**Withered Lives Restored**

Mark 3:1-6

Rev. Brian Bill

April 2-3, 2016

Did you hear about the Easter Egg Hunt that went south last weekend in Connecticut? The PEZ Candy company (I love that candy) sponsored an Easter Egg hunt but had to abruptly shut it down in the middle of it because parents were misbehaving. One headline captured the chaos: *“Adults swarm PEZ Easter egg hunt ‘like locusts,’ ruining it for kids.”* Many moms and dads were shoving and tackling kids as young as four-years-old in order to get more eggs. These same parents got mad at PEZ for cancelling it and took to social media to complain, while PEZ blames out-of-control parents for having to cancel it. I wonder how the children feel? It’s all a matter of perspective, isn’t it?

I love the perspective that children have on things. What a joy to see so many children attend our Rise Up With Jesus program during our Comeback Easter services. Suzy Crosby is doing a super job providing leadership for our nursery ministry and Sheila Kuriscak and her team really stepped it up for Easter. Children were able to hear from the perspective of a maid (played by Chasity Holmquist) cleaning up after the last supper, saw how Jesus suffered on the cross, they went into the empty tomb, they heard about the resurrection, and they received the gospel message from Marie Guyton. And at the end, they received eggs filled with candy...and no parents stole any though I’m sure some bags were pilfered out in the parking lot.

Perspective is important in almost everything. More than 1500 people attended our five services and 18 individuals raised their hands last weekend to indicate that they received Jesus Christ as their Savior. Many others rededicated their lives to Christ. The staff contacted over 50 Easter guests this past week. I loved hearing what one guest said to me when I called: *“The service was way more than I expected. My whole perspective on Christianity and what it means to follow Jesus has changed.”*

One’s perception and perspective is paramount. Let me illustrate by giving summaries of two actual news events.

* 4 people were killed in another part of the world last month
* A suicide bomber killed over 70 on Sunday

Now, here are these same stories from a different, more accurate perspective.

* 4 Bible translators were martyred in the Middle East
* A terrorist in Pakistan purposely targeted Christians on Easter Sunday, killing over 70 believers celebrating the resurrection.

If you want to learn more about how Christians are being persecuted around the world, visit Voice of the Martyrs at persecution.com.

Grab your Bibles because we’re going to approach our passage in Mark 3:1-6 from three different perspectives.

* First, from the view of a humble-hearted man.
* Second, through the lenses of some hard-hearted religious guys.
* Third, from the perspective of the holy heart of our Savior.

Please stand as I read our passage: ***“Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3And he said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Come here.’ 4And 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. 5And 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. 6The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.”***

I’m excited to be back in the Gospel of Mark. We took a break for our Christmas B.C. series and our Metaphors of the Messiah series. We’ll camp in this glorious book through the end of summer. Before we dive in, I want to let you know about two things.

* The deacons and pastoral team have been interviewing Kyle Parks for our Youth and Young Adults Pastor position. We are very excited about the possibilities and have invited him and his wife Liesl to Edgewood April 29 through May 2. We’ll let you know more as we move forward.
* John and Tiffany Markum and their children will be here next weekend. John was a pastor here for 5 years and is now the lead pastor for LifeCity Church in San Jose. I will be interviewing him in the weekend services. He’ll be teaching in Ignite on Sunday morning and then will be sharing more details next Sunday night at 6:00 p.m. There will be a luncheon for the Markum family next Sunday after the 10:45 service. Please sign up on our connection card.

As we turn to the third chapter of Mark, the tension has been building between the religious establishment and Jesus. In chapter two, they were angry because Jesus forgave a man’s sins, He ate supper with sinners, He refused to honor their rituals and He allowed His disciples to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath. The religious leaders are upset and are looking to trap Jesus in something. The Pharisees are not playing fair, you see (see what I did there?).

