

8. Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath because He is the Son of God. He is the One who made it possible for us to enter into rest because He finished the work of paying the penalty for our sins on the cross. In this topic, we will see that Jesus further angered the Pharisees by healing a man on the Sabbath.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees were looking for an excuse to accuse Him of sin. Mark 3:1-4 says, “And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent.” When Jesus entered the synagogue, He saw that there was a man there with a withered hand. A withered hand is one that never grew properly, so the arm and hand was much smaller than the other hand.

Luke 6:6 says, “Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered.” Luke mentioned two things Mark did not mention. First, this happened on a different Sabbath. Second, it was the right hand of the man that was withered. This meant that the man was forced to do everything with his left hand. However, the Pharisees had no concern for the man. They were only looking for a way to trap Jesus.

As a result, the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. They wanted to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath day. They thought that if Jesus healed the man that would give them an excuse to accuse Jesus of sin. Jesus had the man stand so that everyone would be able to see what happened to the man. Then, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question. The question began, “Is it lawful?” By that one statement, Jesus forced the Pharisees to base any charges they might try to make on the Old Testament law instead of the traditions of the Rabbis. Then, the rest of the question forced the Pharisees to think about what the Ten Commandments said. Immediately, the rest of the question forced them to think about two specific commandments.

Exodus 20:8-10 says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.” Then, Exodus 20:13 says, “You shall not murder.” The Word of God explained exactly what it meant to work on the Sabbath. They were not to work on the Sabbath. However, the law did not forbid doing good on the Sabbath. Second, Jesus asked if it was right to save life or to kill. Since the commandment said not to murder, it did not forbid saving life. Later, Jesus said to a ruler of a different synagogue, in Luke 13:15, “‘Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?’” Jesus made it very clear that even the religious leaders showed kindness to their animals on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees did not answer the question of Jesus because they knew Jesus was right. Mark 3:5-6 says, “And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.” Here, Jesus showed the difference between godly anger and worldly anger. Jesus was angry at sin, but He loved the sinners who committed that sin so much, He died for them. In contrast, much of the anger in the world is worldly anger. That is when people are angry at the sinner instead of their sin.

Jesus was grieved, because He had a great love for every one of the Pharisees. At the same time, He was angry at the hardness of their hearts. The hardness of their hearts was due to their inner rebellion. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The Pharisees had an evil heart of unbelief that was causing them to depart from the living God. The result was that their hearts had become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Jesus turned to the man with the withered hand and said, “Stretch out your hand.” The word “restore” means “*to be restored to its former state.*” The word “whole” means the hand would be restored to health and strength. The man did stretch out his hand, and it increased in length, and became normal just like his left hand. Matthew 12:13 says, “Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched *it* out, and it was restored as whole as the other.”

This caused an immediate reaction among the Pharisees. Luke 6:11 says, “But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.” This rage caused the Pharisees to leave the synagogue and go find the Herodians. The Pharisees were religious leaders and taught the traditions of the fathers. In contrast, the Herodians were a political group and thought they could change things by working with the Roman government. Normally, these two groups were opposed to each other. Here, we see that quickly changed. We will see that these two groups began to plot together how they could destroy Jesus. Both groups were opposed to Jesus. The Pharisees were afraid of losing their religious power, and the Herodians were afraid of losing their political power. Both groups were controlled by hardened hearts.

Jesus knew what was going on in the hearts of the Pharisees as they left the synagogue. Mark 3:7-12 says, “But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.” We see that Jesus then left the synagogue and went to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The very thing the Pharisees feared happened as great crowds of people from throughout the region followed Jesus because they heard what He was doing.

Jesus saw the large crowds and realized that many of the people would try to get closer to Him. As a result, He told the disciples to have a small boat ready so that He could get into the boat if the crowds began pushing to get closer to Him. Jesus knew that such pushing could crush either He or others. Jesus had found it necessary to do that at an earlier time because the people had pushed closer to try and hear Jesus as He spoke. Luke 5:3 says, “Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.”

The crowd also had other reasons why they wanted to get close to Jesus. Jesus had healed many people over the previous months. Other people heard about those who had been healed. The word translated “afflictions” means “*a scourging, a plague or any misfortune or calamity that had affected a person.*” As a result, this included people with many types of painful diseases and physical ailments. These people with various painful physical problems were all trying to get close to Jesus so that they could touch Him and be healed. Jesus healed many people, but He also wanted to teach the people so that was why He told the disciples to have a small boat ready for use if necessary.

Jesus also healed people who were possessed with demons. The demons that possessed these people were forced to recognize that Jesus is God. Mark 3:11 says, “And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’” Here, we see that the people that were possessed with demons would fall down in front of Jesus. Then the demons would speak through the person and cry out, “You are the Son of God.” At the very time that the Pharisees and Herodians were plotting against Jesus, the demons were being forced to recognize that Jesus is God.

However, Jesus did not need the testimony of demons to prove that He is God. That was why Jesus sternly warned the demons not to make Him known. The word translated “sternly warned” means “*to rebuke, to admonish or to charge sharply.*” John 5:33-47 gives us four witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Those included: the witness of John the Baptist; the witness of Jesus’ works; the witness of the Father and the witness of the Old Testament. John 5:39-41 says, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. I do not receive honor from men.” Since Jesus did not depend on the witness of men, He certainly did not want the witness of demons.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why Jesus chose to do good on the Sabbath even though He knew that it would cause the Pharisees to begin to plot His death. We see that Jesus was carrying out the will of the Father, and by doing that, caused the Pharisees to begin to plot His death. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Jesus did what He did.