

Stretch forth thine hand

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Mr Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing and guidance, let us turn again to the portion of Scripture read, the Gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 6 and verse 10.

And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand.

And he did so, and his hand was restored whole as the other.

And this evening we shall seek to consider first of all, the Sabbath day.

A word upon the Sabbath day. And then the circumstances of this miracle.

[1 : 27] And thirdly, the implications of the miracle. The spiritual lessons which attach to this miracle.

The Sabbath day, the circumstances of the miracle, and the implications of the miracle. The circumstances attached to it.

First, the Sabbath. The Sabbath was one of the greatest benefits God gave to Israel.

It was given, this benefit or boon was given to man in the creation.

A very, very great benefit. In the book of Exodus, we read that God rested on the seventh day and was refreshed.

[2 : 49] On the Sabbath day, there was to be rest from all labor. But there was more than that.

They were also commanded to make the Sabbath a delight.

And this is very much stress. On the Sabbath, according to Jewish rules, there must be no mourning.

This was a tradition among the Jews. There must be no mourning. Because the Jews applied this saying to the day.

The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich. And he addeth no sorrow with it. Therefore, the Jews ruled that there should be no mourning on the day.

The Sabbath was quite alone. Among the other days of the week, as far as the Jews were concerned.

[4 : 11] Every other day had been paired with his fellow, but not the Sabbath. And so, any festival, including the great day of atonement, which was the greatest day in Israel, might be transferred from any day of the week to another day.

But not the observance of the Sabbath. The Jews stated it graphically like this. He said, the Sabbath complained before God.

The Sabbath complained before God. That of all days, it alone was lonely and solitary.

And in answer, God had wedded the day to Israel.

He had married the Sabbath to Israel. That was a great Jewish tradition. And this holy union, God had bidden his people.

[5 : 32] Remember, he told them, when they stood before the Mount of Ordinances, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

But sadly, but very, very sadly, the Pharisees and scribes had burdened the Sabbath with endless rules and regulations.

They had encumbered everything connected with the sanctity of the day.

They had encumbered it with all the thrammels of self-righteousness. And this is what self-righteousness does.

It only encumbers. It only keeps away from God. No matter how it may clothe itself.

[6 : 41] Self-righteousness keeps people away from the life of all lives.

And this is evidently shown here. How? It is shown in this way. When the Lord of the Sabbath came among this people to declare and to interpret the spiritual meaning of his own day, they found

endless fault with him.

That is said before us clearly in two incidents here in this very chapter.

What was wrong with these people? Let us beware that it is not wrong with ourselves. What was wrong with them?

With these Pharisees and scribes? Very simply, they were making religion nothing of the outside. They were externalizing religion.

[7 : 59] They were externalizing sacred things. And we must always remember that if we do not go deeper than touching holy things on their outside, we will be of all men the most hardened.

This was made abundantly clear among these people. The scribes and Pharisees were further from the kingdom of God than the publicans and the harlots.

And they were very, very far from the kingdom. But the scribes were even further, the scribes and Pharisees.

This applies to us here this evening in this church. We must seek by God's grace to get inside the things of God.

Then only, then and then only, shall we be spiritual worshippers.

[9 : 31] Everything belongs to God's people. As Paul declares, they are possessors of things present and things to come.

They are the possessors of all the great teachers of the church of Paul and Apollos. They are the possessors of life and they are the possessors of death.

Isn't that remarkable? Isn't that remarkable? But the apostle qualifies this possession of theirs. They are possessors possessed.

He ends that great statement in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians by declaring, after he has enlisted the things that they possess, possesses, he says, and ye are Christ's.

And even Christ is possessed. And Christ is God's. Let us, with all spiritual endeavors, seek to get inside these things.

[10 : 57] These Pharisees then, in their own spirituality, failed to realize something very special.

They failed to realize that the Sabbath law had an eternal element in it.

This is stressed by the writer to the Hebrews. He talks about God entering into his rest. The rest that God took on the seventh day.

He also talks about the rest that the children of Israel had. The Sabbath that they had after their 40 years wandering.

But he talks about another rest. An eternal rest. And what is the sure proof that there is such an eternal rest?

[12 : 05] There is a sure proof of it. We have it in the Christian Sabbath. When the Lord of glory, when he completed the work he had to do in the body of his humiliation, he entered into rest.

The rest of resurrection morning. And that is the great proof of the final resurrection.

And we have said fairly often that Christians should look forward far more towards that day than they are afraid of it.

No doubt sinners should be afraid of that day. But Christians should yearn for it more than they are afraid of it.

