

# Who Do You Trust With Your Heart ?

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[ 0 : 00 ] And my thanks to Alan for your opening devotional, for these promises and words of truth, for the words that we've sung, to remind us of these truths, for the prayers.

We all need these things, and I may be a pastor, but I'm also just a sheep trying to follow the Good Shepherd, and we are human.

I feel particularly weak this morning, and these things that we're going to look at in Mark chapter 3, they don't come any easier to me than to you.

Living a life of faith doesn't come any easier to me than it does to any of you. And so we're in this together, and I'm very, very grateful for all of you this morning.

On this Mother's Day, I'm very, very grateful for my own mum, who's been looking after Ezra, and I'm really grateful for Jen. She is such a terrific mum, and how she's been caring for Levi.

[ 1 : 10 ] And I'm really grateful for, you know, we're going to hear it in a couple of weeks' time, when Jesus talks about who are his mother and his brothers, and his family.

And so I'm really grateful for you guys. You guys are my family, and having each other's backs, supporting one another along the way. How can we ever hope to get to heaven without walking that journey in the company of the saints?

So thank you. Please turn to Mark chapter 3. We're just going to be reading the first six verses.

Heavenly Father, please, would you open our hearts and teach us by your Spirit as we open your Word.

Please open your Word to us, and open our minds to your Word, and show us life and light and glory in Christ through your Word this morning.

[ 2 : 32 ] I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Mark chapter 3. Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand.

And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, come here.

And he said to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, stretch out your hand.

And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him.

[ 3 : 41 ] How to destroy him. This is God's Word. Well, this is, this could be like church service.

This could be just like your regular church service. And how would you feel if you went into your regular weekly church service, and this is what went down?

What kind of church would it have to be for things to go down like this? This was just a regular synagogue service. I know how it could have been different.

I don't know if this was the man with the withered hand, if this was his first time there. I don't know if he was a regular there. I don't know if he'd been invited there. I don't know if he'd been invited there under pretense as a trap.

Whatever the case, the man with the withered hand, a vulnerable person, has been brought to this service. And this is what happens.

[ 4 : 51 ] And so I've just got four things that I want to share with us this morning. Just four thoughts about this passage. The first thought is, how should this have gone down?

And so let's look at that just now. I want you to look at this passage and just imagine how this could have been better.

If you ever think, there's a little group that I'm on that's a church page. And very often on this church page they'll ask, what happened this past Sunday that just went completely wrong and unexpected?

and people share all their fails and faux pas. And reflecting on this synagogue service, what should have happened? Again, Jesus entered the synagogue.

This is a great moment. Not every synagogue had a visit by Jesus. And at this point, loads of people knew who Jesus was. What an exciting thing to have Jesus.

[ 5 : 55 ] I would love this morning for Jesus to walk in this church service this morning. And if I knew that was going to happen, I would have brought Levi. And we would have brought everyone that we want for him to attend to, wouldn't we?

Jesus has visited the synagogue. And lo and behold, there's a man with a withered hand. This is great news. What a great day for a man with a withered hand to be in the synagogue. The very day that Jesus is there.

And so they watched Jesus with great glee and excitement. Excited about all the wonderful things that he could do. That's how it should have gone down. All the people who knew about Jesus and what he could do, sitting watching, oh Jesus, please.

Please would you help this dear man. He's a part of our fellowship. We love him dearly. The man hasn't been able to work because of his hand. But Jesus is here.

We're going to watch and we're going to see what he might do. So that we can rejoice. Except that's not what happened. They watched him so that they might accuse.

[ 7 : 03 ] What kind of heart do they need to have that that is where they're at? That's where they come into the synagogue that morning with a heart that just wants to find a way to accuse someone for doing something good.

To see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that he might accuse him. I don't know what it would have been like to be part of that system.

Some people were really, really uptight about the Sabbath. Some people, not so much. I'm sure the man with the withered hand wasn't so bothered. He would have gladly been healed.

When Jesus says to him, come, he comes. When he says, stretch out his hand, he obeys him immediately. But other people were very uptight about the Sabbath. They built all these customs.

And so he said to the man with the withered hand, come here. And he said to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath? He doesn't say to heal.

[ 8 : 08 ] Do you notice that? He doesn't say, is it lawful to heal? He says, is it lawful to do good or to do harm? Is it lawful to save a life or to kill?

What an easy question. I would hope that you could stand up in any church across the country or across the world or even any synagogue and ask that question. And everyone say, yeah, do good.

Do good and to save life, of course. Any day. Surely, if we've learned anything from the heart of God, any day it is lawful to do good. And it is not lawful to do harm.

Any day it's lawful to save a life. And it's not lawful to kill. And so Jesus asked this question, how should it have gone? Everyone in there should have went.

Of course. To do good. Have you ever heard the terms, the silence was deafening? Silence.

[ 9 : 10 ] They were silent. And you can finish the phrase, the popular phrase. If you've got nothing good to say, say nothing at all. And yet this kind of silence, a question like this, to a people like this, a time like this, in a place like this, this kind of question, followed by this kind of silence, just angered Jesus.

