

*6 And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse Him. 8 But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and come forward!" And he rose and came forward. 9 And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?" 10 And after looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored. 11 But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.*

Jesus is declaring to the rulers of Israel, the scribes and the pharisees, exactly who He is.

Beyond all the miracles, the likes of which have never been seen on earth since creation, He is telling them in plain language first that He has authority over everything.

He has told them clearly that He is the Messiah. He is that person that Isaiah spoke of. He has authority to offer the favorable year of the Lord.

He has told them clearly that He has authority to forgive sin, an authority that they rightly conclude, only God can have, and now He is telling them He has authority over the sabbath.

Again, only one person trumps authority over the sabbath day, and that is God, alone. They understood perfectly what He claimed. The problem is, even though He is rocking the entire region with miracle after miracle of healing and casting out demons, they do not believe that He is the Son of God.

In Israel, even though Rome was the ultimate occupying authoritative

power, foretold by their own prophets, no one had more real power over the Jews than these Pharisees. They were the top dogs in Israel.

And the authority that Jesus claims is a direct threat to their authority over the people of Israel. And in a short time, these folks have come to hate Jesus. He is a direct political threat against them. He claims to usurp their authority, their power base.

And the people are following Jesus. It's a no-brainer. Mean spirited rigid un-loving Pharisees who load great burdens on them, or Jesus who loves them and teaches them God's word and heals their diseases, and offers hope and forgiveness.

So we're only perhaps 6 months into this ministry, and the Pharisees are desperate to catch Jesus in something they can dis-credit Him with to the people of Israel. They want to discredit Him badly. And that's tough to do when the one you want to dis-credit . . . is sinless. Perfect.

Righteous.

This story is a turning point. When we come to this scene we'll look at this morning, these men are literally salivating at the thought of getting rid of Jesus. Jesus comes offering grace to all of Israel, freely. But by the conclusion of this story, according to Mark's account, the Pharisees are plotting Jesus' destruction. They want Him gone. Dead.

Listen to Mark's parallel account of this event. In Mark 3:1

*And He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him. 3 And He said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and come forward!" 4 And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was*

*restored. 6 And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.*

The Herodians hate the pharisees and vice versa. It's like congress and the president. They hate each other. But they hate Jesus even more, and they come together to plot a way to destroy Him. The herodians and the pharisees have found something they can have a bipartisan effort on. Kill Jesus.

The pharisees need the herodians because they can't just kill who they want. Rome has laws against murder. So they will need the herodians to help them get this done. The herodians, as their name might indicate, are the sect of jews who are in bed with Rome. They'll need Rome's blessing somehow.

Something else happens at this juncture in the story of Jesus. In Matthew's gospel, the parallel account of our story this morning is in Matthew chapter 12. And after this confrontation, Jesus says something frightening to His disciples. Matthew 12:31

*“Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.*

This is as good a place as any to talk about the "unforgivable sin". Listen carefully. The Holy Spirit has revealed God the Son in every possible way. He has authority over Satan's kingdom. He casts out demons. They must obey Him.

He has authority over disease. Creative authority. He creates new body parts where before there was just corruption and ruin. He reverses leprosy and creates new perfect skin where there was only destruction and death.

He has authority over sin. And He has authority over the Sabbath. He has told them clearly all of this, and proven He is from God, by the miracles.

And after all of that revelation from the Holy Spirit, if you still don't believe, you have dismissed the only person who can rescue you out of Satan's clutches, and that final sin, rejecting Jesus, the Son of God, puts you in a category called, hopeless. Unforgivable, because you've dismissed the forgiver!

You have all the evidence and you dismiss the only one who can save you. You're lost. There's nothing else to do after that.

And that is where these pharisee's are at by the end of this story this morning. They not only do not believe He is Son of God and forgiver of sins, they can only come up with one solution. Destroy Jesus. Kill Jesus.

No more evidence will be given to them. In fact He shifts to parables which is a form of diminished revelation and a judgement from God.

In Matthew 13, almost immediately after this event, the disciples ask Jesus why He only speaks in parables; 10 *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"* 11 *And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. 12 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,*

*'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;*

*AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;*

*15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,  
AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,  
AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES  
LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,  
AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,  
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,  
AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'*

These people have rejected all of the evidence, and God turns a corner with them. No more straight talk. No more direct statements. The parables that they cannot understand are a judgement. They rejected all the easy evidence. No more. God will send them confusion now.

