

**Christ's Power Displayed through the Man with the Withered Hand**

Mark 3:1-11

April 28, 2024 Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Good morning, everyone. This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the Gospel of Mark. So if you would take your Bibles out and turn with me to the second book in the New Testament, it's pretty easy to find, we're in the Gospel of Mark this morning. Well, as we're turning there, I want to begin our sermon by asking you a question this morning. I want to do a quick exercise with you and ask you to finish the following sentence for me, if you would. Jesus Christ came into the world to do what? That's a good answer. Just to meditate on it for a moment, the Son of God left heaven, and entered our world in time and space for what reason? I ask you that because I think if you would ask that to a group of people in Canada, you would get a lot of different answers. Some would say for example, "Jesus came in order to make me happy." That was His purpose in coming to earth. They would tell you, the Son of God left having lived among us to give me my best life now or something like that, right? Anybody met someone like that before? I think we all have in church life. Others would say He came to teach me and show me the way to enlightenment. That's what Jesus is to me. He's nothing more than a guru like Gandhi. Others would say I think Christ came to help me get sober and kick my addiction to drugs and alcohol because that's how I look at Him, Jesus is my divine therapist. Now we can go on and on with this. There's a lot of different answers as to what Jesus came to do in the world today.

But you guys just hit it right on the head when I first asked a question. You know, Jesus came to save sinners. If you want to quote John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."

But as I say that I want to ask you another question to go along with that. And it's this. Well, okay, if that's what Jesus came to do, how did the Jews respond when they first heard that? Have you ever wondered that before? What did the people of Israel do when Christ came offering life to them? Did they believe? Not exactly. Many of them rejected Him and to show you this, look in your Bibles at Mark 3:6 because there it says, after healing a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring against Him so as to how they might destroy Him. Not a very good reaction, is it? And it says earlier, they did this because in verse five, they had a hard heart. If you're wondering why they did that, it's because many of the people who first encountered Jesus were unconverted. They claimed to know God but didn't. They said they loved Him, but their souls were far away. But the good news is you're going to find out this morning is either way, it doesn't matter. It did not stop the Lord Jesus Christ. If He wanted to heal someone, He just healed them. Whether they acted that way or not. That's what you're going to find here because while it never actually says Jesus saves the man with a withered hand, it does say that He healed him while his enemies looked on and sneered, to show you that salvation or mercy is from the Lord. It doesn't depend on the man who wills the man who runs but on

God who has mercy. Amen? I mean, God is the one who cured this man, the Son of God is the one who delivered him, and the Son of God is the one who gets all the glory.

And aren't you glad that's true? Because so many of you were saved, amidst opposition like this, weren't you? Let's be honest. When you told the people in your life you wanted to become a Christian, how did they respond? Did they support you? No, a lot of them opposed you. They said that you can't do that because Christians are nuts. They're a bunch of crazy mind narrow minded bigots that look down their nose at everybody. But what did Jesus do? Save you anyway. Brought you straight to the cross. It didn't stop Him in the slightest. Others of you told your family you were thinking about converting to Christ and they went even further, they threatened you. They said, "If you do that, we won't have anything to do with you anymore. We're gonna throw you out in the street." How did Christ handle that? He did the same thing. In order to demonstrate nothing stands in His way. Your family doesn't stand in His way, your friends don't stand in His way, neither do their threats, He overcomes all of it.

And that's what we're going to read about in this passage in this passage, Jesus is going to overcome the resistance of some of the most powerful men in His day to help a poor anonymous sinner that you've never heard of before, and you're not going to hear about after this. After this story, he's going to completely disappear from the pages of history. But that's okay. The story is not about him anyway. The story's about Christ and what He came to do. And that's how we're going to approach it this morning by looking at some insights into this miracle. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline, it's a very simple one, in Mark 3 and the first couple of verses, we're going to look at several insights into the miracle Jesus does for the man with the withered hand. And we have to call him the man because we never get his name. He's completely anonymous.

