

# Guest Preacher Rev. RJ Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking the Lord's self and blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together in the Gospel of Mark, and chapter 3, and we'll read again from the beginning of the chapter.

And he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a widowed hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether he would tell him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

And he said to the man with a widowed 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 and immediately held counsel of the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. As we read the Gospels and the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, we'll soon come to see the growth and nature of opposition that was raised against the ministry of Jesus.

[ 1 : 10 ] And that opposition especially came from the scribes and the Pharisees. Already in this Gospel of Mark in previous chapters, we have three incidents where the opposition is brought before us.

The call of Matthew and the feast that followed. The observance of fasting. And the disciples of Jesus plucking ears of corn in the cornfields on the Sabbath day.

And Mark follows these incidents in the cornfields on the Sabbath with this fourth incident which we have today, which took place in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, the healing of the man with the withered hand.

The incident that we are discussing today is also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, as well as here in the Gospel of Mark.

There are certain variations in the way that each Gospel reports of what took place, but there are no contradictions. That which is common to each is that they all report that Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

[ 2 : 25 ] That present were some Pharisees whose motive for being present was to find fault with Jesus so that they could bring forward a charge against him.

But in the synagogue that day was a man with a withered hand to whom the Lord commanded to stretch out his hand. And that obedience to this command resulted in the full restoration of his hand. And then the Pharisees discussed what should be done about the situation. We are told that Jesus entered the synagogue.

That was his custom that every Sabbath day he would go to worship in the nearby synagogue. We are not given the location of the synagogue, whether it was in Nazareth or Capernaum, where he had set up his headquarters.

Luke mentions that he attended the synagogue and taught. And among those that are in the synagogue, there is this man whose hand, according to Luke, is withered.

[ 3 : 33 ] Now, as we noted also, present that day were scribes and Pharisees. His only motive to attend the synagogue that day was to see whether he would heal this man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, so that they might have a charge against Jesus.

And so they watched him very closely to see what he would do. Jesus had a continual controversy with the Pharisees, so with the right use of the Sabbath.

And would Jesus dare to oppose the rule well established by the Pharisees, that it was not permissible to heal on the Sabbath day unless the person's life was in danger.

The man with a withered hand, his life was not in danger. He was a man with a withered hand. On Friday, he would be a man with a withered hand.

And when the Sabbath was passed, we must remember that we are still with the Old Testament Sabbath of the seventh day of the week, which would be Saturday.

[ 4 : 44 ] Saturday, when the Sabbath would be passed on the first day of the week, he would still be with his withered hand. According to the Pharisees, he could be healed on the first day of the week or any other day of the week, but not on the Sabbath.

The real issue here is not the healing of the man, but whether Jesus would dare break the Pharisees' interpretation of the Sabbath law by healing this man's hand on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees had added a lot of rules and regulations to the Sabbath day, over and above what we find in the Bible.

Jesus knows what the issue is. And he asked the man with the withered hand to come here, he says. And he turns to the Pharisees who are watching him and says to them, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill it?

The Pharisees, according to Matthew, had already asked Jesus the question, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? For they were merely watching very intensively upon Jesus to see what he would do regarding this man with the withered hand.

[ 6 : 08 ] But Jesus turns around and replies with another question. You might think, well, this is a not question to ask. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm?

But Jesus knew their hearts. He was well aware of their motives that day. He knew that the Pharisees and the scribes had a little care for this man.

Their intent was upon what Jesus would do with this man on the Sabbath day. Whether he would heal him so that they could bring a charge against Jesus, that they could accuse Jesus and destroy him.

We read later on, the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. And he, that is Jesus, looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.

Here, Jesus is exposing their hearts. He knew their motives for being present that day in synagogue. It wasn't in order to come and to worship God, but in order to try and find Jesus doing something so that they could accuse and bring a charge against him and destroy him.

[ 7 : 31 ] He knew their motives for being present that day in the synagogue. In the same way that he knows my motives and yours for being present in this place today.

He who is the searcher of our hearts knows our motives for being present here today. Whether we have come just out of practice, out of custom, whether we have come to please someone, or whether we have come truly to worship God, to praise God, and to thank God for his goodness, it tells us for the way in which he blesses each one of us.

