A Man with a Withered Hand

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[0:00] Amen. In the Bible, I encourage you to find the book of Mark and turn to chapter 3, where we will be talking about a man with a withered hand.

Dun, dun, dun. Many, many decades ago, I was at Grace Bible College, which no longer exists. It's now Grace Christian University.
And one of the profs would send his students out early in the year to spend, I don't know, an hour, two hours thinking about this passage of Scripture, and in particular, just one of the verses.
And you see these people sitting under the tree, and you're like, what are you doing? Oh, I'm studying. Can I take that class, please? But if you've got your Bible open to Mark chapter 3, we're going to be spending time in the first six verses.
But before we do that, I just want to remind you of love your neighbor as yourself. That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Wasn't that Christ's answer?
[1:26] You know, what was the greatest commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. And the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself. Well, we're going to talk about loving your neighbor as yourself. We're going to be talking near that.

But let's start with reading this passage. Gospel of Mark chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. 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. He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.
The Pharisees went out immediately, held counsel with the Herodians against him how to destroy him. What a wonderful passage of Scripture. You just feel so good having read that, don't you?
[2:37] Well, as I am at times tempted to do, we're going to go the long way around the barn.

And let's start off in verse 1 and ask the question, what is a synagogue? And there's a really, really, really simple answer. The answer is that it is a local meeting place, such as this church building is called a church, or it is an assembly of Jewish people, such as if we got together somewhere, like for a picnic, the church would gather.
So a synagogue can either be the building or the body of people. Simple, straightforward answer, right? Good. Just some information about what a synagogue is.
If there are 10 or more men in a community, that's greater than or equal to 10, for those of you math nerds. If the number of Jewish men is greater than or equal to 10, they make a synagogue.
Okay? Now, synagogues were very, very local. So that you did not travel beyond what a Sabbath travel or a Sabbath distance is.
[4:03] A Sabbath distance is 3,000 feet. Or 0.57 miles. Or not that far. Yeah, just about a half mile.

So you got this building or this group of people that come together and they assemble. And because of the strictures of the traditions around the Mosaic Law, they were limited to a half mile. And there was no riding donkeys or cows or hopping in your jalopy and rumbling down the road. They had to be local and limited.
And so these are the basics of this. Oh, and it was a means of preserving the Jewish faith and worship.
I have a great picture here. Isn't that fantastic? This is just a spot-on picture of what the basic elements of a synagogue are. Okay, the nertimid.

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[5:13] It's the eternal light. Okay? They have this because God is eternal and He is light. Okay? They have the Ten Commandments. That looks familiar, right?

The Mosaic Law. They have pews or other seating arrangements. Sometimes they would just have stone steps that they would sit on. Sometimes they would have a balcony and seating below.
But in every synagogue, there is some form of division. And on one side would be men and on the other side would be women. The men would be down below.
The women up high. There was always a division. Like if you go to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem today, they've got a wall down separating it. Women pray on this side. Men pray on that side.
Okay? When I read that, my mind says Bima. I don't think that's how it's pronounced. But I think Bima, and I think of the Bima seat of, you know.
[6:14] But anyways. This one says Bima or whatever. That's this right here. And what it is is a place for them to set the scrolls on where they read it before the group.

Then they have an ark. Think. Not Noahic ark. Think closet. Okay? See this wall closet here?
And it's an ark because it's a container for the Torah, the law. So they would put the scrolls inside the ark, and they would pull them out, lay them out on the Bima to read, and put them back in the ark.
Star of David. The Torah, which is the law, which you find here and here. And a menorah, which is light. Then they've got seats for the people that are teaching.
These are the basic elements of the physical synagogue.
[7:24] I knew the word. But I want to go back here. I wanted this to come after. It is a means of preserving the Jewish faith and worship.

