

# Answering The Call

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn back to the portion of Scripture that we read together in Mark's Gospel, chapter 3. Mark, chapter 3. And we want to consider some thoughts from the beginning of the chapter where Jesus heals the man with the withered hand.

And every time that the Gospel is preached, there's a call on all of us. And we will respond in one of two ways.

We can accept the call and respond to the call that's made upon us, or we can choose to reject it.

And very often, the danger is that we might have already made up our minds what we're going to do before we come to hear the Gospel.

Some will have come to church this morning with the desire that they will meet with Jesus, that they will hear Jesus speaking to them through the Gospel, because they're hungering for that.

And that's the attitude of heart that they have when they come to church. And there might be others who have determined within themselves that they're not going to hear anything that's going to change their lives in any way.

[ 1 : 33 ] Well, I hope you're not numbered amongst that latter company. But as we go through this passage, I hope that you'll be enlightened as to what company you belong to.

The first thing I want to consider is the hardened worshippers. Some people faithfully come to church, just as they did in Jesus' day, go to the synagogue.

And they faithfully keep the Sabbath day. But they do so not to worship God, but to justify themselves.

They want to worship God, because they want to worship God.

I don't really have any interest in hearing what he has to say to me. Now, nobody who comes to church would readily admit that they find fault with Jesus.

[ 3 : 02 ] I don't think there are many, if any, that would dare say that they find fault with Jesus.

But in reality, if you reject the message of the gospel, that's what you're doing. You're finding fault with Jesus.

Because what's being preached is the gospel of Jesus Christ. So if you've already chosen to reject that message, you're rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not my message. I haven't made up what the Bible teaches. I haven't come with my own program.

I'm just simply coming to open up what we have already got revealed to us in God's Word. Now, Jesus came into this world to do good.

[ 4 : 03 ] And this is the challenge that he puts to the Pharisees. Was it lawful to do good or bad, to kill or to save on the Sabbath day?

Well, the people in the synagogue there, the Pharisees who found fault with Jesus, they remained silent.

But just because they remained silent and wouldn't voice their opinion, doesn't mean to say that they're not guilty of finding fault with Jesus.

And the same with yourselves. You might not openly go against anything that you've heard being proclaimed from the Word of God down through the years.

But that doesn't mean to say that you're not guilty. Because unless you're accepting the message, and unless you're a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you're actually rejecting the message.

[ 5 : 08 ] And you're rejecting the one who gives us this message. In verse 4 here we read, 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. But their silence doesn't excuse them, as I said. How does Jesus feel towards those who come to the place of worship as these Pharisees came?

Now, I'm quite sure they would have been in the synagogue every Sabbath day. If anybody was missing, it certainly wouldn't have been the Pharisees.

Because that was one of the things that they insisted on. That they would be in the means of grace at the times that were appointed.

They were meticulous in not just trying to keep the laws of the Old Testament, but the laws that they themselves had made up, in their own opinion, to protect the laws of the Old Testament.

[ 6 : 17 ] So if anybody was going to be missing, it wasn't going to be them. They were very diligent in their attendance upon the means of grace. But Jesus sees their hearts.

He's not looking at the outward appearance. These Pharisees were very moral, upright people. People that you would love to have as your neighbor. Because they wouldn't deliberately do anything that would harm anyone.

They were meticulous in seeking to be as upright and as righteous as they possibly could. But it's not what we appear to be outwardly that's important.

It's what we are in our hearts. Because Jesus is looking to our hearts. So when he looked around, we read in verse 5, he looked at them in anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.

It grieved him that they were so hard in their hearts. He wasn't impressed with their outward religious piety.

[ 7 : 28 ] He was looking deeper than that. And he's not impressed with our outward religious piety, if that's all we have. He's looking to see what's in our hearts.

What's the real motive for bringing us to the place of worship? And what is it that we desire often? And are we desiring his help so that we might do good?

Or are we just wanting to make ourselves appear to be good? Well, Jesus is in this church today, and he's looking at every one of us.

And he's not looking at us outwardly, he's looking at us inwardly. He's looking into our hearts. And even although we might remain silent, and have never spoken against him to anyone, unless we're willing to accept him and to follow him, we're actually rejecting him.

