

A Sabbath Split

(Mark 3:1-6)

(preached 10/5/14 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to Mark 3.

If you are visiting with us, we are going through the book of Mark verse by verse.

We have made it through two chapters in a little over two months.

At the current pace, we will finish this book up in 14 or 15 months...

So hopefully by 2016, we will have covered every verse of this book.

May seem like a long time, but we love walking with our Lord during his ministry...

Seeing his compassion and power.

Watching him teach, preach and heal.

So, if you will, I want to read the first 6 verses of Mark chapter 3...

And we will be off and running....

Mark 3:1...

*3 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered.² They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.³ He *said to the man with the withered hand, “^[a]Get up and come forward!”⁴ And He *said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent.⁵ After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He *said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately began^[b] conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.*

North of Greenville SC is Caesars Head State Park.

The park runs all the way to the border of North Carolina and contains a number of mountain ranges.

One of the mountains is Cedar Mountain, which actually is part of both states.

What is interesting about Cedar Mountain is that it is part of the Eastern Continental Divide.

That may not mean much to you but consider this...

When a thunderstorm passes over that mountain, the drops that fall on the west side of that mountain....

Eventually drain off into the French Broad River, which flows into the Tennessee River which ends up in the Gulf of Mexico.

However, the rain drops that fall on the eastern side of Cedar mountain flow into the Saluda River, which flows into the Broad River, which eventually flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

That means that there is a point where two rain drops can fall out of cloud....

And one can end up the Gulf of Mexico and the other in the Atlantic Ocean...

Even though they may have fell only inches apart when they hit the ground.

That is why we refer to those places as Continental Divides...

They essentially determine where a rain drops final destination will be.

North America has 6 continental divides that are really just ways to determine water flow in the US, Canada and Mexico....

However, in many ways, Jesus is the divide of all of human history.

When people are confronted with the person of Christ, they only have two sides on which to fall.

There are those of us who are on the right side of Jesus...

We have repented of sin and trusted in Jesus alone to save us.

Then there are those who have fallen on the wrong side of Jesus....

Who have rejected His Lordship and rejected his deity...

He is the most divisive figure in all of human history.

No other divide even compares to the divide that Christ makes in people.

Clemson/Carolina, Republican/Democrat, rich/poor all fall by the wayside when it comes to the divide that Jesus brings into the world.

For the believer, we live by the effects of that divide.

Every decision, every action, every word, every day should flow from that the divide that Christ has brought into our life.

Like the raindrop flowing down the hill, we are moved by our belief and trust in Jesus.

For the unbeliever, just the opposite is true.

Every word, action, day is lived in slavery to the consequences of rejecting Jesus.

And make no mistake about it, there are no fence riders...

The raindrop can't decide to just sit on the top of the mountain and wait until later.

And neither can any of you.

You are driven by the divide of Christ every day.

Either toward him and for Him or further away and against him.

That is the truth of the Bible.

Jesus himself said in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with me is against me."

In our passage this morning, the divide between Jesus and the Pharisees is increasing.

Today, we will see Jesus 5th confrontation with the Pharisees in the gospel of Mark.

If you have been with us, you know that they have been after Jesus since the beginning of chapter 2.

The y said he blasphemed when he forgave the sins of a paralytic.

They said he was a sinner when he called and ate with Levi and other tax collectors.

They said he was a rule breaker when he didn't fast twice a week.

Then last week, they said he was a law breaker when he didn't keep the Sabbath laws...

Which we learned were not Sabbath laws but man made laws of religious people.

And now, we are faced with a fifth showdown with the Pharisees...

And again, it concerns their rules and expectations.

So the sides of this showdown are forming.

And the divide is beginning, and it will be a divide that stretches all the way to today.

To this very hour.

And it is time for you to choose your side.

The question before you today is where do stand?

Jesus is the divide in our text, but he is also the divide in the world.

And you need to examine where you stand in relation to Him this morning...

So, I've separated these verses into 3 desires that we will see in these verses this morning....