And the first one is that Mark begins by telling you the where and the when of the miracle. So the first insight into this miracle that Christ does for this man with a withered hand, is he begins by telling you the where and the when of the miracle.

If you look at Mark 3:1, it tells you where this takes place when it says, "Jesus entered again into a synagogue." See that word there? A lot of synagogues in the Gospel of Mark. Mark mentions that term because that's the setting for the story. It occurs in a Jewish house of worship, which is something we've talked about before in this in this series.

But to do a quick review, if you remember, a synagogue is a place where the Jews would go to worship if they were outside the city of Jerusalem. If they were inside the city of Jerusalem, they would go to the temple. If they were in the capital city, they would go to the place where the priests were, but if they were someplace else, instead of making the long trip to the city, they would sit under the instruction of a religious figure called a rabbi, which is a term that means teacher. The way it worked is that if you had ten Jewish families living in a town, the leadership gave them permission to build their own assembly hall and hire a man called a rabbi to teach the Scriptures every week. And he would do it in places like

Capernaum and Nazareth and Cana and he would teach them in areas like Bethsaida, and Caesarea and Bethlehem. And in fact, in this passage, Mark doesn't tell us where the synagogue was located. I looked in the other gospels, I couldn't find where it was located. But the ancient historian Josephus said that there were 480 synagogues in Israel at this time. So it could have been any number of those. And many of them were under the influence of the Pharisees. The Sadducees ran the temple; that was kind of their territory. Pharisees watched over the synagogues; they trained up the rabbis, oftentimes. And that's what you'll find here.

Because if you go on to read the next few verses, it says, Jesus again entered into a synagogue," in some anonymous town, "and a man was there whose hand was withered. They" or the Pharisees, as you find out later in verse six, "were watching Him to see if He would heal on the Sabbath." And the reason I wanted to read that to you is because Mark is now telling you the *when* of the story, the *where* is the synagogue, The *when* is on the Sabbath.

And I need to stop and talk about that too because if you remember from last time, Deuteronomy five told the Jews observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and work, but on the seventh day, it says, cessation or Sabbath from it, which means for six days, the Jews are supposed to work, go about their business. On the Sabbath, seventh day, Saturday, they were to cease from it, like the Lord did when He created the earth, it was a reminder of that. The Lord formed the earth and everything in it for six days, stopped on the last day. And He told the Jews to function with that kind of schedule, six days on one day off, which they did. And it made them unique, because everyone in the ancient world, just about, worked every day of the week, hardly ever took a day off. But when you came to Israel, it was different. They took this day away off on the schedule so they could set their eyes on God, which was a good thing to do. The problem is that over time, some of the Jews like the Pharisees here added extra rules that the Lord did not command.

We talked about those recently; I gave you some examples of that. But the mentality of the Pharisees was that the Sabbath is a day of rest so to make sure everyone is resting, they prohibited the Jews from doing things like taking so many steps on the Sabbath or eating anything larger than an olive. Remember that? Or carrying anything heavier than a fig or, and this is important for this passage, healing someone. That's one example I couldn't get to last time, but they said, "You can treat a disease on the Sabbath and alleviate someone's pain if you have to, but you can't cure it." That would be sinful. I don't know where they came up with that, I don't know where they came up with all this stuff. But for example, to flesh that out a little bit, they said, if someone broke their arm on a Sabbath, and you doctors in the room might relate to this, you could splint the arm, but you couldn't set the arm. That's too much. And the Pharisees would chew you out for doing that. If they saw you setting someone's arm in the Sabbath, they would take you aside and scold you, maybe even throw you out of the synagogue. Or if you came down with a cold, you could drink water to quench your thirst, but you couldn't gargle any oil. Imagine that. If you had a fever, you could stay in bed and have someone call on you, but you couldn't have a doctor do

that because then he's working. And you could go on and on. They had pages of this stuff. And it sounds silly, but it gives you a taste of what's happening in Mark chapter three.