And it doesn't really matter what we hear in church, because we're not going to give obedience to it in any case. We've already made up our minds before we came to church that we're not going to hear anything that's going to change the way that we live our lives, because we don't want to change our lives.

[ 8 : 48 ] And that's how some of you may have come to church today. Now, he's looking, we read there, in anger.

But what kind of anger was it? Was he wanting to destroy them? Well, that's not the kind of anger that he had towards them.

He had an anger because of their hardness of heart. Because he sees that the Sabbath that was created for their good, they have turned it unto their God.

And it has hardened their hearts, because they're now serving this God that they thought was the true God. And they've idolized the Sabbath day.

And he tells them, I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath wasn't for the purpose of you serving the Sabbath.

[ 9 : 56 ] The Sabbath is to serve you. It's for your benefit. And it's to serve your good. He didn't give it to us to spoil our fun.

He gave us the Lord's day in order that we might experience true joy. And that's what the true worshiper in here will experience today.

He will experience joy under the teaching of God's word. He's hungering to hear from God what the Lord will say to him.

And as he discerns the Lord speaking to him or her, whoever the person might be, it fills his heart with joy.

He didn't come here to fulfill an obligation. It's not because he feels that he has to come to church, that the Christian comes to church. He comes to church because he wants to come to church.

[ 10 : 58 ] He comes to church because he wants to hear what God has to say to him. Because he knows that that's the only thing that's going to give true joy and true satisfaction to his heart.

And he appreciates the goodness of God. But the person who hasn't come with that attitude doesn't really believe that God has anything good to give to him.

Or to her. Have we come here to have communion with God and receive more life into our souls?

Or do we find that the truth is actually killing us and spoiling us and spoiling the fun that we want to really have?

Now notice that Jesus didn't speak a word to the Pharisees. And that's exactly how they will leave the church or the synagogue in their case.

[12:12] They will have left as they came. They haven't heard God speaking to them. And they'll go home.

And if you were to ask them, what did you hear today? They will probably struggle to tell you what the passage that was preached on actually was.

Because they didn't really pay that much attention. They had decided before they came that there was going to be nothing there for them. And they haven't bothered to try and retain what was said to see if there was anything there for them.

They didn't really want to come and hear God. And they didn't hear God. Because God doesn't speak to those who don't want to hear Him.

Jesus didn't speak to the Pharisees. Because He knew that they didn't really want to hear what He had to say to them. But it's better for us all if we hear what Jesus has to say to us and respond to the call.

[13:27] And ask ourselves, is that applicable to my life? And what am I doing in order that I might receive Jesus as my Savior?

Am I willing to receive Him as my Savior? Is that why I come to church? Because He is my Savior? Or because I want Him to become my Savior?

Well, you might have, as I said, dug your heels in by this stage and decided, I'm not going to hear any more of this. So you'll shut your mind off and you'll start thinking about whatever you want to do throughout the week.

And you'll allow Satan to lead you astray from the purpose for which people come to church. And you'll be planning what you're going to do when you go home, what you're going to eat, what your dinner is, planning what you're going to do for the rest of the day, what you're going to do throughout the week, and so forth.

Because you don't want to hear what the Lord has to say to you. But there will come a day and you will hear Him. And what you will hear then is, Depart from Me, for I never knew you.

[14:46] Depart into the fire that's been prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, although we read here that Jesus, when He looked round at them with anger, we read that He was angry because of their hardness of heart.

And His anger, as I said, wasn't the kind of anger, I hate you and I want to destroy you. No, His anger was that He was saddened. That that's the attitude that they had come to the synagogue in. That they had come seeking to find fault with Him and with His message. And that they didn't realize that they needed forgiveness just as surely as everybody else that gathered in that synagogue.

And He was saddened. He was grieved, we read, because of their hardness of heart. Because Jesus didn't come into this world to spoil our fun.

He didn't come to do evil. He didn't come to condemn us. If He wanted to do that, we would be in hell already. No, we're told that Jesus came into this world to save sinners.