I. Desire to See the Rules Followed

II. Desire to See Mercy Given

III. Desire to See Jesus Killed

Each of these desires will reveal which side of Jesus you are on...

He is the great divide in human history and in every person who has ever lived...

So, where do you stand this morning?

So, let's look back at verses 1-2 and meet those who....

I. Desire to See the Rules Followed (Mark 3:1-2)

¹He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered.² They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

If you have been with us in the past few weeks, we have seen this before.

The Pharisees and scribes are in the synagogue like the police hiding in the median of the highway.

They are ready to catch the next law breaker.

They are the cats ready to pounce on the next mouse that walks across the room.

But they are much worse than the cops or the cat.

One has a job to do and the other has a belly to feed.

Both very good reasons for stalking their prey.

But the Pharisee has no such need.

He simply waits on the next rule breaker, so he can feel better about himself.

His holiness increases when he catches someone breaking the rules.

He thinks to himself, “I never do that. God certainly must love me more.”

“God is so pleased with me.”

His motivation is to climb the ladder of success by stepping on the folks below him.

“Look, God! They don’t keep the law like I do.”

I’ll never forget one day in 5th grade when our teacher stepped out of the class.

She asked us to not talk and remain in our seats.

Hoping to gain favor with the teacher, one our classmates (who I will call Billy) recorded the names of everyone who talked or got up.

When the teacher came back, he raised his hand and told the teacher about his good deed.

She smiled and ask him to come up and bring the list of names...

He was smiling as he headed her way...

She said, “That was such a wonderful thing to do.”

We were all groaning in the back of the room...

She read the names out loud and announced that we would all would have to stay inside at recess as punishment....

And that Billy would be staying inside with us to make sure we didn't misbehave then either.

That's the attitude of a religious, rule keeping Pharisee.

Like we said last week but it is worth repeating, their joy in life comes from catching others break their rules.

And here they with all their eyes fixed upon Jesus just waiting on him to break their Sabbath rules.

But get this...

This shows how twisted their religious system had become.

They have their eyes fixed on Jesus, but have given no thought to the man with the withered hand.

You would think that these people would be showing compassion to a man with the use of only one hand.

But no.

Instead of having compassion on a man with one hand, they set their sights on catching a rule breaker.

You know who the Pharisees are?

They are able bodied people who park in handicapped spaces.

Because they deserve front row parking.

There is no mercy left in these people.

No grace. No love.

They are obsessed with their rules, and the victims of that are always the less fortunate, the poor, the desperate.

And here is a great example in verse 2..

Here is a poor man with one hand, and they don't even lift a finger...

Because they are ready to catch a rule breaker...

And let me speak from the heart here, I quickly became that kind of person after I was saved.

I got blood thirsty for justice.

I used phrases like, "They deserve what they get."

They made their bed, let them lay in it.

And those phrases are way too common in the church today....

Our compassion has been replaced by contempt for those less fortunate around us.

And yes, there is some truth to the fact that people create their own misery.

The Bible even teaches that.

Sin has consequences.

And oftentimes, the down and out have made a choice to be down and out.

But even in that, let us never lose our love for them.

Let us continue to extend our hand to them.

And here is what never needs to leave the back of our mind...

We show mercy because we've been shown mercy.

The truth for every believer is that we each made our own bed of sin...

But praise God that he has not made us lie in it.

By choosing to sin, we were also choosing to be down and out, but thanks be to Jesus that He lifted us up and out.

The principle for believers is that we show mercy because we have been shown mercy.

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall be shown what?”

Mercy!

The Pharisees will never receive mercy because they have never shown it.

A man with one hand needs their mercy, but they are only concerned with justice.

IS that you?

Is your heart more likely to show mercy or look for justice and fairness?

Do you spend your days complaining about the unfairness of our world?

Do you demand justice?

Or do you show mercy and grace?

The heart only wanting justice will one day get it.

The heart showing mercy will one day receive it.

Unfortunately, the Pharisees only wanted justice.

And in verse 1 and 2, we find hearts with a desire to see the rules followed...

But in verses 3 to 5, we find a heart with a different desire...

