

WITHERED HAND

Date: March 17, 2020

Scripture: Luke 6:6-11

Hey everybody, my name is Jonathan Vinke and we're going to focus today on the miracle of the man with the withered hand. It's found in two gospels, Luke 6:6-10 and also in Mark 3:1-6. I'm going to read the version out of Luke.

⁶ On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. ⁸ But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. ⁹ And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰ And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Luke 6:6-11

In this miracle, what happened? Well, basically Jesus restored a man's hand from being paralyzed or shriveled up, deformed. He restored it back to its original function. And the context of what's going on here, well a couple of things that we want to note: First of all, this happens in the synagogue. The synagogue is a place where worship happened in the communities around Israel. It started during the exile of the Jewish people when they couldn't worship in the temple. They would gather for a public Scripture reading and a rabbinical sermon or teaching and the practice became so rooted in the culture that it continued even when the people returned from exile to Jerusalem and Herod and rebuilt the temple.

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It was a normal part of community worship because it could happen regionally. People didn't have to travel all the way from their remote town all the way to Jerusalem to worship. They could gather in the synagogue and still have access to the Torah. It was also easy to replicate this across regions because it didn't involve sacrifices. So it was not illegal for them to worship in their town by having a different altar to sacrifice animals on.

Second thing to note is the physical deformity of this man. It would have meant that he was disqualified from entering priestly service. If he was a young boy and thought, "Man, God's calling me to serve in the temple," he couldn't do that because he had a physical deformity, but even if he didn't want to be a priest or serve in the temple, he would have been severely inhibited from normal life. He wouldn't have been able to work a job, probably would have been begging to have money and it would have ostracized him from the community because of that. He may have lost respect because he couldn't earn money for himself, maybe couldn't have a family.

Third thing to notice is that this miracle happens on the Sabbath, it says that in the Scripture passage, people went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. And at this point in Jesus's ministry, the Pharisees have started to watch Him carefully. They have done that really from the beginning, suspicious of everything He did and they're looking carefully for ways to trap Him and to accuse Him. They're jealous of the power that He has and they don't recognize Him for who He really is, God in human flesh. So when He performs miracles on the Sabbath, which He did on more than one occasion, not just this one here, the Pharisees wanted to use it as an example of Him breaking the law because He was doing work on the Sabbath.

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They were even willing, the passage in Mark says, they conspired with the Herodians, which was a political group sympathetic to Rome. They were conspiring against Jesus to try to bring Him down. You see, they totally missed the point of the Sabbath laws, which was to bring you near and into fellowship with God. They missed the point of that because Jesus was there and they could have been near to God through Jesus. And He was trying to make the point that He is in fact, Lord of the Sabbath, but they totally missed that.

I want you to think about something. I want you to think about how the man who was healed, how his life would have been changed after this. It would have changed completely. Everything would have been different. Where he was once weak and paralyzed, he was now strong. Where he was once deformed, he was now whole and restored. Where he was once helpless and outcast, he now has the power to live life to the full and to be a fully integrated part and member of the community. And this miracle is important. It's significant because it points us to the miracle of resurrection because Jesus came to undo the curse of sin. He came to defeat death. He came to fulfill all the Scriptures, to set all of creation free from the oppression of sin.

In Colossians 1:19-20, we read:

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

So in a sense, every miracle points us to the resurrection by demonstrating the supremacy of Jesus over all things. Everything that was broken by the curse of sin, He could and can repair.

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Miracles are like little snapshots into the supernatural power of Jesus. They show us who He really is as the King of all Kings and the one who holds everything together by the word of His power. Through His resurrection, Jesus would make all things new and initiate the new kingdom of heaven reality that we now have a chance to live in and that is what they point us to.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for showing us Your love by sending Jesus. Thank You that His power is so great that He rules everything that we see, even the things that we don't see and we thank You that His love for us doesn't use that power against us to crush us, but to bring us close, to bring us into fellowship with You. Heal us where we're broken and deformed, restore us to fellowship where we're outcasts and lonely. Help us in this season to understand the great lengths that You were willing to go to to rescue us. Would You let this land on our hearts in a fresh way and help us to worship You in response to it. I pray in Jesus name. Amen.