If God is speaking to your heart this morning, believe. Do not harden your hearts like these pharisees and herodians. God responds to belief by giving you more belief. And He responds to dis-belief by hardening your heart further. If this story teaches us anything, it's this, you may not grasp it all, you may not yet understand everything, but keep your heart open and tender to God, and He will bless you with more faith.

These pharisees turned their back on the only one who has the power to forgive, and *that* IS the unforgivable sin. To walk away from the forgiver, the only Way to God, out of your sins.

So let's look at the story beginning with vs. 6. Let's try to re-create the drama. Luke presents this story very dramatically.

*6 And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching;*

The literal greek says it's the second Sabbath. No one is sure what that

means except perhaps in whatever Jewish month we're in it's the 2nd one in that month.

*He entered the synagogue and was teaching; You'll recall that in Luke 4 Jesus gives us His plan, His method, and by extension, our method to do God's work in this world.*

*4:42 When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. 43 But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." 44 So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*

If you're getting tired of the verse by verse teaching after 5 years, my apologetic to argue why we do this is; this is what Jesus did. He preached. In the synagogue. No matter where He was at. The miracles are supplemental proofs. His main method to announce the authority to reign of God in Satan's world; is preaching. And so we preach. Poorly perhaps, but we do what we can to follow His example. Teaching and preaching the word of God.

Jesus enters the synagogue to preach and teach the word on this Sabbath, (by the way, anything that comes out of His mouth is the Word of God.) And a drama develops. A conflict presents itself.

At this point just here, we should take this opportunity to define a couple of words. Providence and miracles. The fact that the man with the withered hand was in the right place at the right time that morning to be the center of a great drama, is providence. The healing, is a miracle.

God causes things to happen in our lives without interrupting the natural order of the world. Providence. Sometimes He does interrupt the natural order of this world. Those are miracles.

*6b and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.*

Our modern translations leave out the little participle, *idou*. The authorized version is careful to say, behold! Behold. It's there for a reason. The fact that this man happened to be there on that day is important. Behold.

It's important because God has put him there to accomplish a great purpose. If the president or perhaps the governor showed up at our little service, we might exclaim to someone later, behold, the governor was in our service. Although the word behold is now obsolete. There are other ways we draw attention to something remarkable.

In this case the man is remarkable for one reason only. He is God's candidate in God's timing, to be healed, both spiritually, and physically, and God's purposes are plural. He loves this poor helpless derelict man, and He purposes to elevate the conflict of the false religion of the pharisee's.

Those are only the beginnings of God's purposes for this man's presence. There are millions upon millions more. Pinch yourselves. Here we are this morning, 2000 years later, and God is still using this event in this place at this time to change lives because that poor man was in the room on that morning so long ago. Behold!

I'm not sure what the current word is. Perhaps we would say "Dude!" There was this guy there that day with a withered hand. But we wouldn't say withered either, would we.

How would we describe his condition? We might say, he had a broken wrist and his hand was just dangling limp and it was shriveled and dry and lifeless and gross. In our modern times, it would have been removed. They didn't have those options.

A year and a half ago, I did something men my age aren't supposed to do, we're supposed to have more sense by this time, but I was standing about 5 feet above the ground on top of fire wood piled high in my wood trailer. Trying to get it loose and thrown out in a pile.

The wood shifted and I fell forward, head first, to the ground and stumps below, and I broke the fall with my wrist, breaking it. We take for granted having 2 hands, don't we. I was almost helpless. Ever try to pull socks on with one hand? Or pants?

You don't lose 50%, it's more like 85% when you lose a single hand. This man had a severe handicap in a society that required 100% output in order to maintain . . . ordinary poverty. He would be reduced to begging most likely, in order to not starve. He is rather pathetic in his need.

And it's no secret, Jesus can reverse his handicap. Jesus can make dead things alive. Jesus can create new flesh where there was only dead flesh. Jesus can create new bones, new joints, new muscles where there has been only deadness. It's no different than creating the worlds. Smaller scale, but equal in impossibility, unless you are God.

This is a man with a dead appendage dangling limply. Worthless to him, and hideous to others. Behold! God has him there for the purpose of grace to him, Glory to God, and division and conflict for the false unbelievers.

*7 And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse Him.*

They have only one purpose in that room that day. It's a setup in order to catch Jesus in a bogus crime. They don't care about truth or righteousness. And they especially don't care, at all, for this derelict

man. He's invisible to them, until perhaps he can be useful as a snare for Jesus. Just a useful idiot

This is a bit of theatre that is being played out in front of our eyes every single day. We need go no further to understand the extent of this drama than the hearings that are on the news constantly.