II. Desire to See Mercy Given (Mark 3:3-5)

Verse 3....

*³ He *said to the man with the withered hand, “^dGet up and come forward!”*

According to Luke’s account of this same event, Jesus had been teaching...

And then he stops and gives these instructions to the man with the withered hand.

Jesus knows the thoughts of the Pharisees sitting there.

Can you imagine being a Pharisee sitting there and the thought flashes through your mind...

“Here’s a guy with a crippled hand...I wish he would break the rules and try to heal this man’s hand today..”

And then all of a sudden, Jesus stops his teaching and calls to that man.

Talk about spooky.

But that is what Jesus does, and he does it to confront this false religious system of works.

Verse 4...

4 And He *said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent

Here is the great divide in this one verse.

So we need to answer each of the questions in order.

First, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?

Yes, it is always lawful to do good.

The “good” here is easily seen.

Is it lawful to heal a man’s hand?

Yes, God is good.

Doing the good of a healing a hand is always lawful.

Is it lawful to do evil on the Sabbath?

No, it is always wrong to do evil.

Evil is evil regardless of the day.

But you see that is where the Sabbath laws of the Pharisees had gone wrong.

These laws had made good deeds evil on the Sabbath.

They had gotten it all backwards.

Then Jesus took it to the extreme.

Is it okay to save a life on the Sabbath?

Well, absolutely. It is always lawful to save a life.

Is it okay to kill on the Sabbath?

Well, no. It is never lawful to kill or take a life.

Jesus was pointing on the error of their Sabbath laws.

They had become obstacles to mercy.

They were obstacles to grace.

The Sabbath was meant as a day of rest, but the religious leaders had made it a day of work in trying to keep it.

And I would add a word of caution here.

Make sure we don't be turn Sundays into a Sabbath for the church.

I was taught growing up that you don't wash a car on Sunday, you don't wash clothes on Sunday and you never cut grass on Sunday.

Now, I touched on this last week, but the Sabbath command does not carry forward to the NT church.

The book of Hebrews says that Christ fulfilled the Sabbath for Christians.

He is our Sabbath rest.

Paul wrote in Colossians...

^{d6}Therefore no one is to ^[n]act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath ^[o]day—¹⁷ things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the ^[p]substance ^[q]belongs to Christ.

But unfortunately, many in the church have brought the Sabbath forward...

And I ask them if they rest from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

Because that is the Sabbath.

However, most say that Sunday is now the Sabbath.

Which, by the way, is never said anywhere in the Bible.

However, most Christians believe that and expect you to do the same.

However, like the Pharisees, these same Christians would never think of working on Sunday...

But they will fill restaurants and enjoy the labor of others on Sunday.

Or they will go to stores and benefit from the work of employees there.

And we must be careful not to allow Sunday to become a day of rules for us.

Now, does that mean that we don't set aside a day of rest on Sunday?

Not at all.

I still don't cut grass on Sunday or wash my car.

Even though it wouldn't be a sin if I did.

Can you make the Lord's Day special?

Certainly.

First of all, it's a day that the church gathers to worship the Lord.

Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week and we have gathered today to celebrate that.

It truly is Resurrection Sunday every Sunday.

Can you rest from work on Sunday?

Absolutely!

This is the freedom you have in Christ.

But if you have strong convictions about Sundays...

First, don't make them rules for everybody else.

Other may not share your convictions.

Second, don't let your rules triumph over mercy.

If you see an old lady broken down on the side of the road, will you pass her by because you don't work on Sunday.

If your child breaks an arm, don't wait until Monday to get a cast.

Those both sound ridiculous, but that is where a religion of good works takes you.

You will choose not to help by trying to live by the law.

This is far how corrupt the religion of the Pharisees had fallen.

Instead of rejoicing that One had come who could heal their diseases, they are concerned with when he healed their diseases.

Such a sad reality when people love the letter of the law more than the spirit of the law.

And that is exactly the emotion that Jesus has in verse 5...

⁵ After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

Jesus has placed them in an impossible position.