This is vital. This is important. They were to come together to preserve their faith and to worship.
And this faith wasn't preserved well. We'll see that in a minute.
Okay. So here we are. Mark chapter 3, verse 1. Again, he entered the synagogue. And we all know a little bit more about what it means for a synagogue, right? And a man was there.
Oy, oy. Now we've got to ask. And how appropriate is this culturally today to ask this question, what is a man?
[8:30] I don't say it's appropriate in here, but I'm saying culturally. In here, I'm fairly certain we're solid on this one. But just in case we're not, we're going to spend some time on this.

What is man? A man. So what is man? It could be a singular man. Okay. Or it could be a member of mankind.
Okay. Male or female because they're part of mankind. Or scientifically, you could label them a member of homo sapiens.
All right. That's what a man is. A man is. A man. A man could be just a member of humanity, male or female. Or scientifically, a member of the homo sapiens.
Homo sapiens. Modern classification of biology credited to Carl Linnaeus. I knew I had that pronunciation correct.
[9:41] Linnaeus. Anybody notice anything about those dates? Lived through the start of our nation. So just to think about a couple, 250 years ago, right?

So, all right. So Carl Linnaeus, he was a biologist. And he was being frustrated because at that time, they would find a new species and they'd give it this Latin name.
And these names were like really clunky and, you know, and they're arguing about what. And he was frustrated. And so what he did was he came up with a classification system to help him and fellow scientists understand what they were talking about.
There he is. There's Carl. Yeah. Anybody know what that is? I've got no idea. That looks like a snail. That might be a flower. I don't know.
But that's Carl, right? And he was trying to help his fellow scientists so that when they came together to talk, they would have an easy way of knowing what they were talking about. And so he came up with this classification.
[10:54] And it was based on observable facts. Very important. What's the key word in that sentence? Observable.

Observable. All right? Based on observable facts, he developed this classification system. Our classification hierarchy is arranged from large groups that are broadly defined to smaller groups that are more narrowly defined.

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And it goes, I did not come up with this. This is a mnemonic to help students remember. Deranged killer penguins can...
I saw that. I'm like, oh, we're going to go with the other slide. Never heard of deranged killer penguins. But anyway, you got domain. And notice, these are all things that are alive.
You got trees. You got plants. You got fish. You got kangaroos. Men. Gorilla. Then you go to kingdom, which excludes the plants. This is just animals. Phylum.
[11:58] I think this is mammals. Class. Then family. Then we get down to the genus and the species. And for man, it would be Homo sapien down there.

But the thing is, they looked at things. Right? All of this... All of these are alive. Meaning that they process energy. Right? Then you move down.
These are animals which are distinct from plants. Most people can tell animals from plants usually. Right? Then you work your way down by observable differences. Until you get to the bottom.
And so when you talk about it, people go, oh yeah. That part. Oh yeah. That. That's all it's about. Carl. Linius. Was just trying to give them a tool.
So when they take a look at the creation, they could talk about this specifically. It's all it was about. It has been hijacked by evolutionists as a means of establishing a common ancestry.
[13:12] Which completely fails to understand Genesis chapter 1 and highlights the truth of Romans chapter 1. In Genesis chapter 1, starting in verse 20, it says, Let the waters swarm with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the spans of heavens.

So God created great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm according to their kinds. And we could read again and again and again about the different kinds.
A great way to define the difference between kinds is what can have viable offspring together. Okay? If they can mate and have viable offspring, they're kinds. Now you can have close kinds that don't really produce good offspring.
Horses and donkeys? Mules? Okay? They can have an offspring, but it's not really... Yeah. Yeah. Mm. Doesn't always work, right?
[14:36] Because they're different kinds. And the greatest distinction is humankind.

Because we have been created differently than every other animal. And when I say every other animal, I'm not including us in animals.
We are not animals. Because we have been created with the Spirit of God. We have been created as His special creation.
We stand apart from all the rest of creation. And that is so important. It can be seen in many ways. Not the least of which God gave us the word that we can study and know God better.
He hasn't given that to any of the animals. But I want to... I'm coming back to Mark chapter 3, but I want to point out something in Romans chapter 1. Verse 19.
[15:52] Verse 19.