Because when verse two says the Pharisees were watching Jesus, to see if He would heal someone on this day, so they could accuse him. That means accuse Him of breaking one of their laws. That's the issue. They're not worried about Jesus breaking God's law, they're worried about Him breaking their law that they just made up out of their head. Because verse one, going back up a little bit, says a man with a withered hand was there, which means that there was a man there in the synagogue whose hand looked like this, kind of like a clawlike shape. Maybe due to paralysis or disease. It could have become that way. Maybe he was born like that. And the idea is that when they saw that, that man in the synagogue, and they saw Jesus walking, they knew what He's going to do. He's going to heal them because that's what He was doing.

He was healing all kinds of people at this time. If you look up in the previous chapters in Mark, you'll see He's healing everywhere in places like Capernaum and Nazareth and Cana and Bethsaida and Caesarea and Bethlehem. So the thinking is surely He's going to do it again, here. And they're right? As you're gonna see in a moment, Jesus will go on to perform a miracle on the Sabbath in the synagogue right in front of their faces, and there's not a thing they can do to stop it in order to show you that Christ is sovereign, and He can do whatever He wants with or without the Pharisees. Thank you very much.

I mean, where's the Pharisees' faith in Christ here, saving faith? Nowhere. And where's their support for the miracle? They didn't give Him any. But the idea is, that's okay. Jesus didn't need it. He could do all this through His own power, whether they supported Him or not.

And as I say that, what does it mean to say Christ is sovereign? That's a term we often use in the church today, rightly so. But what are we referring to when we tell ourselves Jesus has this kind of power? Well, when you say Christ is sovereign, what you're saying is that Christ can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants, with whomever He wants. Amen? And no one can stop Him. That's what sovereignty is. You're on top. You're the king. He can save anyone He chooses, forgive anyone He chooses, redeem anyone He chooses, and heal them. And His enemies can't lift a finger against it. I mean, Jesus wanted to do a miracle here, so guess what, He just did a miracle. And the Pharisees didn't matter.

I mention that because I'm wondering if some of you need to hear that right off the bat this morning because maybe some of you are considering coming to Christ today. I don't know where everyone's at on this. But maybe you're thinking of putting your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but you're holding back because like I said earlier, you're afraid of what someone may think about you. You're worried they might tell you that Christians are nuts, and they're a bunch of narrow-minded bigots. By the way, these people in this room are not narrow-minded bigots. But you're putting off your decision because that intimidates you. If that's the case, I want to tell you, you don't need to do that anymore because it doesn't

matter what others say. It matters what Christ says. And Christ says He'll save anyone He pleases if they'll come to Him. So you need to do that regardless of what your friends think. Who cares what your friends think. When you stand before God on Judgment Day, what do your friends matter? Some of you may be thinking of converting as well, but you're holding back because of threats. Your loved ones are telling you if you do that, we won't have anything to do with you anymore. And I bet that's hard on you as well. I can't even imagine what you're going through. But I wouldn't be doing my duty as a pastor if I didn't say the same thing to you. And that is that Christ is sovereign, and all the threats in the world don't mean a hill of beans to Him. They can threaten you from now until eternity, it won't do a thing. If He wants to forgive you, He can forgive you; and that's all you need to know. Psalm 115:3 says, "Our God is in the heavens, and He does all that He pleases." And that's what we put our hope in. Don't put your hope in your family, or your friends, or the experts like the Pharisees who want to put themselves over you. Put your hope in the Lord. Sometimes we make it harder than that. We struggle with the fear of man so much, but I love it what the Scottish Pastor John Knox said about this. If you know John Knox, he didn't fear almost anybody. And he said this, he said, "Christ plus one always equals a majority. And if you have Him on your side, let men and devils do their worst." We need to remember that.

