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Restoring A Withered Hand

by John T. Polk II

Mark 3:1-6: "And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. **2** So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. **3** And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." **4** Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. **5** And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. **6** Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him." (also in **Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11**)

1. Jesus "entered the synagogue again," a custom He had from childhood (**Luke 2:41-42; Mark 1:21, 39**). In fact, Jesus began His public preaching in a synagogue (**Luke 4:16**) continuing His "custom." Anyone who follows Jesus Christ today will also adopt His "custom" of assembling with the saints (**Matthew 18:20; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). *Being a Christian begins with a life "customized" by worship assembling.*

2. Pharisees were there and "they watched Him closely."

Jesus did not refuse to attend "because there were Pharisees/hypocrites there," nor did He refuse to attend because it was a "hostile audience," nor did He refuse to attend because others there were "judgmental." These who trained their microscopic vision on Him wanted nothing else than to see fault with what He did. *It's sad to think that people attend "church" and miss its beauty and effective strengthening because they are only there to judge and condemn others who are there, but we must not "draw back" (**Hebrews 10:32-39**) because of them.*

3. Jesus focused on the real issue of "is it lawful on the Sabbath..." The Sabbath was a "holy day" only for the Israelites (not Gentiles!), only as long as God planned to use them to produce Jesus Christ, and only for them to cease their usual work during the week (**Exodus 31:12-17**). *Never, in any account of that Sabbath law, did God condemn doing good or saving life on a Sabbath day!* Matthew's account of this incident includes Jesus' pressing the point at issue by comparing the worth of a man with a sheep (**Matthew 12:11-12**), a point to remind people of today! *When Jesus raised the issue of Truth and the written Law of Moses, "they kept silent." Just like people today, their dishonesty with Truth shuts them down in open confrontation.*

4. Jesus "looked around at them with anger." His "anger" was prompted by their "hardness of hearts," was momentary and not permanent, and did not lead to other sin (**Ephesians 4:26-27**), thus proving His humanity was tempered by Divine nature (**2 Peter 1:2-4**). *"Anger" is no sin as long as it doesn't become an excuse for sin (**Hebrews 4:15**)!*

5. One must study all the Bible has to say on a subject before drawing conclusions. An example is that **Luke (6:6)** is the one who tells us which hand was "withered" ("drawn up"), and mentions it in such a way that it probably was the result of an accident. These accounts converge on Jesus' command to the man, his response, and the instantaneous healing. The slow-healing nature of tendons, muscles and nerves being what it is, it is impossible that this was anything other than a miracle! *Never was the miraculous element challenged by the Pharisees, though they sought other reasons to reject these miraculous "signs" (**John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:48; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37**).*

6. The unscrupulous nature of Pharisees is seen in that they "plotted with the Herodians" to destroy Jesus.

Pharisees focused on minutiae to preserve what they perceived as "purity" among the Jews, whereas the Herodians sought Jewish power through government as if the compromiser Herod was their predicted Messiah. From opposite ends of the religious spectrum, they unified behind a common enemy. Truly, "politics makes strange bedfellows." They were willing to reject God's only begotten Son, the Prophet/Lawgiver after Moses, the miracle worker, in order to preserve their prejudices. *They represent denominational attitudes and doctrine today in not letting God's*

Word define their faith and relationship with God. They will act as though they are "one" in rejecting what the Bible plainly says! When the man obeyed Jesus' command, it was by an obedient faith (faith plus the work God commands, **James 2:24**). No work God commands ever contradicts what He says about faith and obedience (**John 6:28-29; Mark 16:15-16; Philippians 2:12-13**).

7. Though confirmatory miracles are recorded in the Bible and no longer actively performed (John 17:20-21; 20:30-31; 21:24-25; Hebrews 2:1-4).

There are lessons for us:

a. Jesus' miracles are unquestioned and proof that He was God in the flesh. He, therefore, should be followed passionately before all pretenders who come "in his own name" (**John 5:43**), such as Mohammed, "Buddha," Joseph Smith, "The Pope," Greek Orthodox "Metropolitan," *ad nauseum*;

b. Jesus' commands to the man in a synagogue ("church service"?) to "Step forward" and "Stretch out your hand" illustrate what Christian worship should emphasize. Every time Christians meet, it should be to "let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). We should encourage each other to stretch out our hands to do good works for others, especially of the household of faith (**Matthew 25: 31-46; Hebrews 13:16; Galatians 6:10**).

Christians should always "step forward" to meet every opportunity to learn, and for "teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (**Acts 5:43; Galatians 6:10**).

Thus will our "withered" hands find new life and strength in serving the Lord Jesus. -----jtpll

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Salted Speech Colossians 4:6

~**"Faith is not something you just have; it is something you constantly have to work toward. Faith is not a feeling; it's a decision you have to make every day."** — Al Carraway

~**Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains to bring it to light.** ---George Washington

~**"Reading makes a learned man, writing a correct man, conversation a ready man, and thinking a great man."** ---
--Lord Bacon, p. 26, *The Christian Almanac*, 1832