Carl came up with a tool to help his fellow scientists see and understand the creation. And Carl was a man of God. Honored God in his life and in his work.
But it has been hijacked as some way of establishing a common ancestry. The only problem is there is zero evidence.
Zero evidence of a crossover. Of a previous kind becoming different kinds. There's zero evidence. So anybody who tries to say, this shows the commonality of ancestry, they're wrong.
[17:12] The synagogue. The synagogue.

I've already slipped in my mind today. The synagogue was there to preserve Jewish faith and culture. The church is here to preserve Christian faith and culture.
And part of that is making really fun statements like... Evolutionists are wrong.
Okay. So here we are. Let's go back to Mark chapter 3, verse 1. Again, he, Jesus, entered the synagogue and there was a man there with a withered hand.
And we know that a man is God's special creation, created to be in special relationship with God, and is distinct and different from all of the rest of creation because he was created in God's image.
[18:32] And there is this member of humanity, this special creation, in the synagogue, and he's got a withered hand. You all with me?

And they, that is the Pharisees, watched Jesus to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might worship in glory of the power of God.

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No. So that they might be in awe of his power over all nature. No. They were there to find an excuse to accuse him.
And he said to the man with the withered hand, Come here. Get up here.
Imagine that. How much fun is that, you know? You're in a group and you get singled out to get pulled up front and you weren't expecting it. Yeah. That's fun, isn't it?
[19:39] Especially when you've got a visible abnormality and you can feel the tension in the room. You're like, why'd you bring me into this?

I was waiting after service I was going to talk to you. And he said to the Pharisees, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or harm, to save life or to kill?
But they were silent because they weren't there to answer the question. They weren't there to learn. They were there to do what? To find a reason to accuse. That's why they were there.
Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, so here we go. Look at verse 5. A lot of people have a real problem with verse 5. Have you ever heard somebody say, I love New Testament God? I don't like Old Testament God. God was mean in the Old Testament. But Jesus is all about love. I like that.
[20:45] You ever heard that? They make fun of it in movies all the time. It's part of our culture. They don't like the fact that God killed all those that gave false fire.

All those that wrongly tried to give him honor. Because they weren't honoring him. They were honoring themselves and God killed them all. Or how about, All I was trying to do was to keep the Ark of the Covenant from falling into mud and I got killed.
That offends people. Okay? I understand. They like Jesus. Jesus is all about love and kindness and turn the other cheek.
What does verse 5 say? Jesus became angry. There is a famous sermon about sinners in the hands of an angry God.
And I'm not really familiar with it, but that title is awesome, isn't it? The idea is that the only thing that is keeping sinners from being sent straight to hell is God is holding them up.
[21:57] And here's the thing. God is angry at sin. But He's also a very gracious, kind, and loving God. And there's a day set aside for judgment.

We are in the hands of God. And Jesus Himself becomes angry. Why would Jesus become angry? If you turn to John 3, verse 16, we read, For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
When God says that He loves the whole world, it's not talking about the dirt and the trees and the ants and the insects and the animals. No. Just like when we talk about the whole church, we're not talking about the building.
We're talking about us. The whole world is all of humanity. For God so loved all of humanity that He sent His only begotten Son. The entire purpose of Christ being here was an expression of God's love.
[23:04] Turn, if you will, to Philippians 2. It's a very famous passage. You probably, once you get started on it, you've got no worries. But we're going to take a look at verses 5-8.

Paul's writing and he says, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, you have to understand, for eternity past, Jesus Christ reigned in heaven.
And He heard all day, every day, from start to finish, praise. And He was glorious in His appearance. And there was just...
It is beyond our comprehension how high and mighty God is. And that's where Christ was. And it says, Who though He was in the form of God, there in glory, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.
Not something to be achieved, but something to be held on to. He was in the form of God. He had all that glory and praise and worship and honor and power. And He didn't have to hold on to it.
[24:13] It wasn't something that He had to cling to. But rather, He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. God, from glory, loved us so much that He didn't cling to that glory, but became one of us, lived a sinless life, died a death that He did not deserve on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

The amount of love that it took for Him to come and endure were things that we can't understand. Because when He was on the cross, all of our sin was poured upon Him.