That brings us to another insight into this healing miracle. And this miracle is full of so many wonderful lessons for us. But the next insight is that Mark now tells us the manner in which Jesus heals this man. So first, he tells you the where and the when. He heals him in a synagogue on the Sabbath, an unusual place to do that, especially if you're in the Pharisees' backyard. But now he goes on to give you the manner in which Jesus does this because He heals him with a question.

And as I say that, let me just walk you back for a second and remind you of the setting to this because by the time you come to verse three, there's four characters in the story. There's Jesus, the Pharisees, the man with the withered hand, and then there's the crowd looking on. And I haven't said too much about the crowd so far, but let me do that. Because a synagogue in Israel in the first century would have always been a crowded place on the Sabbath. Because it's Israel, the land is full of Jews. I looked it up this week, and found that in smaller synagogue services, there would not have been any less than 100 people there. And in larger ones, there could have been up to two or three or 400. To the point that it's standing room only. And with that in mind, verse three says this, it says, "Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and come forward.'" Which literally means get up and go to the centre of the room because I want everyone to see this. He's about to do something amazing and He wants every eye on the room fixed on that guy as it happens.

In order to get a full picture of what does take place, as the man comes forward, it would be good to pull a few texts from another gospel that describes this story, because the book of Matthew says that as the man comes toward Jesus, the Pharisees speak first. Now, you don't see that in Mark here, but you do see that in the Gospel of Matthew because they ask Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" They're kind of poking at Him. And here's Jesus' reply in Matthew 12:11, you're welcome to turn there. If you

want to keep your finger in the Gospel of Mark, I'm going to go right back to Mark in a second. But if you want to see this, it's in Matthew 12:11. This is the parallel passage to this story. And the Lord says there, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?"

The reason I wanted to read that to you is because if you notice, Jesus answers their question with a question, to point out that if it's permissible to help a sheep on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees said it was, you can find that in the writings, how much more should you help a man? I mean, come on. Seriously? Which one's more valuable? Some of you guys are farmers in here, a man or a sheep? The man is just no comparison. And to bring that home to life it's like Jesus is saying, in a sense, "Look at this man. Is he suffering? Yes. Is he hurting? Absolutely. Look at his hand. What are you doing about it? Nothing. You treat your livestock better than that, Pharisees. What's wrong with you?" You can feel the sting of the question, can't you? It's like fires coming off the page. And the gospel of Mark here in chapter three adds one more question to go along with this when He says in verse four of our text, He says, "Is it lawful to do good or harm on the Sabbath?"

And that question is just so obvious, it explains itself, you don't even have to say anything about it. If you were to go to a second grade Jewish Sunday school in a synagogue at this time, and say, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" Do you think they would have a hard time figuring it out? To save a life or kill it? Every little kid in the room would say, "save it." Everybody knows that.

Which is why the end of the verse here says the Pharisees kept silent, and they didn't know what to say. I mean, if they said it's lawful to save a life, then it would have validated everything Jesus was about to do. It would have confirmed it. And if they said kill life, it would have been worse, because everybody would have written them off as fools. So they just stood there dumbfounded. And you don't want to miss the significance of that because that really never happened in the first century; it was hard to make a Pharisee stop talking. This was their backyard. This was their territory. And even more than that, the Pharisees that were considered by the people to be the professors of the day, they were the teachers and scholars of the law. Many of them would have had degrees hanging on their walls, PhDs after their last name. Remember, they're the ones that taught the rabbis, who taught in the synagogue. So they're kind of the power behind the scenes. But when Jesus shows up, it doesn't matter, because they just fall apart in His presence, in order to show you that, even though they had all this, Christ had something greater, and that was the mind of God.