They have tried to lay a trap for Jesus but He puts them between a rock and a hard place.

If they say, don't help this man, the people will see them as merciless leaders...

Which they are.

But if they say heal him, they are breaking the laws that they demand everyone else to follow on the Sabbath.

So, they take option 3.

They keep their mouths shut.

And this angers Jesus.

This is not an anger that leads to sin.

This is anger at sin.

It is the righteous anger of God when he sees the horrible effects of sin on the heart.

The man may have a withered hand, but the Pharisees have withered hearts.

His hand may not work, but their hearts not longer care.

And Jesus is angered but sad.

Pine Grove, keep your hearts soft to people.

A church with a calloused, unmerciful heart angers Jesus.

Then Jesus “said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

In the company the merciless Pharisees stands our always merciful Savior.

We go from no compassion to all compassion.

And the really interesting part is that Jesus doesn't lift a finger to heal the man's hand.

The Pharisees were waiting on him to break the Sabbath law with some act of work....

But Jesus don't raise a finger to heal a man's hand.

The hand is brand new without one touch of the Savior.

When unmatched power joins with unmatched mercy, a man with a withered hand gets brand new palm and fingers..

And you would think that nay reasonable person sitting in that synagogue on that Sabbath...

Would have marveled at such power.

That even the hard hearted Pharisees would have fallen on their faces when the new hand appeared.

But you would be dead wrong.

Look at the final desire that we find in this passage in verse 6....

III. The Desire to See Jesus Killed (3:6)

Verse 6....

⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately began^[b] conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

This single verse clears up a common misconception that many have in the church.

And it is this....

The more people come to church, they more receptive they get to the message.

The more they hear the stories of Jesus, the more they will love him and want to be saved.

And though I would never discourage anyone from coming to church, I would say that it is a very dangerous place.

The Pharisees have just witnessed a miracle, and it is not the first miracle that they have seen.

Many probably saw a paralyzed man walk.

Many probably saw a demon-possessed man freed.

Others saw a leper cleansed...

They are witnessed to miracle after miracle, yet they are farther from Jesus than ever before.

And the same is true for those exposed to Jesus week after week in the church...

Conventional thinking says, "Oh, they will eventually be won over."

Unfortunately, the same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay.

And the same is true of the people exposed to the gospel...

The same gospel that breaks hearts also binds them.

And the Pharisees here are ready to kill their Messiah.

And you know why?

He has destroyed their way of thinking in just a matter of days.

Hundreds and hundreds of Sabbath laws....

Years and years of keeping the rules...

Gone in a matter of weeks or days.

And for some of you, the Jesus of the Scriptures shatters your world as well...

What you thought to be true about him...

What you were told was true about Him...

Is often nothing like the Jesus of the Scriptures.

If you thought Christianity was about keeping the rules, Jesus has demolished that in just 2 chapters of Mark..

If you thought that Jesus was just life insurance that you could add on to your life like a patch on your old way of life, you have seen that is false.

If you thought that Jesus only asks you to follow Him on Sundays, He has also destroyed that idea as well.

And for some, they have the same desire of these Pharisees in verse 6...

They wished he was dead.

I pray that is not your heart's desire this morning.

I also pray that is not your heart's desire to hold the rules higher than mercy.

My prayer is that every heart in heart desires to show the mercy that our Lord showed to this man with the withered hand.

Mercy that exceeds any man made rule or law.

Mercy that was also found at the cross, where...

You have the keeper of the Law crucified like a breaker of the Law.

Where the have the most compassionate, merciful man in history was treated like the most callous and merciless criminal in history.

The truth of the cross is that our merciful Savior received no mercy in his death....

So that you could receive mercy.

The Sinless Man took on sin....

So that you could give your sin to Him.

You may not have a withered hand this morning, but you may have a withered heart like these Pharisees...

The promise of the gospel is the promise of a new heart.

Jesus said, "Repent and believe the gospel,"

Which is the good news that your sins can be forgiven by what Christ has done for you.

Reach out that withered heart this morning by
believing in the One who heals hands and hearts.

Let us pray...