[16:07] Why? Because He loved sinners. And He wants us to be saved so that we will go to heaven rather than continue in the hardness of our hearts and go to hell.

Well, the third thing I want to consider is answering the call. And we want to look at that by looking at the man with the withered hand.

Jesus tells him, come here. And He comes forward. And He was smart enough to answer the call. He didn't ignore Jesus when he heard Jesus telling him to come here. He simply obeyed. And when Jesus told him, stretch forth your hand, the man's hand was paralyzed.

it was disabled. And Jesus tells him, stretch forth your hand. Well, you would say that's impossible for the man to do.

[17:15] But that was the call that Jesus called him with. Because, you see, Jesus didn't come to tell us to do what we can do ourselves.

He came to help us to do what's impossible for us to do. And we read that the man stretched out his hand and it was restored.

What happened? Well, what happened was that he just answered the call. Because he came willing. He didn't have to be able to move his hand. He just had to be willing to do what Jesus told him to do. He didn't heal his hand, first of all, and then stretch it forth.

It was by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that he was able to stretch it forth. And in stretching it forth, he was healed.

[ 18 : 24 ] because it was grace that moved his hand. And it was grace that restored it. Because he just simply accepted that Jesus had the ability to heal him.

He trusted Jesus. And what's impossible for us to do is possible for Jesus. And that's what happened in all of the miracles.

miracles. He didn't come to heal people of the common cold or things that can be healed by doctors. Look at all the miracles.

All the miracles deal with things that man couldn't possibly do. He got people that were paralyzed to walk. Man can't do that.

Got this person who had a withered hand to stretch it forth. Got people that were blind to see. Got people that were deaf to hear.

[ 19 : 30 ] He was doing what was impossible for man to do for himself or for others to do for them. So that we might learn that we need to come to Jesus because naturally we don't see him.

We're spiritually blind, all of us. Naturally we're spiritually deaf, as I was speaking of those who are hardened in their hearts. They don't hear God speaking.

We're spiritually deaf. We're spiritually lame. We can't walk in the ways of God. We're impotent to do anything that God requires us to do.

We've got withered hands. We can't do anything that's going to satisfy God. God. But Jesus can do for us what we can't do for ourselves.

And that's what we see being brought before us in this example. That's what we see being brought before us in every example of every miracle that Jesus performed.

[ 20 : 37 ] It's the gospel preached visibly. So that if we don't understand it, we can see it in a picture. It couldn't be more simple than we have it given to us in the gospels that have been written for us.

And this is what he wants us to understand from this miracle. Now this man could easily have said to Jesus when he told him to stretch forth his hand, can you not see that my hand is withered?

I can't move it. he could have said heal it first and then I'll stretch it forth. And this is the argument that many will use. Well, I can't do anything.

I believe in the elect and I can't save myself. There's nothing I can do to save myself. I believe in God's sovereignty.

And they believe that that's a justifiable excuse. Just as if this man had said to him, I can't stretch it forth because you'll have to heal it first.

[ 21 : 50 ] well, God has done everything that's necessary for our salvation. But this is something that he cannot and will not do for us.

And it's hard to imagine that God cannot do something. Well, he cannot believe on our behalf. We have to do that for ourselves. And he cannot obey on our behalf.

We have to obey for ourselves. and that's simply what this man did. He believed and he obeyed. And that's what he requires of everybody that's been saved.

It's as simple as that. You just have to believe and obey that he's able to do what you need done for you.

And that's what we see this man did. You see, Jesus came down from heaven to earth. He came from God to manhood.

[ 22 : 55 ] He came to die the death that we deserve to die in order that our sins could be forgiven. And that's what he wants us to understand.

That's the picture that's being presented to us in this miracle. I can do for you what you cannot do for yourselves.

And regardless of what infirmities that we might feel that we have, then there is no infirmity that he cannot deal with.

First of all, it makes clear to us miracles. And it convinces us that we cannot heal ourselves. But secondly, it makes clear to us that Jesus can.

The only time that it's recorded of Jesus that he couldn't perform any miracles was because the people would not believe in him.

[ 24 : 14 ] Because the only terms on which we can be saved is to recognize our own inabilities and to recognize his ability and to stop trying to do things ourselves thinking that that's going to earn God's favor and to trust in what God has done on our behalf.