I mean, not only is Jesus sovereign over this miracle, He's also omniscient as well. It explains how He tangles with some of the greatest minds of the day here and blows them away. The reason He does is because He just knows everything. Nothing is concealed from Him here. As I say that, let me ask you, what does it mean to say Christ is omniscient? That's another term we often use, but what are we referring to when we say Jesus knows everything? Well, when we say that, we're saying, there are no secrets to Jesus. There are no mysteries. He sees it all, every hidden thought, every evil deed, everything

is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him. And if you want proof of that, you can look back at this story and just look at the things Jesus knows here. I mean, for one thing He knew the man with the withered hand was there in the crowd. Again, we don't know how big this synagogue was. But if there were several hundred people there, it would be hard to see a guy like that. He knew he was there. He also knew the Pharisees were there as well, that's not lost on Him either. And He knew, get this, He knew why they were there. They wanted to trap Him. Which means He read their minds like a book. Whether they wanted Him to or not, He could look down into the innermost parts of their soul, and tell what was happening there. Because Jesus Christ is not a man only, He's also the Lord of heaven and earth. And we need to let that sink in for a moment.

If we want to apply it, especially as it relates to our conference from last weekend for those of you who were with us last weekend, we had Tim Challies come speak on the subject of suffering. And anytime you talk about that subject, the question that often comes up is how am I going to get through my suffering? I mean, all this theology is nice, but I'm sick, and I'm hurting, and I don't know what to do. And I can't see a way through it. So what am I going to do? And the answer is that Christ knows what to do. And that's how you get through your suffering. He can make a way where there is no way because He knows everything. He knows every high and every low. He knows every joy and every sorrow. He knows everything going on and the innermost parts of your heart. And what's more, He knows what it will take to bring you past it, and that's what you put your trust in. It's not about what you know; you don't know that much, amen? It's about what He does.

In this story, Jesus doesn't tell the man with a withered hand, "You need to figure things out before I help you." And He doesn't tell him, "I need you to come up with a five-year plan for how to get your hand restored." He just heals him. And that's often how He helps us in our problems in life as well. Even though Jesus doesn't always heal us right away, Romans 8:28, says He works all things for our good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. And this is how He does it through His own omniscient will. I don't know about you, but I took a lot of notes last weekend, I actually ran out of ink in my favourite pen. I hate it when that happens. I thought about sending an email to Tim Challies; He could blog about that. But one of them said this, one of the notes I wrote down said this, "We need to learn how to submit ourselves to the secret things of God, and suffering is one of the greatest ones." Because when we suffer, we don't know why. Can't tell why our hand is withered. We don't know why the Lord allowed this trial, why we lost our child, why we lost our job somewhat. So much of that's hidden from us, but it's not hidden from Christ. And that's what gives you the strength to carry on. The secret things belong to Jesus, and we need to learn how to be okay with that.

That brings us to another insight into this healing miracle that He does; and that is that Mark also gives us the spirit in which He does this. A third insight into this miracle that Jesus does for the man with the withered hand, is that Mark now gives us the spirit in which Jesus does this because He doesn't do it in a spirit of joy. It's very interesting. He does it in a spirit or feeling of anger.

Verse five goes on to tell us that Jesus looked around at them. And what that means is that after He asked them this question, Jesus glared at the Pharisees, as if to say, "Well, anything? Nothing?" And do you mean to tell me you guys honestly can't answer the question, whether it's a lawful to do good on the Sabbath? You don't have anything to say at all to that. What's going on with you? And as a result, it says He became angry. Verse five, the words actually say, "After looking around at them with anger" That may not be a strong enough word in English because the Greek term literally means that he was filled with rage because his soul was consumed with fury. And if you're wondering why, the answer is found later on in this sentence when it says it was on account of their hardness of heart. That's what caused Jesus to be upset with the Pharisees and that is because they're just so callous to the suffering of other people. They didn't care about the man with the withered hand. He didn't mean anything to them. They just cared whether Jesus kept their little rules about the Sabbath and that kind of thing. So Christ responds the only way that's really appropriate, and that is to become angry.