He knows your motive for being here today, and he knows my motive for being here preaching today. Mark here speaks of Jesus being angry and grieved for the hardness of their hearts.

The Bible has much to say about the heart and the hardness of the heart. Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment was, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

And he also warns regarding the heart and says, For from within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

[ 9 : 15 ] All these evil things come from within and defile the heart. You see, our problem is sin. Our problem is our sinful heart.

On one occasion, after the Pharisees had been listening to Jesus, they derided him and said to him, You are those, and he said to them, You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. It is well for us to remember what God said to Samuel when he went to seek the next king in Israel.

The Lord said to Samuel, For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

And Jesus said, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The apostle Paul warns the church at Rome and says to them, But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing your wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

[ 10 : 42 ] We see that the hardness of the heart is a serious matter, and especially when it is placed in the light of the overdues of the gospel, over the overdues of grace.

It is very solemn that the more we bring the overdues of grace to the attention of our people, the more some hearts are going to be hardened against it.

If your hearts are not softened and transformed by the overdues of the grace, then you will continue to resist the overdues of grace, and your hearts become more hardened against the grace of God. more hardened against the salvation that the gospel gives to you. And this is what is happening to the hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees.

The Bible speaks of the Lord as hardened the heart of Pharaoh. Well, what does that mean? The Lord hardening the heart of Pharaoh. It just means that the Lord gave Pharaoh over to the intents of his own heart, to the desires of his own heart, so that Pharaoh could do what was in his heart, what he desired to do.

[ 12 : 18 ] And if you look at the first chapter of Romans, there we're given such an account of sin, sin which is seen in our own society today.

And what is happening is that God gives them over to what was in their heart. God gives them over to the desires of their own heart.

And what we see is hardness, chaos. These scribes and Pharisees were full of zeal and very conservative in their character.

They were good husbands. They were good neighbors. Saul the Pharisee could say of himself that he was as touching the righteousness which is in the law, that he was blameless. The Pharisees in the temple, remember that story that Jesus told, the Pharisee gave a good account of himself.

And there is no reason for us to suspect that what he said about himself was not true. But despite all their commitment to things which seem to be so good, nevertheless, they are here revealing the true condition of their heart by their response to Jesus.

[ 13 : 33 ] The response to Jesus today, it reveals to us the true state of our heart. The true state of our heart.

We may be good and upright people in the community. We may be full of zeal. We may be actually very religious. However, the true condition of our hearts in the presence of God is revealed in accordance with our response to the overtures of the gospel, to the overtures of grace in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Your relationship today with Jesus, your relationship with God today, reveals where your heart is. It reveals the condition of your heart.

I do not know the condition of your heart today, but God knows. And the condition of our heart is revealed in our response to the overtures of grace as presented to you in the gospel.

In other words, of your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Here in this story that we have here in Mark's gospel, it reveals to us that they had a hardened heart.

[ 14 : 59 ] We can be so committed to the things of the gospel that no one can find fault with us and yet be so far from the one thing that is needful, and that is a heart that is wholly, completely, exclusively committed to Jesus Christ.

Jesus separated the Pharisees on another occasion and said to them, So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God.

You hypocrites! Well did I say I prophesy of you when he said, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. They were honouring God with their lips only.

Their heart was far from their worship. These people had witnessed again and again and again the power and the transformation that Jesus could bring into the lives of men and women, but they continued with their impenitent and hardened hearts.

[ 16 : 12 ] Our response to Jesus Christ is the ultimate heart test. It reveals how our hearts are before God.

We are told that Jesus, that he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of heart. It tells us that Jesus was emotionally affected in perceiving the hardness of their hearts.

When we look around us and see how many people, perhaps those whom we love so dearly in the world, are hardening their hearts against the overtures of grace.

What effect has that upon you? If you receive the grace of God into your hearts, you cannot but be emotionally affected.

If you are a Christian today, you cannot but be emotionally affected as you look around you and you see a people whose heart is hardened. Whose heart is hardened.

[ 17 : 14 ] Well, you are not the first to feel like that. Jesus can empathise with you. He can truly understand the way that you feel.