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He paid the full penalty for our sin, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. When we turn to Him and ask for forgiveness, it's granted, because He paid the price.
Therefore, Romans 8, verse 1 says, Therefore, there is no longer any guilt. There's no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Now imagine, just for a moment, step back to Mark 3 in the synagogue. And you're Jesus. And you have left eternal glory.
[25:47] And you have come down here and taken on the very form of a human, which, by the way, you will now carry forever. He forever will be part of humanity.

When we get to glory and we look up Jesus, He's going to look like us. We're going to look like Him. You've come down from eternal glory for the sole purpose of carrying the weight of the punishment of sin upon a cross.
And you're there in the synagogue and you see one of these people that you love so much that you left glory. And people are just using that person as a pawn.
Can you understand why Christ was a little bit unhappy? Can you understand what it would take to drive Him to be angry? Christ was angered.
Christ was angered. We read on. He looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of their hearts.
[27:06] In the midst of His anger, He's grieved.

He's heartbroken. Empathetic. Desiring to include mercy and grace. I love what it says in Matthew. What is it? Matthew 23. Verse 37. This is Christ.
He says, Do you get that?
The compassion that Christ has for everybody. For the saint and for the sinner. For the high and for the low. For the weak and for the strong.
[28:16] His desire is to gather them together to protect them. To guard over them. To provide for them. That's what I see.

In Mark 3 verse 5. He's grieved at the hardness of their hearts. And then He turned to the man with the withered hand and said, Stretch out your hand.
He healed the man. And finish it. Pharisees got ticked off.
Went out. Hooked up with the Herodians. And eventually, it led to the death of Christ on a cross. So what?
1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 12 says, Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
[29:49] Or if you prefer, we can go to 1 Peter, which I prefer. So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly. As God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.
Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. So I'm going to be an example to the flock.
you may not have heard, but earlier this year, I took a three-month sabbatical. Desperately needed, timely, if not too late, a true and honorable blessing that my wife and I benefited from immensely.
The reason why I needed that sabbatical is because last year was not fun.
[31:12] I endured quite a bit last year. I mean, every year's got its ups and downs. Can I get an amen? You know, got to me last year.

I didn't handle myself very well. There are times that I caused great pain to both Jim and Frank. I did not set a very good example to the flock.
And so, that's been a reality. And there's people that know it in the congregation and have been aware of it. And so, it's public.
And so, I'm dealing with it publicly. I apologize and ask your forgiveness. I should have done better. I'm so sorry for the pain. I'm sorry for the heartache. I'm sorry.
[32:37] My friends, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Just a second. Time out. Okay? I didn't run off with the money. I didn't run off with the secretary. I wasn't pulled over for a DUI. I handled a couple interpersonal relationship issues poorly.

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Okay? Don't, let's not, let me just clarify. Pastor did not get arrested and I'm not going to jail or anything like that. I handled some things really bad.
Okay? Not in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.
You see, I want to preserve our faith.
[34:05] I want to be a good example and I want us to be a strong church. That's why we're here. I am not perfect and none of us are.

Not even the great Mrs. James. but we are here to preserve and to honor and to grow to be encouraged and hopefully lead people to salvation in the Lord because that is what we're about. We will make mistakes but God forbid that we act as the Pharisees who stand there only to accuse. may rather we act as brothers in Christ to come alongside to give a kick in the butt to give an arm around the shoulders to be men and women of faith.
Father, as we wrap this up today I think of your son standing in the synagogue heartbroken for others and seeing the the anger seeing the readiness to accuse I totally get him being angry.
We all do. but Lord his compassion the fact that he was grieved and the love that he had the love that took him to the cross for us may that be ours.
[35:55] May I be better and may we be better. We pray this in Christ's name.

Amen.

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