And it even says in the text here to grieve, which tells us not only is He mad, but He's feeling a deep sense of pity toward the Pharisees. Because His heart is going in two directions here. On the one hand, He's burning with indignation and rage. On the other hand, He's sad because they just don't get it. They pretended to know God while their hearts are far away from Him because God is a God of mercy. And there's not a drop of mercy in these men.

The interesting thing about this statement is that from what I could look up and find it, I think it's the only time when this kind of language is ever used about Christ in the Bible. Obviously, there's other times when He's mad, like when He cursed the fig tree, or made a whip in order to drive the money changers out of the temple. Remember all that? But from what I could tell, this is the only time when it actually says it. To add to that, I couldn't find any times where the Bible ever says Jesus was mad at tax collectors or sinners. Or when He was angry at prostitutes or someone like that. He's just mad at Pharisees because everything they do is so fake. To the point that when they would come into the synagogue their prayers are fake and their songs are fake. And when they show up in the building, their words are artificial, and their deeds are artificial because they're like an actor that comes into the room and puts on a costume and plays the part. I mean, make no mistake, the Pharisees acted like they cared about people from time to time. But that's the point, it's just an act. Nothing more.

And the principle here is simple. I mean, how do you get on the wrong side of Jesus? Do what the Pharisees did. Come to church and put on an act. That's how you do it. You don't have to kill somebody, that does make Him mad. And you don't have to steal something, that makes Him mad as well. But just show up here and fake it so every time you walk into the building, your prayers are fake, and your songs are fake. And when you come for worship, your words are artificial, and so are your deeds. Jesus hates it when you behave that way. There's only one thing He really wants you to do before anything else when you come to church, and that is to be sincere. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have everything all together on the outside, but He wants you to be honest when you stand in the presence of God. Remember, He sees everything, so He knows that when you're not honest.



This is something these men never really got in the Bible. It's why Jesus is always rebuking the Pharisees every time they come together in the gospels, it's like World War Three. Just to show you what I mean, sometime after this story occurs, Jesus would cross paths again with the Pharisees in Matthew 23. And if you've ever read that passage before, you've probably never forgotten it. These are some of the harshest things Jesus ever said anyone in the Bible. And remember, it's not to the tax collectors. This is to the religious people. But in Matthew 23, He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites." You wonder why they killed Him, right? "Because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much as son of hell as you are." That's what the Pharisees were at the end of the day, they were sons of hell. These nice, "holy" religious men are lost. Did you know it's possible to do that? You can be a nice, "holy" religious man and be lost. They're walking proof of it. You see it right here. In another part of that passage, Jesus goes on to say, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they're full of robbery and self-indulgence." Because that's all the Pharisees were caught up in – the outside of the cup. They didn't care about their heart. They didn't care about their soul. They didn't care about the inside where you actually should really be focused on. You don't want to drink out of a cup if it's dirty on the inside. So Jesus says "Woe" to them. He didn't say "good job." "Woe". Not well done. Basically, He's saying, "Look out you Pharisees, judgment is coming for you." In the same place, He also called them whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they're full of dead men's bones.

And the lesson you have to take away from all that is that your religion has to be real, or Christ doesn't want it. It doesn't matter how much you work; the Pharisees worked hard. And it doesn't matter what you look like on the outside; they looked great. They were the best-looking people in Israel, religiously speaking. They had money, power, respect, admiration. And Jesus said it's all for nothing because they're on the wrong side of God. It's a good reminder for us not to go down that road. I mean, what's the matter if you work hard if you go to hell.

It brings us to one more insight into this miracle, and that is that all of this is going to end with the Pharisees' response. So, so far Mark is giving you the where and the when of the miracle. And he's giving you the manner and the spirit in which Christ does it. He does this out of a spirit of anger, making it one of the most unusual miracles in the Bible, in my opinion. Not too many times Jesus did that. But it raises the question at the end, well, how did the Pharisees react to this? What are they going to do? We said a lot about Jesus' reaction to them. How do they respond to the Lord Jesus Christ?