God's love. Because that's the only thing that will justify us. That we trust in his righteousness rather than trust in our own righteousness.

righteousness. And we ought to praise the Lord that it was sinners that he came into this world to save. Because we all fall into that category regardless of who we are.

Regardless of how pious we may have appeared from childhood. Regardless of how obedient we may have been to our parents, to our teachers, to our employers.

regardless of how diligent we've been in attending church all of our lives, none of these things will earn any merit before God because the standard God requires is far higher than the highest standard that we could ever achieve.

[ 25 : 44 ] Thankfully, it was sinners he came to save. And we don't need to be notorious criminals. We don't need to be junkies or alcoholics in order to realise that we need help.

We can just be ordinary people who have never outwardly done anything wrong in our lives. others. But we must recognise that regardless of who we are or what we've done, that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost.

No sinner is too great a sinner for him to be able to save them. And no self-righteous religious people are outwith the bounds of possibility to recognise that their own works can't save them.

And recognise that their sinners are just as surely as the most notorious in the world. And there's only one saviour that we can come to. And that's the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I could ask the question that I started out with, why did you come to church today? Did you come to hear what God speaks to us through his word?

[ 27 : 12 ] Or did you come to appease your own conscience, determined that you weren't going to hear anything that was going to change your lives? And are you going to leave the church as you came to it?

Well, the one that came with the right attitude, the Christian who came hungry, to have his appetite satisfied, and the person who came thirsting to have his thirst quenched, will go away with some joy in his heart.

But the person who came to justify himself, to appease his own conscience, will have remained unchanged, and Jesus is sad, and he's angry, because of the hardness of your heart, because you are not willing to respond to his call, because as I said at the outset, he's calling us all.

It doesn't matter who we are, man, woman, or child, he's calling everybody that hears the gospel, and he's requiring that you respond to it, and that you respond to it in an appropriate manner, recognizing rather that you need the Jesus that the gospel is proclaiming, recognizing that we've all sinned, and come short of his glory, and recognizing that if you die as you are, you are going to hell, because that's where you deserve to go, and recognizing that the reason that Jesus came was to prevent us from going to hell.

He came to save us, to assure us that when we die, we will go to heaven. You make the choice by whatever you decide on how you're going to respond to the message.

[ 29 : 24 ] You're making the choice of whether you want to go to heaven or hell by the way that you deal with the call that Jesus is laying upon your hearts.

Well, may God grant that he would make us all wise to his salvation, and that we would accept him and follow him, and give obedience to him.

Amen. our gracious God, we come before you this morning, knowing and recognizing that all of us have come to church not knowing what might have lain ahead of us.

But we pray, O Lord, that as we heard your gospel being proclaimed, that it would lay hold of our hearts. And regardless of who we are, whether we've already received Christ as our saviour, or whether we have still to receive him, help us, O Lord, that we would continually respond to the claim that you make over our lives, because we're accountable to you, all of us.

Help us by giving us the grace to give obedience to you, and help us that we would throw ourselves wholly upon your mercy, not thinking that we can do anything to earn your favour, but willingly accepting that you have come to show us favour, and that you have come to bless us whilst we're

still here on mercy's ground.

[ 31 : 08 ] Lord, help us that we would indeed have received your blessing this morning, and have mercy upon us for our shortcomings. For we ask it in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 22, on page 228. Psalm 22, page 228.

And we're going to sing from verse 22. I will show forth thy name unto those that my brethren are. Amidst the congregation thy praise I will declare. Praise ye the Lord, who do and fear him. Glorify all ye, the seed of Jacob. Fear him all, that Israel's children be.

for he despised not, nor abhorred the afflicted's misery, nor from him hid his face, but heard when he to him did cry.

[ 32 : 13 ] These three verses from Psalm 22. I will show forth thy name unto those that my brethren are. I will show forth devise congregation I praise I will declare this year the Lord will fill and glorify all ye mercy don't take a fear him all that his best children be for it is

Christ not afford the afflicted misery nor from him hid his face but hurt when he to him did cry now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen