

Daily Bible Study

“Withered Hand ~ Hard Hearts”

Mark 3:1-6

November 1-7, 2009

THE LORD’S DAY – As we return to our study in The Gospel According to Mark we find ourselves at the start of chapter 3, specifically **Mark 3:1-6**. In these first six verses we read of the second incident of conflict recorded by Mark involving Jesus and the Pharisees concerning Christ’s work and healing on the Sabbath. Jesus is in the synagogue teaching in the Sabbath service and among the worshippers is a man with a *withered hand*. Jesus calls this man to Himself and proceeds to heal him. We will see unfolded this week that there was a lot going on “behind the scene” if you will. Also among the worshippers at the synagogue that day were the Pharisees and a conflict between them and Jesus came to a head. Exposed that day was the real issue of sin among them which Scripture describes as the *hardness of their hearts* which was made plain by their unconcern for the welfare of man with the *withered hand* as well as their stubborn and prideful hatred for Jesus veiled in a hypocritical piety. Read **Mark 3:1-6**.

The Word Applied & A Suggestion for Prayer: Prayerfully read the text then ask God to both teach you from His Word this week and then give you opportunity to practice what you learn.

MONDAY – In the first verse we read, “*And He entered the synagogue again...*” The scene before us taken from Mark’s record of Jesus life has now shifted from the grain field to the synagogue. The incident and discussion from chapter two concerning the disciples eating of grain on the Sabbath appears to be separated by a week’s time according to **Luke 6:6** as he comments “*Now it happened on another Sabbath...*” It is now another Sabbath day and Jesus is found entering the synagogue. In today’s vernacular; Jesus went to church. And furthermore we could say from the Scripture record of His life, He was faithful in His attendance of public worship. As we will see from the other synoptic gospels there are details of this event which catch the eye of the particular writers which help define our understanding of the event. But all three of them report that Jesus attended the synagogue. Jesus was there to worship, He was there to pray, He was there to teach, and as *Lord of The Sabbath (Kurios Sabbaton)*, He was there to demonstrate both His authority as God and the heart of God through His supreme example of showing mercy to a needy man. On this day, Jesus brought both the message of the good news of the gospel as well as physical healing. Jesus loved God’s house but this was merely a reflection of the fact that He loved God’s heart. As God, He taught and demonstrated to all who had *eyes to see* and *ears to hear*, who God is and what He is like. Read **John 1:14-18**.

The Word Applied: Why should I study the life and actions of Jesus? What should I see in them?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to see Your character in the life, attitudes, and actions of Jesus. Although He is perfect and I’m not, help me to strive with all my heart to follow Him.

TUESDAY – We are quickly introduced to another character in the story as **verse 1** also says *a man was there who had a withered hand*. Luke tells us that it was the man’s right hand that was *withered* (**Luke 6:6**). The word in the Greek for *withered* speaks about something being dry and drying up by losing its juices or nutrients. The word is used in **Mark 11:21** in reference to the fig tree that Jesus cursed which the disciples found the next morning to be *withered* (**Mark 11:13-14, 20-21**). The way the original language is used here may suggest that the man was not born this way but rather had an injury or accident which led to this condition. This idea is expressed in the Revised and older American Standard Version of this verse where they read, “*...who had his hand withered*”. Regardless of the timing of this man’s condition the fact was he had a most pitiable debilitation. He was most likely unable to work with such a disability and therefore would possibly be in a position to not be able to even make a living. All speculation aside concerning the origin, occupation or timing of this man’s condition, we do clearly know and see from Holy Scripture what the immediate future for this man will be in relation to the condition and health of his hand. Jesus is about to heal him and this hand would once again be able to work. The principle of work is one which Scripture speaks to quite plainly. God states men should work if they are to eat. God, from creation informed us He is pleased with work. He

established work for mankind to perform even before the fall. Read **Genesis 2:15, Proverbs 10:4, 12:11, 24, 16:26, Ephesians 4:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.**

The Word Applied: God has made it clear that we are to work. We are also reminded to do all our work as unto the Lord. What are some specific ways you can better obey in this area?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, give me strength and help me to obey You by working. Help my attitude in work and my actual work itself be done in such a way that I honor and please You.

WEDNESDAY – Verse 2 of our text reveals the real issue taking place here in the hearts of the Pharisees that were observing this scene. The text reads, “So they watched Him closely...” It seems understood that the “they” is most likely the same group of critics from the previous incident; namely the Pharisees. **Luke 6:7** tells us it was both *the scribes and Pharisees* who watched Him closely. This would be wonderful and there would be no problem if they were watching Jesus to focus on His teaching and actions in order to learn from Him; but this was the farthest thing far from the hearts desire as their motive and sin is revealed to us from Scripture as the text continues with, “...whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him”. They were merely watching Jesus in the hopes that He would violate their rule in respect to the Sabbath. There was even debate among the rabbinical schools as to what was considered work and what was “allowed” to be done regarding medical attention on the Sabbath. Scripture said nothing about helping someone medically in need on the Sabbath. God had said the day was to be *remembered*, marked out or set apart as holy and that work was to cease as the day was designed to be different then every other day of the week. But here again the Pharisees had gone further and added by their traditions even rules pertaining to how much could be done to a sick individual by a physician. It is around this addition that they are waiting and wanting to accuse Jesus of working and therefore violating the Sabbath. The depravity, depth, and ugliness of the human heart with its sin and evil intent is seen in the fact that Jesus wasn’t out there “working”. He wasn’t even exerting effort (“sweating”) if you will, as He healed with the power of a word, thought, or touch. Yet these men would define this healing and helping of a man in need as work in order to find some ground of accusation, to get some sense of satisfaction for their hatred toward Jesus. Read **Ecclesiastes 9:3, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19.**