There is a spiritual and an eternal element. The Sabbath law embodies two thoughts.

[13 : 30] Two thoughts. It embodies the thought of rest for worship. In the other language, the old people used to say, that it was a workful rest.

That the rest of the Sabbath is full of good works. And it also embodies the thought of worship, which points to rest.

And we noticed at the beginning of the chapter, when the Pharisees found fault with regard to the disciples plucking and eating the grains of corn, the Lord interjected, the Lord interjected that an incident in the history of the Jews, that it vindicated this point, and he instanced their greatest king, the greatest king that Israel had when he was hungry.

He ate, he ate, he entered the holy place and ate of the show bread, which was only for the priests to eat. And he gave it to those who were with him.

The Sabbath law allowed works of necessity and works of mercy. And St. Matthew relates, and you should look this up, how the priests, in their service in the temple, necessarily broke the Sabbath law, without thereby incurring guilt.

[15 : 31] That's a very interesting point. The work of the priests involved breaking the Sabbath law without incurring guilt.

Secondly then, the circumstances, the circumstances of this miracle. Our chief concern this evening is with another Sabbath day, on which the Lord of the Sabbath showed most clearly how the Sabbath law allowed deeds of mercy.

It was probably the next Sabbath after the one already alluded to, which is the disciples' 80 years of corn.

We are not told whether the Pharisees brought the man with the withered hand on purpose to the synagogue or placed him in a conspicuous position.

We are not told that or whether the man came himself. We know for certain what their objective was.

[16 : 53] They wanted to commit the Lord of glory to some word or deed which would expose them to the capital charge of breaking the Sabbath law.

This was their intent. They wanted to vilify him. They wanted to bring him down.

How little they realized who he was, who he is. How little they realized.

Their eyes were blinded by their own unspirituality. He read their inward thoughts, their inward thoughts of evil, and proceeded to do the good which he purposed.

They didn't prevent him from doing the good which he purposed. And thus, the Almighty, in his majestic sovereignty, he carries out his fixed purposes.

[18 : 13] Whoever and whatever stand in the way, he carries out his purposes. And thus, God, in his wondrous goodness, adapts the circumstance to the good of his creatures, notwithstanding the evil thoughts that were there in that synagogue on that day.

And it was not their very own admission.

The principle of the rabbis clearly implied that it was lawful on the Sabbath day to do that which would save life or prevent death.

This was a principle of the teachers of the Jews. There was no answer to the Lord's argument. St. Mark expressly records that they did not even attempt a reply.

They themselves did not hesitate to deliver a helpless animal out of a pit on the Sabbath day. how much better is a man than any animal.

[19 : 47] We can imagine the scene there. The synagogue was crowded. The Lord was there in a prominent position, maybe leading the prayers or teaching.

He could see everyone and everyone could see him. And he took up the challenge of these Pharisees.

He ordered the man with the withered hand to stand forth right in the midst. He asked one question to refute their evil thoughts.

and he looked round about on them with holy anger being grieved at the hardening of their heart.

But that was only for a moment. That was only for a moment. Then with life giving power he bade the man stretch forth his withered hand.

[20 : 59] hand. And when the word was spoken and the man stretched it out it was withered no longer.

Fresh life streamed into it as following the Savior's word the man stretched it forth.

as he stretched it forth his hand was restored. The tense used in the original it indicates this that it was restored even as he stretched it out.

the Savior had certainly the Savior had certainly broken the rules of the Sabbath but he had not broken the Sabbath law.

He came to fulfill all law. And what is law? Dr. Kennedy in a magnificent statement he says this God's law cannot be in abeyance it cannot be set aside.

[22 : 20] When man breaks it God's law cannot be set aside. It can be fulfilled by another as it was done by the Christ but it cannot be set aside.

Why? It is the charter the great preacher said it is the charter of his own inalienable rights.

It is the assertion of his own righteous claims. It is an expression of God's love to himself.

that's what the law of God is. An expression of God's love to himself that cannot be set aside.

We can imagine the situation of this man before the miracle the man who was healed. By the withering of his hand his life had been fragmented.

[23 : 33] Tradition has it that the healed man was a mason whose affliction had compelled him to beg for bread.

His life had been broken, had been fragmented. His paralyzed right hand made him useless to himself and to his family and to society.