My wife warns me often and severely to not say anything political up here. I am taking no side. Just saying the drama we're seeing on our televisions is no different than what Luke pictures for us here. A room full of men trying to set a trap.

These pharisee's are rabid. Seething with hatred, they are like a pack of hungry dogs, waiting, waiting, trying to orchestrate something, anything, so they can charge Jesus with some crime.

The room is tense with the drama, the conflict, the hatred of these rulers for Jesus. And it *is* political. Totally political. This man Jesus has claimed power and authority that they consider to be theirs. And they will do anything to retain that power. This is politics being played out in Luke chapter 6 this morning. Not hard for us to understand.

That's our picture. A pack of wild wolves, teeth bared, saliva dripping to the ground, waiting for the moment to spring and attack and kill.

*8 But He knew what they were thinking,*

Jesus reads minds. Jesus is fully aware of the fact that these men both hate Him and wish His demise. He knows that they are there for one reason, and one reason only. They are waiting for opportunity. Opportunity to attack and ultimately, to murder.

Now a good politician knows his crowd and speaks to the situation. A wise politician knows the pitfalls are waiting. The pit is dug and

carefully hidden so that some person or animal will not see it, and fall into the trap.

Crafty politicians avoid the hidden pits, and the triggered nets that whoosh you off the ground, trapped.

Jesus far more. He can read minds. There are no surprises for Him. And Jesus is fearless in this danger. Jesus knows His Father has ultimate control of every breath, every molecule.

If His Father wished, He could strike every pharisee there with advanced leprosy. He could make them all white as snow with leprosy, if He desired. Jesus tells Peter, Mt. 26:52 *“Put your sword back in its place,”* ..... *“For all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Are you not aware that I can call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?”*

The fact that Jesus understands the danger of this situation and proceeds forward fearlessly, is based in what He later told Peter. These guys are helpless to do anything that isn't already ordained by God who owns everything.

*and He said to the man with the withered hand, “Rise and come forward!” And he rose and came forward.*

I love the command and the immediate obedience of the man. I'd be shaking in my boots in a confrontation like this. I'm not very brave. I talk real big up here where it's safe. In this situation I'd have been terrified.

And suddenly the Teacher, the One who owns the room in the midst of dangerous conflict looks at you and says, get up and come here. And Luke says; He got up and came there. Obedience is immediate.

There are so many good lessons for us in this story. This is as good as any of them. When the Spirit burdens your heart for some obedience, do you jump to obey. No matter the danger. No matter the discomfort. Jesus says get up and come here, do you get up and come there? This man did, and his life was forever different.

But of course, Jesus doesn't do anything the easy way. Just heal me and let me sit down please. Oh no. No such luck. You're the most frightened and least significant person in the room, and Jesus is going to make you an object lesson. Jesus is going to use you to bless some, and curse others.

*9 And Jesus said to **them**, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?"*

This is a theological question for the theologians in the room. It's very similar to the question for the lawyer when Jesus asks what are the most important commandments and the guy says Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus says, you've answered correctly. And they guy says, yeah, but let's clarify. Who is my neighbor?

Gonna get out of this on a technicality. Who is my neighbor, and Jesus launches into the story of the good samaritan. *9 And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?"* Is it lawful to love God and love men . . . on the sabbath day? Is the Sabbath about love, or is it about man made laws?

Let's get into the weeds here, the technicality of the law of moses. *Is it lawful.* We talked at great length last week about how they had built an entire false religion around Sabbath law. Jesus says let's talk about this;

You can find much in God's law about mercy and goodness for other

humans. No shortage at all. Love your neighbor with all the same effort as you love yourself.

What's more important than our own personal comfort. We work our entire lives to assure a level of comfort for . . . who? Ourselves. Let's be honest. When it comes to comfort, who gets taken care of first? Who?

If God wanted to send us all to hell, that command about loving our neighbors as much as we love ourselves would condemn every single fallen son and daughter of Adam. I'm first. You get the leftovers . . . if there are any.

Jesus goes right for the heart. He sharpens up his knife for these politicians and goes for the jugular. *is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?"*

What did Moses command? Pretty simple stuff, really. Stop your occupation for a day, and honor God. Take a day off your normal work, your occupation. Take a day off. Honor God.

Is there anything in there about not doing good on that day, to a neighbor who needs good done? Certainly not, in fact, loving a neighbor fulfills God's commands and that honors Him. Doing good to neighbors honors the Sabbath, it doesn't break God's law at all.