For he himself was in that very place. He experienced it himself. And he has not forgotten that experience. He has not forgotten how he was so affected emotionally when he looked around him and saw the hardness of heart among the people.

He was angry and grieved with them because of the hardness of their heart. Christless soul here today, do you understand that Jesus is emotionally affected with your continued resistance to his grace and to his salvation.

He is emotionally affected, even today, in glory. He is emotionally affected by your resistance to his grace, to his mercy, to his work on the cross of Golgotha, to his work when he met with the curse of death what your sins and mine deserved.

He met with that curse of death in his own body on the tree or on the cross. And how do you respond to that?

[ 18 : 46 ] With a hardness of heart? With a hardness of heart. Well, not only is the Christian body here affected by the hardness of your heart, but Jesus is affected by the hardness of your heart.

The story is told of a great Welsh preacher in the olden days, and he went with his horse to the blacksmith to put a new horse shoe on the animal.

And as he approached the blacksmith shop, as the blacksmith was banging on the anvil, he could hear the howling of the blacksmith's dog. And when he got there, he realised that the dog was in fear of the banging of the anvil.

However, after many months, he returned to the blacksmith. And he heard the banging of the blacksmith on the anvil, but when he went into the room, the dog was lying beside the anvil, fast asleep.

That is the way it is when we get so familiar with the gospel that through time, it begins to affect us less and less. You see, the dog had got accustomed.

[ 20 : 09 ] He got familiar with the banging of the anvil. And soon, where is he? Beside the anvil, fast asleep. And it is in a similar way.

Familiarity with the gospel truly brings contempt. As the same goes, familiarity brings contempt. And we are told that most conversions take place when people are young.

Of course, God is sovereign. One can be converted at any age. But we are told that most conversions take place when people are young. And the reason is that as we grow older, and as we grow more familiar with the gospel, it has less of an effect upon us.

Jesus was aware of the condition of their heart and their motive had been present that day. He knew that their hearts were hardened against him and he said to the man with the without hand, stretch out your hand.

hand. Jesus commands us to do what for this man was physically impossible. Jesus commands to do what for this man was physically impossible.

[ 21 : 27 ] He just could not do it. He could not stretch out his hand. The man knew that he could not stretch out his hand. For many years, every day, he had looked at his withered hand.

The hand had become such a great hindrance for him, holding him back on so many things. And now, here is Jesus and commands him to do what the man sounds impossible.

You can imagine this man thinking within himself, how can I stretch out my hand? It is impossible. For years, I've been going around with this withered hand.

For years, I've been attending the synagogue with this withered hand. This is impossible. Perhaps the reality of your sins is a great hindrance for you.

Perhaps it is holding you back from salvation. Jesus says, believe the gospel, which says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

[ 22 : 36 ] Jesus says, believe. Believe. But you're saying today, how can I believe? How can I believe?

It is impossible. I am dead in trespasses and sin. my hand is withered. It is dead. How can I stretch it out?

This man would have been well aware of those who were around him. He would have known about the rules and regulations regarding the Sabbath and in this tense situation with the scribes and the Pharisees watching.

He might have concluded to himself, not today, Lord. Leave it today. I hear your command. I hear it quite clearly. Stretch out your hand.

But leave it today, Lord. Leave it till tomorrow. How those around us can sometimes, you know, instill fear in us. Tempting for us to postpone, delay, defer, and suspend that which for us is the most needful thing of all, salvation.

[ 23 : 50 ] to be reconciled to God, to be at peace with God. For our man here, what was more needful to please the scribes and Pharisees than to receive the healing that he required?

To obey man-made laws than to be healed? What is more needful for yourself today? To please man than to receive salvation. To obey man's rules and regulations.

You must be this and that then to receive the salvation of your soul. The Bible tells that Jesus came not to call the righteous, but he came to call sinners to repentance.

Maybe you're saying to yourself today, well, I must be this and I must be that. I must do this and I must do that before I can come and accept the salvation that Jesus offers.

What Jesus says to you today is, as he said to this man, stretch out your hand. What is impossible for you is possible with God.