The Word Applied: Even the redeemed heart can have depraved, ungodly sinful thoughts which manifest in behaviors. Ask God to examine your heart and confess any evil, sinful, selfish motives you find there. Turn to The Holy Spirit and Scripture for power to think and act right.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me confess pride. Give me a heart of sincerity & love for You.

THURSDAY – As the story continues, **Matthew 12:10** tells us that Jesus was asked by the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” They are lying in wait and just know Jesus is about to do something special involving this man with the *withered* hand. Also interesting is what is mentioned in **Luke 6:8** which begins with this incredible phrase, “But He knew their thoughts...” So Mark tells us in **verse 3** that the omniscient Lord Jesus knows their sinful hearts and He does not sit back but rather goes on the offensive as He addresses the man and says, “Step forward”. Literally, “arouse middle”. Jesus calls this man with the withered hand to step into the middle of this crowd. The Lord Jesus directly confronts the secret, conniving, under cover sinfulness of the Pharisees with a bold, prominent, determined move as He puts right out in clear view the act of power and mercy He is about to perform. He also gives them space to see this man and be moved with compassion for Him and repent of their wicked sin. Now appealing to both their hearts and minds Jesus asks the question “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill”? Christ’s question basically points out that they were internally holding to murderous thoughts and He was seeking to save and heal a man’s life. Which was breaking the Sabbath? But all the while through this scene we see the patience of Christ with sinners as He gives opportunity for repentance. Sadly, we read, “But they kept silent”. This was a stunning silence, a continuous silence, as emphasized by the imperfect tense of this Greek verb. This word is also used of those who are silent because they are dumb. It got real quiet and Jesus lets EVERYONE present soak in this moment. Read **Psalms 95:7-8, Hebrews 3:15.**

The Word Applied: *How do you respond to the convicting work of The Holy Spirit? Are you even aware of your sinfulness? What should we not do when we are made aware of our sin?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank You for Your patience with me and the convicting work of The Holy Spirit in my heart and mind. Help me respond in repentance quickly when convicted.*

FRIDAY – During this moment of silence we read an incredible statement: “*And when He looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts...*” This is a weighty verse of Scripture beloved. Mark has a lot to say about the looks of Jesus as he uses the word here translated “*looked around*” six times (**Mark 3:5, 34, 5:37, 9:8, 10:23, 11:11**). The only other writer to use the word at all is Luke and he uses it in his account of this story. As the eyes of Jesus swept the room we read “*He looked around at them with anger...*” This word for *anger* (orge) used only here in Scripture concerning Jesus during His earthly ministry is often translated *wrath* and is used in familiar texts such as **John 3:36** and **Romans 1:18**. It is commonly used to describe the *wrath of God* and is connected with Jesus also in **Revelation** where it does speak of the *wrath of the lamb*. A very interesting fact is that the Lord’s *anger* is expressed by an aorist participle demonstrating momentary action while His *grief* is expressed by the present participle speaking of a continuous state of action. Jesus Holy anger is tempered by His grief. Truly this is expressed in **Psalms 30:5**. The man of sorrows was *grieved* over the *hardness of their hearts*. Their hearts were, as the word literally means “covered over with callous”. Their rebellious hearts were being more hardened in sin by fault finding, criticism, evil thoughts, and their final silence when given an opportunity to respond.

The Word Applied: *What do you feel in your heart when you look at a lost soul in this world?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, grant us an anger for sin (especially ours) and may we be moved with compassion to tell the lost we meet about the good news in Jesus Christ.*

SATURDAY – Jesus brings the tension to a climax when He tells the man, “*Stretch out your hand*”. Despite any possible embarrassment Jesus tells this man to put “out or forth” his *withered* hand for all to see. Immediately he obeys and the cure was instantaneous. The cure was also complete as we read in **Luke 6:10** that it was *restored as whole as the other*. Possible humiliation in the moment for the man was swept away in joy while humiliation and rage took over in the Pharisees and they too had an immediate response: “*...the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted...how they might destroy Him*”. Displayed was Christ’s unselfish anger and the Pharisees truly selfish fury and resentment. Finally, we read that a strange coalition is formed in attempt to destroy Christ. Read **Romans 12:15, Ephesians 4:30**.

The Word Applied: *How specifically are you living out the above passages of Scripture?*

Suggestion for Prayer: *Jesus, help me have Your heart for others and help me to express it.*