

JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH A SHRIVELED HAND

Luke 6:6-11

Key Verse: 6:10

He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored.

Let me begin by asking you a question. Suppose you feel a lump in your body that bothers you as it might be malignant. But it is located in a very awkward and embarrassing place. Would you share this with your friends on Facebook? Perhaps not, but I hope you will share it with your doctor. In today's passage Jesus heals a man whose right hand was shriveled. It was on the Sabbath day and some religious leaders were watching him, hoping he would heal the man so that they could accuse him of violating the Sabbath law. But Jesus healed him anyway. Jesus wants to save a person's life on any day of the week. Jesus wants us to come to him by faith so that our shriveled hands may be healed.

First, man with a shriveled hand (6). Look at verse 6. *"On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled."* This event occurred sometime after the Pharisees criticized Jesus for violating the Sabbath law. His disciples had picked some kernels of grain to eat them. The Pharisees viewed that as "working" on the Sabbath day. Jesus taught them that the law should be practiced with love and compassion. Then he declared that he is the Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is the Creator God who created the universe and designated the Sabbath so that we can come to him and find rest in him. We should have Jesus at the center of our worship as well as our lives. May God help us to keep the Sabbath holy by actively worshipping our Lord Jesus!

On another Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue to attend the worship service. Jesus remembered the Sabbath by keeping it holy. But he was not like a guest sitting passively in the back of the synagogue. Rather, he actively participated in the worship service. How? Verse 6 says that he was teaching the word of God. Jesus taught the word of God in season and out of season. He taught the word of God early in the morning, during the day and late into the night. He taught the word of God in people's homes, in synagogues, and at beachside and mountainside. People were more interested in his healing than teaching, but Jesus made it clear that his primary mission was to preach the word of God so that their sin-sick souls could be healed. The word of God is the word of life!

As he was teaching, he noticed that a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. This man had a serious problem in life. He could not use his right hand because it was shriveled. Most of our daily tasks in life requires the use of both hands. We need both hands to put on our pants and tie our shoelaces. We need both hands to rake the leaves in fall and shovel the snow in winter. This man could not play baseball or basketball very well. As a child, he was self-conscious of his handicap to the point that he did not want to go to school, because some cruel children would pick on him. He

formed the habit of trying to hide his shriveled hand in his pocket. Because of his handicap, he could not function as a normal person. His job opportunities were severely limited. No one wanted to marry him. Despair and hopelessness made his life miserable.

One day, this man heard the good news about Jesus of Nazareth. They said that Jesus healed many sick people, including a man with leprosy. His heart melted when he heard what Jesus had said to the leper—"I am willing. Be clean!" Then he heard that Jesus came to his town. A beam of hope shined into his heart. He couldn't wait for the Sabbath day. He knew Jesus would be at the worship service. So he came to the synagogue and sat down in one of the corners. He was sitting quietly hoping and praying that Jesus would take notice of him. Then it happened. Jesus saw him. Their eyes met together, and he knew instantly that Jesus would help him. His heart began to beat fast with excitement and expectation.

Second, "Which is lawful, to save life or to destroy it?" (7-9) Look at verse 7. *The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.* The religious leaders watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath. Now this is a remarkable statement. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law had no doubt in their minds that Jesus could heal the man with a shriveled hand -- something that their medical doctors could not do. It means they knew in their hearts that Jesus was someone special—someone from God with the power to heal the sick. If they were humble, if they were honest, knowing this fact alone would have helped them to see Jesus and realize that he was the Messiah sent by God according to his promise. But the religious leaders were anything but humble. Their hearts were not pure. They were stubborn. They were only looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, treating him as their enemy. It was a tragedy! Let me ask you a question. What do you think the religious leaders learned from Jesus' teaching on that day? We do not know the content of Jesus' teaching, but I can say with certainty that they didn't learn anything (11). Jesus was the best teacher of the word of God. His sermons were the best sermons. Many people were deeply moved when they heard Jesus' preaching. But not the Pharisees. They heard the same precious words coming from the mouth of Jesus, but their hearts were not moved. What was the difference? Their hearts were not prepared to hear Jesus. They had no listening ears. No matter how inspiring a sermon may be, if the listener's heart is hard like a concrete slab, the word of God cannot be planted in him. The Pharisees were there when Jesus was teaching, but their minds were busy, trying to catch him with something to accuse him of. We learn that we should ask God to help us to open our hearts to hear him as we listen to the word of God. If you come to Sunday worship service, but your mind is not ready or if you only try to catch something wrong about Sunday message, you will miss the precious word of God that God wants you to hear. God wants to bless us with the word of life. It is important for us to come to him with a humble heart and listening ears.

Tragically, the Pharisees didn't care about the word of God. Neither did they care about the poor man who was suffering with his handicap. The only thing they cared about was catching Jesus. Their hearts were evil. They were wolves in the priestly garments. What could Jesus do in this situation? Look at verse 8. *But Jesus knew what*

they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there. Jesus knew what they were thinking. Our Lord knows what was in their hearts. Jesus knows what we are thinking too. We can hide a lot of things from other people. But we can never hide anything from Jesus. If we think Jesus does not know what we did last night, just because we did it in secrecy, we are badly mistaken. He knows all about it and he cares about it.