Jesus, these people should know better. This is not just your regular church goer. This is not your regular synagogue goer.

This is the religious leaders. This is the Pharisees. Entrusted with the law. They should know better. And so he is angry. Angry. Filled with anger.

Looking around at them. They can't have a good thing to say. Really? And he's grieved at their hardness of hearts. And he says to the man, stretch out your hand. And the man stretches it out.

And it's restored. And the Pharisees went out and immediately they held council with the Herodians to see how to rejoice at this wonderful thing. That's how it should have gone down.

[ 10 : 19 ] To see how they can invite more people to the synagogue next week to get healed. Think about all the different ways how it could have went down better. And yet this question.

To do harm. To kill. They went out and immediately held council against him to see how to destroy Jesus.

They want to kill the healer. This is a terrible day at the synagogue. Really terrible day. What is going on? I wonder how many people went home that day thinking that should have gone differently.

I wonder how many people went home thinking we need a different synagogue, brothers. These Pharisees are no good. And so that's how it should have gone down.

The second thing I want to look at is how one question exposes centuries of misuse of God's law. And so the Sabbath. This is the reason.

[ 11 : 15 ] Because it's on the Sabbath. Jesus could have waited to the next day. I think the man with the withered hand would have been okay with that. Hi, Jesus is here. But I understand what day it is.

Maybe you could come to my house tomorrow. But Jesus is not for it. Today is the day. And it might seem like the least appropriate day to do something like this.

But that's the thing that they misunderstood about the entire law of God. They thought it was the least appropriate day to do something like this. When in actual fact it was the most appropriate day.

Sabbath was the most appropriate day. To bring rest and refreshment to a brother. Is that not what we learned in Exodus? Think about that little verse when we were going through.

I think it was in Exodus 23. We were going through all those laws. And it said so that even the animals could find rest. And the foreigner could be refreshed. The most appropriate day.

[ 12 : 12 ] The Sabbath was never meant to prevent people from doing good. And so this question that Jesus has. Is it lawful in the Sabbath to do good?

Sabbath was never given to prevent us from doing good. It was from burdens. Not from doing good. And so.

They had used the Sabbath to prevent people from being compassionate. Jesus might not keep all their customs. But he shows the very spirit of the law. The intention of the law.

And he proves that he's the Lord of the Sabbath. Because he is the one who brings rest and refreshment to this. This dear fellow who's got a withered hand. And think about this.

Right? Remember the man comes to Jesus and says. What is the greatest of all the commands? I'm going to try and see if Jesus knows a thing or two. And Jesus says to love the Lord your God.

[ 13 : 16 ] With all your heart. All your soul. Your mind. Your strength. And the second is like it. To love your neighbor as yourself. And do you remember what he said? Yet. On these things. The whole of the law.

And the prophets hang. On these very things. That means the Sabbath law. Hangs on. The fact that we have to love God. And love our neighbors. Yet they were using the Sabbath law.

Not to love their neighbor. Clearly not to love their neighbor. And folks. It's a good indication. If someone's not loving their neighbor. They're probably not loving God.

And so Jesus shows the spirit of the law. The greatest commands to love God. And to love your neighbor. And all the others hang on this. So that.

All the law should be helping you to do these very things. All the law of God should be helping you to love God. And should be helping you to love your neighbor. And so is your Sabbath customs.

[ 14 : 13 ] Is your religion helping you to love God? When you go to synagogue. And what the Pharisees are teaching you. Is what they're teaching you. Are all these customs. Helping you to love God.

And love your neighbor. And clearly for them it was not. It was not. Their strict Sabbath customs. Were not helping these religious leaders. To love their neighbors.

Which was a good indication. They probably weren't loving God. And Jesus is the son of God. He knows the heart of the father. And so the way that he acts. In the synagogue that day.

Shows the heart of the compassion of the father. And the way that they act. Shows that they don't even know. Father God. They don't know their own God.

They don't know. God. Yahweh Yahweh. A God. Merciful. And compassionate. Abounding in steadfast love. So the next point.

[ 15 : 14 ] The Lord is grieved. When people are silent. About. What is good. And what is harmful. The Lord is grieved. When people are silent. About what is good.

And what is harmful. And so Jesus asked them a question. To expose their hearts. Is it lawful on the Sabbath. To do good. Or to do harm.

To save a life. Or to kill. And they can't even answer that question. And it's not a difficult question. It's not hard. To know the answer. To that question. It's very easy. It's a very easy question.

But why can they not answer it? Why are they silent? Well folks. We are not just intellectual beings. We don't just respond. Intellectually to facts.

We are emotional beings. We have wills. We have hearts. And if those hearts and wills. Are in the wrong place. Then we're not going to expose ourselves. We're not going to incriminate ourselves.

[ 16 : 10 ] By agreeing to some fact. What you say. Can and will be used against you. In a court of law. And these people are silent. And the silence is deafening.

It exposes their heart. And they're silent. Because they don't care about doing good. They just don't care about it. If it was them that brought this man. To the synagogue. They didn't bring him to be healed.