These men had actually set God's law aside, and added volumes of traditions of men that in effect caused God's Sabbath to be dis-honored. It turned God's good day into a legalistic impossible ridiculous burden.

Their Sabbath observance dis-honored God and ignored the heart, totally. It was cold dead legalism, and never prescribed that way by God. At all! They had turned God's day where you are to stop working for a living and love God and love neighbors into just the opposite of God's design. So Jesus goes for their hearts.

In a single sentence He condemns their false religion. Only God can condense words so that so few can have such power. In that short sentence, Jesus has condemned them and their false religion! That's called verbal plenary inspiration. Wipes them out in less than two dozen words.

*is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?"* In other words, is the Sabbath a heart matter, a love matter, or is it this cold dead empty legalism you have invented.

That's why we believe He is God and why we believe this book is inspired. In 20 words He pulls the rug out from under their entire religious world.

Answer the question please; pharisees. All you rulers and lawyers and politicians. Weilders of power. It's a simple question. Can we have an answer?? Anybody?? What utter contempt they must have for this man that destroys their life's false work in 20 words or so.

*10 And after looking around at them all,* This is drama. Silence. Jesus is looking into the eyes of each and every one of them. Can you imagine that stare? Looking into the eyes of God, who has just turned you into a piece of burnt toast.

The drama is intense. Answer the question, as the eyes pierce your souls. They know the answer, but the correct answer means their power and authority is gone and their lives work is for nothing.

It is at this point that Mark's parallel account tells us He looked at them, with anger. Can you imagine the piercing eyes of an angry Son of God staring at you, having asked the question that you know is true.

It was a rhetorical question. The question contains the answer. They

should have been undone. God in human form is staring at you, and He's angry!!?? Oh my. It should have melted them into so many puddles.

Not these men. They will double down. That's why the stare has turned to anger. They are looking into the piercing eyes of an angry God, and they double down on their hatred and rejection.

The only thing standing in the way of their authority and political power is one threat. Jesus of Nazareth. Kill Jesus. It's ugly business, but we've gotta do it. He has to be removed. Kill Jesus ASAP.

*10 And after looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!"*

The words here are important. If Jesus had said stretch out your arm, he apparently could have done so. But Jesus didn't say that, did He. Jesus requires the impossible . . . and then He does the impossible.

This guy can't stretch out his hand. That's the one thing he can't do. His hand is broken. Withered. Dangling. Useless.

If Jesus had told him to stretch out his other hand, he could have done it with ease. He knows how to make his muscles respond. He could lift his other hand and stretch it out toward Jesus. But not the broken one.

The next words are remarkable. Because obedience is met with a miracle. He holds up his arm, probably, he figures, I'll get this dead thing in the air and do as much as I can accomplish in this deal. I can raise my arm with my dead dangling hand, I'll do that much.

But before he gets it raised up as far as he can, it's a new hand and he CAN stretch it out towards Jesus. *And he did so; and his hand was restored.*

*And he did so; and his hand was restored. !!*

God asks us to do the impossible. God asks me to stretch out my sinful worthless dead heart to Him, and it's impossible, it's dead, but I do it anyway, and before I'm done, He quickens my dead heart to life. Just like this hand.

This guy is looking down his arm as he raises it and by the time it's lifted up, in obedience, that's what Jesus told him to do, he lifts up his dead hand with his arm and when he looks at his hand, it's restored. Perfect.

And Jesus has done this miracle millions of times in millions of dead hearts. He calls for a response which is impossible, and for those of us who obey, in faith, He quickens us to life.

Well, I wish the story could end on that marvelous high note, but unfortunately, it doesn't.

*11 But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.*

The pharisees are filled with rage. They have just seen God perform a miracle, and their response is that they are filled up to overflowing with murder.

If there had been a way forward to murder Him that day, they would have accomplished it. But they are constrained by the people and by Rome, and they need to plan His demise carefully, and carry it out.

This level of hatred is unhinged. Deranged. It doesn't compute. But it's still with us today.

When our culture is confronted with a God who defines good and evil

and who claims an authority to judge sin which is crystal clear in it's various definitions in His authoritative book, we are seeing this same derangement on a daily basis.

Our culture has just about had enough of christians. Especially the ones who believe in the authority of this book. Their patience is over. Derangement over sin is nothing new.

We need to be like Jesus. Fearlessly and lovingly confrontive no matter the consequences, for the glory of God.