And if you look in the middle of verse five, it starts to get into this when it says this, it says, "Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, 'Stretch out your hand.'" Now, I don't know about you, but when I read that, I always smile because if I was that guy, I would look at Him and say, "I can't stretch out my hand. That's why I'm here." Jesus just says, "Stretch it out." And it says his hand was restored. In other words, the way this is worded makes it sound as though the man is standing there, in the middle of the

room with all these eyes on him, the paralysis left him instantly. When he opened up his hand, the deformity just vanished, and the shrunkeness disappeared. And the old muscles are replaced with new ones, and the ugly shriveled up skin is changed into normal healthy skin. And the cells, nerve endings, muscles, bones, ligaments, fingers, joints that were hurt, were fixed in an instant because Jesus' miracles were never done partially. They're always done perfectly to the point that the guy didn't have to go to rehab after this. He didn't need to go find a doctor. It's not necessary. He's just cured.

Before I tell you the Pharisees' response to that, let me ask you, how would you respond to that? If you were a Jew sitting in the synagogue on that day, what would you do? I hope you would pass out. I hope you would say, "Glory be to God, I just saw a miracle." Hope you would put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, get saved if you haven't done that already. Look at what these guys do. It says in verse six, that the Pharisees went out and immediately without a delay, began conspiring against Him. You want to talk about a group of hard-hearted people. The miracle did not make an impact on them at all. It just made them madder because they're humiliated by all this because as Jesus does the miracle, it's showing to everybody in that room that the Pharisees' ideas about the Sabbath are wrong. They said you can't heal on the Sabbath, Jesus did that. They said you can't cure on the Sabbath, Jesus did that. They said you can't do this in a synagogue because it's holy ground, God would never allow it, and He does that right in front of their faces. Causing the whole thing to just make them look ridiculous.

So verse six says, "They began plotting with the Herodians against Him, so as to how they might destroy Him." And that's a new group of characters in the story. We haven't heard anything about the Herodians before in Mark's gospel, but they were a group of Jews who supported King Herod, that's where their name came from. And by extension, Rome. Which means the Pharisees despise them because they hated the Romans. They couldn't stand them. And so what Mark is saying in verse six, is that everybody in this story, on the opposite side hates Jesus so much, they're willing to join forces to see Him dead. You could look at the Pharisees as the ultra conservatives of the day, the right-wing party; you could look at the Herodians as the ultra-liberals, left wing party. And they all come together to see Jesus Christ persecuted.

Which should be the end of the story, right? I mean, if you're going through the Gospel of Mark, and you're in the first century, to be honest, when you came across this in your Bible, it should bring the whole thing to a close because those two forces are enough to kill anybody in the first century. The Pharisees and Herodians were so powerful, there's nothing they couldn't do. No one they couldn't kill, no crime, they couldn't commit and get away with it. But that's not how the story ends. There's more to it.

If you look in verse seven, it says,

Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a large multitude from Galilee followed, and *also* from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the

vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard about everything that He was doing and came to Him.

And what that means is that after this miracle, Jesus left the area where the Pharisees were, and He just kept ministering to people. Even though the Pharisees and Herodians joined forces against Him, He didn't quit. He just kept serving. To the point that verse nine says that He continued to serve the crowds that came to Him. Verse 10 says He continued to minister to those who had afflictions. Verse 11 says He continued to minister even when the demons and unclean spirits showed up. In order to show that as we keep saying this morning, nothing could stop Him. And Jesus overcame every obstacle that was thrown at Him. In fact, when it says that they began conspiring in verse six, that's in the continuous tense, and you could actually take your pen, and draw a line from verse six, all the way down to the bottom of this and write conspiracy there. They conspired and conspired and conspired.