Jesus knew that the religious leaders were planning something sinister. This was a critical moment for him. He had compassion on the man with a shriveled hand. He wanted to help him. But the Pharisees were watching him closely. He knew that as soon as he healed the man, they would accuse him of violating the Sabbath law and attack him publicly. They would eventually bring charges against him before the Jewish and Roman authorities and have him executed. Now if Jesus wanted to avoid the confrontation with the Pharisees, he could have done so easily. After all, the man’s life was not at stake at the moment. He had lived with his shriveled hand for many years. He could certainly wait till the evening time when the Sabbath would be over. Or Jesus could have taken the man to a private room and healed him quietly. But what did Jesus decide to do? Knowing what the Pharisees were thinking, Jesus said to the man, *“Get up and stand in front of everyone”* (8). Jesus asked the man to be at the center of everyone’s attention. Jesus decided to do more than healing the man. He wanted to teach everyone, especially the religious leaders about the true meaning of Sabbath and what God expects from us as we worship him on the Sabbath. Healing the man on the Sabbath was a risky move for himself, but Jesus wanted to teach everyone about the heart of God.

Look at verse 9. *Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”* Jesus challenged the Pharisees for their legalistic attitudes by asking a direct question: “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” If they had a minimum of honesty and sincerity, they could answer Jesus only one way, that is, it is lawful to do good and to save life. But the Pharisees didn’t have the decency to tell the truth. According to Mark’s gospel, they remained silent (Mk 3:4). They were thinking about killing in their hearts—killing of Jesus (Mk 3:6). They remained silent, because they did not want to admit their problem. Jesus pierced their consciences with the question, but they were unwilling to repent. They were like old wineskins.

Third, “Stretch out your hand” (10-11). What did Jesus do? Look at verse 10. *He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored.* Jesus restored the man’s hand, risking his own life. As the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus used his power and authority to save a poor man and make him whole. Praise Jesus!

Now let us think about this event from the man’s point of view. This man had come to Jesus with a hope that Jesus would heal him and give him a second chance in life. Jesus did not disappoint him on that regard. But there were two things that he had not expected from Jesus. Before the healing, Jesus first told him to “get up and stand in front of everyone.” This was not easy for this man to obey. He was a sensitive man

because of his shriveled hand. He tried very hard to hide his hand from people's eyes. But Jesus told him to get up and stand in front of everyone, exposing his weakness publicly. How embarrassing it was for him to stand before people with his shriveled hand hanging from his shoulder, like a scarecrow's arm! We can certainly understand his difficulty. It was hard for him to stand in front of everyone, while all of them were staring at him. It was especially scary to stand in front of the religious leaders. Nevertheless, he overcame his self-consciousness, got up and stood there in the middle of the room. This was an act of faith and obedience.

The next thing Jesus asked him to do was even more difficult to obey. Jesus told him to stretch out his hand—his shriveled hand. At this point, this man could have protested bitterly, saying, "Lord, it is one thing you asked me to get up and stand in front of everyone. I do have two healthy legs. But are you kidding to tell me to stretch out my hand? You know I cannot do that!" Of course, this man didn't say that. He knew Jesus wasn't kidding. He believed that Jesus asked him to do it, because he wanted to heal him.

There was a beautiful woman in Samaria with an embarrassing problem in her life. She had a lust problem toward men. She married five men but none of them satisfied her. So she divorced all of them. Now she was living with a boyfriend. Her townspeople treated her like a prostitute. One day she went to a well to draw water. A Jewish man was waiting for her. It was Jesus. He began to teach her the word of God, offering her living water welling up to eternal life. She began to open up her heart to God slowly through the 1:1 Bible study with Jesus. Then all of a sudden, Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." Taken aback, she replied, "I don't have my cellphone with me." Actually, she replied, "I have no husband." She didn't want to talk about the sore spot in her life. It was her shriveled hand. She didn't want to stretch it out. So why did Jesus ask her to do this? Why did he bring up the painful subject? It was not to embarrass her. It was to heal her deep wound. Jesus was like a surgeon who wanted to remove a tumor even though he knew it would be painful. He wanted her to stretch out her shriveled hand so that he could heal her and make her whole.

What did the man do when Jesus told him to stretch out his hand? He stretched out his shriveled hand in obedience to Jesus' words. This was an act of faith. By stretching out his hand before Jesus, he admitted that he needed help from Jesus. He no longer tried to hide his problem. With the courage that came from his faith in Jesus, he stretched out his shriveled hand. When he did so, his hand was completely restored. This is a great lesson for all of us. Each of us has a shriveled hand. You may say, "No, both my hands are strong and beautiful." Well, I am talking about our sin problem. Somewhere in our life, we have a problem which we don't want to expose because it is embarrassing. We feel lucky because no one knows about it. But Jesus knows about it. He wants us to come clean before him so that he may heal us. He says, "Stretch out your hand!" He is willing to heal us, forgive us, and make us whole. What a liberating moment it is when we know that our sins are forgiven! We don't have to suffer from guilty feelings. We don't have to let the sin problem come between God and us.

“Stretch out your hand”—these words of Christ were spoken to the man with a shriveled hand. But they were applicable to all of them, including the Pharisees. They also had a shriveled hand. They were proud and self-righteous. The problem was that they would not even admit their sin before God. As a result, they did not receive the wonderful healing from our Lord Jesus. Jesus had told them earlier in Luke 4:31-32: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” To stretch out our shriveled hand before Jesus means that we admit we are sick. We recognize we cannot do anything about our sin. We need help from Jesus. When we come to him by faith, he is more than willing to cleanse us from all our sins and give us the gift of eternal life.

As a conclusion, let us read verse 10 together. *He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored.* Our embarrassing sin problem does not go away just because we hide it. Jesus wants us to bring it to him. He wants us to confess our sins. He is ready to forgive us all our sins (1Jn 1:9). May God help us to stretch out our shriveled hand so that Jesus may heal us and make us the new creation (2Co 5:17)!