As we go through this passage, let’s ask ourselves this question: *“Is my heart humble, hard, or holy?”*

**1. A humble heart.** Let’s first view this incident through the eyes of a man with a lot of humility. He has a withered hand and a worshipping heart. While some commentators believe the Pharisees planted him in the synagogue to set Jesus up, it seems more likely that he was there on a regular basis. I see three things in him.

* **He was in the right place.** Verse 1 says that Jesus entered the synagogue, ***“and a man was there with a withered hand.”*** Even though he was going through a challenging time, that didn’t keep him from gathering with God’s people. That’s a good word for us. Our tendency when we go through trials is to pull away from God and from believers. That’s not good. What I’ve observed over the years is that when people unplug they tend to unravel.

The word ***“withered”*** means, *“to dry up and become paralyzed.”* This same word was used of a plant that had died. Luke tells us that it was his right hand, which means that he was not able to do any kind of physical labor. The Greek tells us that his hand had *become* withered, either through an accident or disease.

* **He obeyed.** Drop down to verse 3. Jesus said to him, ***“Come here.”*** The word ***“come”*** has the idea of motion; he got up and came to Jesus. Luke 6:8 includes additional detail: ***“‘Come and stand here.’ And he rose and stood there.”*** This literally means, *“Up! Rise into the middle.”* Jesus didn’t want anyone to miss what He was about to do. My guess is that he didn’t really want to stand up in the middle of everyone. He was probably self-conscious. And yet, maybe his heart was beating a bit faster as he wondered what Jesus was going to do for his withered hand. Maybe he was both embarrassed and excited. Have you ever felt like that? Almost everyone who gets baptized experiences both extremes. Jesus wants to put Himself on display in your life so He wants you to stand up and to stand out for Him.
* **He exhibited extreme faith.** In verse 5, Jesus said to the man, ***“Stretch out your hand.”*** I’m sure that wasn’t easy for him as he was no doubt accustomed to not using that hand. But this was a command of Jesus Christ and so we read next: ***“He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.”*** The word ***“restored”*** means, *“to be back again.”* This reminds me of the man who was an invalid in John 5:8-9: ***“Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.”***

*Is your heart humble today?*

**2. A hard heart.** We move now from the humble-hearted man to some hard-hearted men. Instead of being compassionate toward the man with the withered hand, they are looking for ways to clobber Christ. I see three things that hard-hearted people do.

* **They find fault in others.** Look at verse 2: ***“And they watched Jesus, to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.”*** The word ***“watched”*** has the idea of being extremely attentive and the tense tells us that they *“kept on watching, by the side of.”* These guys, unlike back-row Baptists, always sat in the front seats so everyone could see them. The front row seats were the seats of honor. The picture is of them watching His every move and listening attentively to everything He said.

Have you ever known someone who loves to play, *“Gotcha”* with you? As soon as you say or do something wrong they say, *“Aha. I caught you.”* It’s like Roz from Monsters, Inc. who says to Mike, *“I’m watching you, Wazowski. Always watching. Always.”* We see this in Luke 11:53-54: ***“The scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.”***

Notice that they aim to ***“accuse”*** or condemn Jesus. They wanted to bring a formal charge against Him. Specifically, they are looking for Him to do something that would break the Sabbath law and they are ready to serve as the required witnesses so He can be sentenced to death according to Deuteronomy 19:15. I’m reminded of Psalm 37:32: ***“The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.”*** What a contrast with the man with a withered hand. He came to worship while the wicked came to watch.

* **They won’t admit wrong.** Hard-hearted people find fault in others and won’t admit their own wrongdoing. Jesus turns the tables on them and asks a question that they refuse to answer in verse 4: ***“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”*** By asking if its ***“lawful,”*** Jesus is taking them back to the Bible, not their rules or rituals. He’s trying to get them to answer this out loud but they won’t do it because it will contradict their own teaching.In the parallel account in Matthew 12:11-12, Jesus expands the question which no doubt makes them very uncomfortable: ***“Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?  Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”***

In response to all this, Mark 3:4 says, ***“But they were silent,”*** which means, *“to be hushed or mute.”* It was used of the demons in Mark 1:25. Jesus shut the mouths of spirit beings and silenced human beings who attacked Him.