They brought him to trick Jesus. And to trap him. And to accuse Jesus. And to see how they could destroy. And you see how Jesus presses into that. He doesn't even talk about healing. He says.

Is it lawful to save a life. Or to kill. Because he knows what's in their hearts. They want to kill him. And is that lawful?

Is not in the same tablet of stone. A law against killing. Where they are so concerned about the Sabbath. Yet in their hearts they want to kill. And they want to accuse Jesus.

[ 17 : 10 ] Of being unlawful. And so Jesus asked. Is it lawful? Is it lawful? You people who want to kill. And yet you won't do good. On the Sabbath.

He exposes their hearts. How many things in life are like this? How many people are silent. Because. They know that they're not doing anything.

About the things that are going on in the world. They know. That they're not standing up for what is good. Or they're not speaking out. Against the harm that's been done in the world.

And perhaps they're not speaking out against it. Because. They're part of it. And maybe we've all been there. Part of the problem. And so we're not going to admit.

That we're part of the problem. And so we're silent. And there's so many things. So many things that. Grieves the heart of God. When people are silent. When they know. What should be good.

[ 18 : 08 ] And what should be harmful. And yet they won't speak up. And so finally. What is the heart of the problem? The heart of the problem. Is. That the heart is hard.

He looks around. At them. With anger. Grieved. At their hardness of heart. This is the first time.

In Mark's gospel. This term is used. But it's not going to be the last time. This is going to be a growing theme. In Mark's gospel. Hardness of heart. Is the human problem. That's what sin has done.

It's a term. That we might have heard. When we were in Exodus. Can you remember. Who it was used of. In Exodus. The hardness of heart. Was used of Pharaoh. And the interesting thing.

About the hardness of heart problem. Is when it related to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was given. Incredibly powerful evidence. Of God.

[ 19 : 07 ] It was not a lack of evidence. It was incredible demonstrations. Of evidence. Yet the hardness of heart. Would not even. Attest to the evidence. It wouldn't be moved.

It wouldn't be moved. Even if you gave. The greatest of evidences. Even if you parted. The Red Sea. A hard heart. Will not be moved. And that's what a hard heart does.

And these Pharisees. Who see. A miracle. Before their eyes. And yet. Their hard heart. Will not open up. To see the. The compassion. And mercy of God. Nor will their hearts.

Open up. To see the son of God. Standing before them. They just want to kill him. Because their hearts. Their hearts are hard. You see. A hard heart. Will.

Ignore. All the evidence. Pointing to who. God is. It will ignore. All the evidence. And still choose. In spite of evidence. It will still choose. To fight against God.

- [ 20 : 03 ] Instead of surrender. To God. Instead. Instead of seeing. The great mercy. And compassion of God. It will only see. What their selfish eyes. Want to see. And so.
- These. These synagogue leaders. Because of their hard hearts. They cannot see. The son of God. With compassion. In front of them. Instead. They ignore it. Because of their hard hearts.
- And they just want to kill him. And that's what a hard heart does. A hard heart. Rejects. The possibility. Of its own salvation. Isn't that tragic?
- A hard heart. Rejects. The possibility. Of its own salvation. And these Pharisees. We're going to see. As we go through Mark. That they're going to. Reject the possibility. Of their own salvation. Because of their hard hearts.
- And so. What are we going to do about this? As we go through Mark's gospel. One of the. One of the really great problems. That we see is. When Jesus begins to ask the disciples.
- [ 21 : 03 ] If their hearts. Their hearts are hard. And so. You might not have thought. That you were coming out this morning. To do a heart check. I'm not qualified. By the NHS.
- Or anything like that. But let's go to the Lord. Let's go to the scriptures. And let us examine. Our own hearts. And this morning. We're going to take communion. And Paul says that.
- In 1 Corinthians 11. He says. You should examine yourselves. Before you take this. We need to examine our hearts. We need to speak up. Against harm.
- And speak for doing good. We need to. Check our hearts. So that our eyes. Can see. God's heart of compassion.
- In Christ. Jesus showed perfectly. The heart of his father. Compassion. Our religion. If it's not leading us to compassion.
- [ 21 : 58 ] Then it's not from God. God. And finally. We must trust him. When it comes to our own heart. How are we to ever. Escape. The possibility. Of rejecting our own salvation.
- How are we ever to. Attend to our own hardness of heart. Well it's only by looking to Jesus. He's the only one. Who can help us in that regard. So let me pray.
- Lord. Lord. I thank you so much. For your.
- Coming to earth. And showing. The heart of God. I thank you that you show. The heart and spirit of the law. Because it is your heart of compassion.
- That seeks. To do good. And to save lives. You came to seek and save the lost. And you gave your own life. As a ransom. And we thank you.
- [ 22 : 59 ] That we look at this. Synagogue service. And we see ways. In which it could have been better. We pray Lord. When we gather. Please help us. To do good. And not harm. Please help us.
- To seek compassion. And to show. Your heart. As we gather together. In your name. And if nothing else.
- As we struggle to do these things. Help us to point one another. To you. You're the only one. That can help our hearts. And so we pray that you would. Soften our hearts.
- And hit and draw us into the. Compassion of the father. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you.