[ 24 : 58 ] Our man knew that he needed to be healed and he probably heard how Jesus had the power to heal but could be tempted into thinking, leave this matter until tomorrow or till another day.

Today you know that you need salvation. You know that you need to be saved from your sin. You know that the only way to be saved from hell is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that the only way to receive salvation, to be reconciled to God and to have peace with God is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that you need to be reconciled to God. You know that the only way to be saved from what your sins deserve is by believing and trusting and committing yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how often the devil whispers into your mind, leave it until tomorrow or some other time. Today is not really a convenient time but Jesus says to the man, stretch out your hand.

[ 26 : 08 ] He says, it must be today. Jesus says to us, today is the day of salvation. The gospel is always presented to you in terms of today and now.

No true gospel preacher would say to you, well put off your salvation until tomorrow or next week or next month or perhaps next year. No. The gospel is always in terms of now and today.

Now is the accepted time. today is the day of salvation. Jesus said to this man, stretch out your hand, stretch it out today, not tomorrow or next week or next year but stretch it out now.

Stretch out your hand. And this man knew that he needed the healing that Jesus was offering to him that day. No one needed to tell him. He knew it himself too well. He knew his great need.

And today friend, you know that you are a sinner and that you are a sinner in need of that salvation that the gospel is offering to you.

[ 27 : 19 ] That salvation that was worked out by Jesus on the cross of Golgotha where he died and met with the curse of death, where he met with what sin deserves in his own body on the cross.

You know all that. And you know that you need that salvation, the salvation that Jesus is offering you today through the gospel. And Jesus is saying to you today, stretch out your hand.

Believe in me. Commit yourself to me. Trust in me. What was this man's response? How did this man respond?

He stretched it out. He stretched out his hand and his hand was restored. A miracle occurs without Jesus even touching him.

For in the very act of calling is the healing. There are times when Jesus touched people in order to heal them. But in this incident we see he didn't touch the hand.

[ 28 : 23 ] He didn't touch the man. He just spoke the word. Stretch out your hand. And the man responded by lifting his hand and stretching it out.

His response was in accordance to the command that was given to him. Stretch out your hand. You see the word of God brings life and healing.

The word of the Lord at that time to this man brought life and healing. man. But along with the word was man's responsibility.

Was man's responsibility. This man was responsible for stretching out his hand. No one could do this for him.

But in obedience to the word that he received, in obedience to the call, what was impossible became possible. So it is with the call of the gospel.

[ 29 : 31 ] You say I cannot believe. It is impossible. But the impossibility is attached to the fact that you are unwilling to believe.

You are not obedient to the word that says believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. This man was willing to obey the command to stretch out his hand.

And in the very act of obedience to the word came the healing. That was his responsibility. And that is your responsibility today.

You have a responsibility under the word of God today. You have a responsibility to be obedient to the word of God which says believe, commit, trust yourself to Christ and be saved.

And you're saying, yeah, that's impossible. I cannot do that. Well, the reason is your own unwillingness to do it.

[ 30 : 44 ] Don't blame Jesus for it. Don't blame the preacher for it. Don't blame the elders and the deacons for it. Don't blame any Christian for it. It is your unwillingness that is the crux of the matter.

Your unwillingness to believe and commit yourself. Jesus was one day coming to Jerusalem and he could see Jerusalem in the distance. And you know, he wept over Jerusalem.

And on that day he said, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks. how often he says, I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks.

What was the problem? But you would not. The problem was their unwillingness to accept Jesus.

And how often Jesus would accept you, but the problem is your unwillingness to accept Jesus.

It's not any unwillingness on the part of Jesus to accept you, but it's the unwillingness on your part to accept Jesus. Oh, let us learn this lesson, this vital lesson from the response of this man, who upon the command of Jesus, stretch out your hand, lifted his hand, and his hand was restored.

[ 32 : 10 ] He acted on his responsibility. And my dear friend, would not be good today, if you also acted on your responsibility and you trusted and committed your life to Jesus.

We see the response of the Pharisees and the scribes were the very opposite. They joined themselves to the Herodians to try and find fault and find a charge against Jesus.

God to us. We find these different responses towards the gospel of Jesus Christ today. Well, what is your own response to the gospel?