Friends, when we’re face-to-face with God, there is really nothing we can say to justify or explain ourselves, is there? I’m reminded of what Job said after questioning and complaining. After God speaks, Job responds by saying in Job 40:4-5: ***“Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”***

* **They get others to pile on.** After Jesus heals the man, verse 6 says, ***“The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.”*** Luke adds, ***“they were filled with fury.”*** Some background is helpful here. The Pharisees saw themselves as the religious role models and the spiritual gatekeepers of Israel. They resented the Romans ruling over them. But get this. They immediately huddle up with the Herodians, who were secular Jews who didn’t care at all about religion. They were loyal to one of Herod the Great’s sons, who was ruling in Galilee. They liked having the Romans in charge because they brought order.

This is crazy because these two groups had nothing in common. They hated each other. The word Pharisee means, *“separatist”* and yet they are willing to work closely with those whom they despise so they could destroy Jesus. They were on the opposite sides of every issue. But now they find common ground in their hatred of Jesus Christ. Maybe the Pharisees were thinking that since Herod put John the Baptist to death, the followers of Herod could figure out a way to kill Jesus. This hatred toward Christ continues today and explains why terrorist groups are targeting Christians.

Notice that they get together to ***“destroy him,”*** which means, *“to utterly do away with a person or thing.”* It’s ironic that Herod himself, after Jesus was born, according to Matthew 2:13 was ***“about to search for the child, to destroy him.”*** What Herod couldn’t do, the Herodians and Pharisees are intent to finish. Incidentally, this is Mark’s first explicit reference to the death of Jesus. There’s a lot of hypocrisy on display here. These guys are upset that Jesus healed on the Sabbath but they are plotting murder on the same day.

It’s dangerous to have a hard heart.

* If you’re not saved, every time you refuse to receive Christ, your heart gets more hardened. Psalm 95:8: ***“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts…”***
* If you’re saved and you no longer are grieved by sin, you can end up grieving the Holy Spirit as stated in Ephesians 4:30: ***“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*** Don’t let your conscience become calloused.

*Do you have a hard heart?*

**3. A holy heart.** We’ve observed a humble heart and we’ve also seen some hard hearts. Let’s look now at the holy heart of Jesus from verse 5. Three things jump out at me.

* **Jesus looks around.** We see this in the beginning of verse 5: ***“And He looked around at them…”*** This means that he looked around with a *“penetrating gaze.”* Can you imagine what this must have felt like to have Jesus gaze into your soul? [Demonstrate this] John 2:25 says, ***“…he himself knew what was in man.”*** So here’s a question. When Jesus looks at you, what does He see? I love 2 Chronicles 16:9: ***“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.”***
* **Jesus gets angry.** When Jesus looked around, He did so ***“with anger.”*** This word was used of sap rising in a tree as it builds and builds. It also means *“wrath.”* This is the only explicit reference to the anger of Jesus in the gospels, though we know He was angry on other occasions. It’s important to remember that in the gospels Jesus is never angry with sinners or tax collectors or prostitutes but rather his anger is unleashed on the legalistic leaders. To read more about this, see Matthew 23 where He pronounces seven woes upon the Scribes and Pharisees.

We don’t think enough about the wrath of God today. In Psalm 95:10 God says, ***“For forty years I loathed that generation and said, ‘They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.’ Therefore I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.”*** In Revelation 6:15-17, we see what lies ahead for the lost as they: ***“hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”*** Aren’t you glad that while Jesus gets angry, He doesn’t stay angry? We know that because the aorist tense is used, which shows that His anger is momentary.