And the Lord Jesus Christ just kept going in order to show you that He'll overcome every obstacle that's thrown at you as well. I mean, if this story tells you anything at the end here is that you should not be surprised when people conspire against you; you need to expect it because they did it to Him. They're going to do it to you. I mean, all this is going to come for you. This world is not going to cheer you on for being a Christian, amen? Are you kidding me? They're not going to pat you on the back. If you're looking for that, you need to find another religion. What are they gonna do? They're gonna give you what He got: rejection, humiliation, conflict, trials, distress, loss, loneliness, insults, threats, suffering, degradation, misery, mockery, misrepresentation, ridicule, scorn and disdain and a cross. They're going to have protests against you and gay pride parades. They're going to pass laws against you like Bill C-4 that make no sense at all. They're going to elect politicians that stand against everything you stand for. And when it happens, the point here that I want you to see is you don't have to give up in despair. Because you have the One that none of that can touch. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the One who's sovereign, and He has all power. He's the one who's omniscient, and He has all knowledge. And He's immutable, which means He's changeless. And He's infinite, and eternal, and holy, and yet He's merciful and gracious, and kind, and He works all things for good. So what do you have to worry about? They put Him in the fire, and He came out unsinged. In order to show He'll help you do the same as well.

In fact, just to show you how amazing Jesus is, if you look in verse 11, I mean, even the demons fall down before him. Demons. Can you think of anything worse than a demon? Some of you may be really upset about our politicians right now. Well, they're not worse than demons. Maybe you're concerned about the crazy laws that are being passed, and I get that. But if the devil will do this in his presence, I promise you, so will the politicians and the laws. The LGBTQ movement will one day fall before the throne of Jesus Christ. The liberal party movement of Canada will do the same. So will the Muslims, so will the Buddhists, so will the atheists and agnostics and all those who think Jesus is just a spiritual guru, and nothing more. Because He's Lord of all. He's Lord at the beginning of this passage. He's Lord at the end. He's Lord before the conflict shows up. He's Lord after it shows up. Yes, He would go to a cross,

but He would go to a cross because He's Lord and it was His choice. And we need to keep that in mind this morning.

You know, I just mentioned to you that we had Tim Challies out for a conference last week, but while he was here, I had the privilege of taking him and his wife to lunch on the Friday of the conference, and he asked me how things were going in Chilliwack, how the ministry was and I said, "It's going well, but it's hard for our people because they work in places where some of them are ridiculed for their faith and others are put in just difficult situations or they're asked to call a he a she and a she a he." I just named the problem, right? And he said, "Well, it's the same way in Toronto." They minister in a very similar environment to this. But he said, "You know, whenever I'm tempted to despair, I always ask myself the question, which one is bigger? My God, or my culture? Because the truth is that when I see how big God is, everything in the culture seems so small by comparison. All these crazy things don't amount to anything in Toronto." And he's right. Friends, you serve a big God today. He's larger than anything that the world can throw at you. And you need to remember that and believe that and take heart and take comfort.

Next week, we're going to see what Christ does in His sovereign will as Lord, when He calls the 12 disciples to follow Him to be His apostles. We'll look at that next week. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank You Lord for the for the greatness of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and how there's nothing that stands up to Him in power and might and glory and omnipotence. And Father, I wanted to highlight that this morning, because I know that some folks in our church can be discouraged by all the stuff in the world today and I understand. It is discouraging. It's hard even to turn on the news anymore. And yet, it's discouraging for us though, Father, because we don't remember that Christ has been through this. He has stood over it as the King in order to make a way for us to stand over it too.

Lord, may we not fear anymore? The world. Would our hearts and our minds be reminded of His greatness and glory, so that when we go to work tomorrow, when we lead our families tomorrow, and we interact with neighbours, neighbours, maybe that we love very much, but they just say the foulest things and live in the foulest ways. Would we remember that our lives are different because of Christ, and we don't have to give into despair.

Lord, thank You for Jesus, thank You that He lived in a sinful world. He didn't live in an ivory tower. He didn't run when conflict came. He stood up to it. He showed courage in His sovereign will. May we live in light of that today and bring You all the glory for it. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.