What is your own response to the grace of God through Jesus Christ? Christ? Is it that of the man with the word of hand, a willingness and obedience to the word of grace?

Or is it the response of the Pharisees, one of disobedience and rejection? today you are responding to the word of God. Let me remind you of that today, if you need reminding.

[ 33 : 20 ] You are responding to the word of God today. You are responding to the overtures of grace today. You are either accepting it or you are rejecting it.

No one leaves this building today without having responded to the gospel one way or another.

Nobody will go home today without having responded to the overtures of grace in the gospel.

You have either accepted it or you have rejected it. One or the other is no middle ground. You have your foot in one camp among those who have accepted the overtures of the gospel and committed themselves to Jesus Christ or you are in the other camp, those who have rejected the gospel on the way to destruction.

You are either on the way to heaven or on the way to hell. There is no middle ground. What is your response to the gospel? What is your response to the overtures of the gospel?

My friend, let nothing become a stumbling block to you to come and to accept the gospel of salvation. You see, the Pharisees and the scribes, they were the religious people of those days.

[ 34 : 41 ] And maybe they could have become a stumbling block to this man or see him and see her and see so and so. And sometimes these things can become a stumbling block to us.

But let nothing become a stumbling block to you. Your salvation is a matter between you and Jesus Christ. Not a matter between you and someone else and Jesus Christ.

No, you're alone in this matter. And your response to the gospel today is your own. Your own. Not what your wife does or what your husband does or what your sister does or what your brother does or what your friends do or what your co-workers do.

It is a matter between you and God. A matter between you and Jesus Christ. Well, what is your response to the gospel today?

Is it acceptance or is it rejection? You will have to respond. You will respond. And it's not a question of, well, I'll think about it.

[ 35 : 49 ] No. You are responding. You're either hardening your heart or you're giving your heart to Jesus. Well, what is it? I don't know.

Nobody here in the church knows your heart, but one knows it, and that's Jesus Christ. And he knows how you have responded to the overture of the gospel today.

He knows. I don't. But he knows. What is it? What is it? Acceptance or rejection? Acceptance or rejection?

It's a great blessing to have the overture of the grace of God in the gospel presented to you. It's a great blessing. It's out of the kindness of God that you have the overture of the gospel presented to you.

But you know there's a day coming, and the day of the overture of the gospel being presented to you in this manner will be over. There'll be no more preaching. There'll be no more preaching.

[ 36 : 50 ] There'll be no more commands. There'll be no more invitation. Where will you be that day? Where will you be that day? Take hold of the opportunity that the Lord in his love and mercy is giving you today, and the overture of the grace of God through the gospel.

Accept. Accept. Well, what is your response? I leave you with that. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord, we give thanks for the gospel of salvation, salvation.

And we pray, O Lord, that as the overture of the grace of God is presented to us in the preaching of the gospel, that our response would be that of the man with the withered hand, that we would accept, that we would, O Lord, take that responsibility upon ourselves that thou has given to us to accept the salvation that is offered to us.

O Lord, we pray that thou would continue with us during the day, forgive us for our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. We shall conclude our service by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 146 on page 446.

Psalm 146 on page 446 at verse 5. At the top of the page. O happy is that man and blessed whom Jacob's God doth aid, who so upon the Lord doth rest, and whom his God is stayed, who made the earth and heavens and heaven's high, who made the dwelling deep, and all that is within the same, who truth doth ever keep.

[ 38 : 27 ] And we shall sing down to the verse marked 8, that is verse 5 to 8 of Psalm 146, which you'll find on page 446. We'll sing these verses to the Lord's praise.

O happy is that man and blessed whom Jacob's God doth aid. O happy is that man and blessed love is that heaven's JENNIFER up the Lord and cookies all the Talks upon the Lord thing rise note on his line and Him all the SINGER steps on His God and His day, who made The earth and heavens my Who made the swelling deep And all that is within the sea

Who drew the heaven key Who righteous judgment executes For those oppressed not me Who to the hungry giveth who Offset the Christmas tree The Lord doth give the blindless sight The world doth raise The Lord doth give the love of those

That walk in the bright ways The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen Frsl algors