesus is enough.

May we learn this lesson of Christ and may this be our prayer – Jesus, all that you are and all that you have done is enough, is more than enough. Thank You Lord Jesus and

Gospel of Mark Sermon Series
Bible Study #11- Mark 3:1-12

may heart always be grateful for what you have done and not stubborn for what it seems you will not do. In Jesus Name, Amen