* **Jesus gets grieved.** We see next that Jesus is ***“grieved.”*** Here we see the present tense, meaning that He is continually ***“grieving.”***  He feels pain and sorrow. Jesus is mad and He is sad; He is angry and He is afflicted. Isaiah 53:3 says that He is ***“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”*** In Matthew 23:37, Jesus is greatly grieved as He considers the hard hearts of those in Jerusalem: ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”*** And another occasion when Jerusalem comes into view, Luke 19:41 says that Jesus ***“wept over it.”***

Jesus laments because He loves people. This is captured clearly in Mark 10 when He challenges the rich young ruler to give up his idols and his self-righteous rule keeping. Check out verse 21: ***“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have…and come, follow me.”***

What is it that makes Jesus get angry and grieved? Listen. There’s something far worse than a withered hand; it’s a withered heart. To the Pharisees, the man with a withered hand was just a pawn; to Jesus He was a person made in the image of God. Their legalism had eroded their love leading them to have ***“hardness of heart.”*** This describes someone who willingly and repeatedly refuses to repent and receive Jesus Christ. The word ***“hardening”*** is a present process and literally means, *“callous and insensitive.”* It was used to describe marble. Hard hearts break Jesus’ heart. We can go all the way back to Genesis 6:6 to hear some shocking words from the Lord: ***“And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”***

So, what kind of heart do you have today? Do you have a humble heart? Is your heart hard? Is your heart growing in holiness? Here are a few ways to apply what we’ve learned today.

**Action Steps**

**1. We should be angry about sin.** The Bible says that we’re to be angry in a righteous kind of way. Ephesians 4:26 says, ***“Be angry and do not sin.”***  When you see a child abused you should be angry. When you hear about abortion it should make your mad. We should be angry about evil and how our culture is sliding south. There’s a place for holy indignation.

But we also need to be very careful. I like what Tim Challies says about righteous anger: “*Does God allow his people to express anger? Yes, he does. But only under these circumstances: You are reacting against actual sin, you are more concerned with the offense against God than the offense against yourself, and you are expressing your anger in ways consistent with Christian character.”*

And I would add that most of us could stand to be angrier about our own sins instead of covering them up or excusing them or cozying up to them.

**2. It’s even better to grieve greatly about sin.** I’ve been asking God to break me and make me weep more, especially for my own sins. It’s working because I cry all the time. I don’t want to just get mad; I also want to get sad about sin. Here’s a good prayer to pray: *“Lord, break my heart with the things that break your heart.”* Psalm 119:136: ***“My eyes shed streams of tears because people do not keep your law!”*** I long for the kind of heart Paul had for the lost as seen in Romans 9:2 and 10:1: ***“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart…My heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”***

**3. It’s important to work hard to keep your heart humble.** James 4:8: ***“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”***  Men, if you’ve not registered for Iron Sharpens Iron yet, can I encourage you to do so? God is looking for humble men, for tender warriors who will live on mission for Him, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our community and in the workplace. We’re hoping for 100 men to go on April 16 – 79 have already signed up!

**4. Remember what Jesus did for you.** As a way to change our perspective on everything, we’re going to end by celebrating communion. We see the wrath of God poured out on the cross and we also see His mercy. He’s a wrathful God because He is just and He grieves when people don’t believe because His merciful. God’s wrath is fully satisfied and His love is fully demonstrated. How can we have hard hearts when He’s done so much for us?

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 says, ***“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”***

I want to lead us in a guided time of prayer. Here are some questions to ponder as we prepare our hearts.

* What are you doing right now that grieves Jesus? Confess it before Him.
* Honestly assess what kind of heart you have – is it humble, hard or holy?
* As you look at the lost around you, ask God to give you tears for them. Pray this, *“God, break my heart with the things that break your heart.”*
* Let’s thank Him now for His sacrifice on the cross.

**Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26** – ***“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”***

**Table Manners**

* For believers only
* Don’t have to be a member
* Process of distribution

**Closing Song:** Let’s stand and sing “At the Cross: Love Ran Red”

**Membership – 10:45 Service** (Ed)