It is interesting to note that though this man had little or nothing in common with the Pharisees who thronged him in the synagogue that day, yet there was a similarity in their condition and what kind of similarity was there between this man with his fragmented right hand and these Pharisees there was this similarity their life was also fragmented they were also without the power of the right hand they were full of self righteousness they loathed God and they loathed the Christ of God they loathed these people who maintained that they alone fulfilled the law they loathed the fulfiller of all law and the fulfiller of righteousness because in the ultimate sense why did they loath him because in the ultimate sense they were lawless and without righteousness that's the enigma of the self righteous man he is lawless and he is without righteousness he is dead dead dead to God's holy law and to the commandment when the commandment comes man dies to all self righteousness and the Lord says to these woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites oh friends there are two things which disfigure our spiritual lives two things which disfigure our spiritual lives firstly we do what we ought not to do secondly we leave undone what we ought to do and we note we note how the

Lord especially emphasizes the second kind of disfigurement in his teaching and in his parables on the great last day some thought they had works works and they and they will be found some some will think that they have works and they will be found without works and some will think that they do not have works and the Lord will discover works of faith that they have done to them and we note how this is emphasized in his parables the priest who passed by on the other side the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side in the case of the man who had fallen among thieves the rich man who made no attempt to succor

[28 : 03] Lazarus that is gay and the servant who did not make use of his talent they did not do the things that they ought to do and the healing of the man with the withered hand it emphasized it emphasized to these Pharisees their own need of healing this is what they would not confess they were whole in their own estimation they did not know the pangs of spiritual sickness and therefore they needed not a physician physician they needed not a physician and the man was now restored what a glorious providence was his now if tradition is right every stone he touched every house he built was a testimony to a divine miracle of mercy we can imagine how this man would appreciate every sabbath in the synagogue in

Capernaum each sabbath would be him a day of rest from the daily use of that wonderfully restored right hand each sabbath would be a remembrance of the great miracle performed on him but we notice the contrast as the Lord performed the miracle the Lord was filled with sadness the scribes and Pharisees when they saw it they were filled with madness and their hearts were hardened and if this took place at Capernaum as is thought how it sets in perspective the Lord's terrible words and though Capernaum which art exalted to heaven shall be brought down to hell for if the mighty works performed in you had been wrought in

Sodom it would have remained until this day oh friends what use are we making of our spiritual privileges God will require every one of them from us thirdly then the withered hand has its spiritual counterpart both in the man of the world and in the lapsed child of God we see a withered hand in both these cases firstly every unrenewed soul is a man with his right hand withered what is the whole purpose of man the whole purpose of man is to glorify

God and to enjoy him forever and no unrenewed man can achieve this he has come short of God's glory his arm is too short and cannot reach God's glory his arm is dried up in the fall and in his sinfulness his arm his right arm is dried up such a man certainly performs the common works of life but as that great preacher says these are only the left hand acts of the immortal soul what the unconverted performs is only the left hand work of the immortal soul the spirit the real strength and life is withered and powerless no man without

Christ truly enjoys God he has never done one work or spoken one word or conceived one thought to the glory of God and what a terrible situation and friend if that is your situation here this night oh that God would take hold of you and rest you out of every insecure place place where you are hiding yourself again the backsliding child of God has his right hand withered the strength of the right hand is the special designation of power when

[34 : 32] Samson went astray his right hand lost its power he was just like anybody else frail and feeble oh friends our need of the power of Christ without it the best speaking and the best preaching and the best teaching are of no avail the true preaching of the gospel and of the cross is not in word but in power the preacher's right hand is withered without the power of the Holy Spirit and the root of the withering lies deep it might be failure in secret prayer if the right hand has been strong to wrestle in the secret place it will be exalted openly when there was a real going aside in the land when there was a real going aside a real separation in the land of

Israel it was all the result of the outpouring of God's Spirit and when there was such a mourning a mourning apart a mourning in seclusion the reality of God's provision was made abundantly clear a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness that's how the Bible unfolds these things to us the Spirit outpour the people separating themselves to make holy lamentation before God and God's provision in Christ made abundantly known to such then again there is the right hand of faith which lays hold on Christ the life eternal which embraces the right hand of faith embraces the exceeding great and precious promises all things are possible to the person who believes and when this right hand of faith is withered the believer's strength is gone oh that

God would give us spiritual strength in our right hand hand and time would fail there is also the right hand of dedication free and cordial self-dedication to God I pray you therefore said he who had abundantly dedicated himself to the work of Christ I pray you therefore by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service and in conclusion friend see that you frequent the house of God whatever you do see that you frequent the house of God how often lost treasures are found in the house of

God Joseph and Mary they lost the child Jesus they thought he was in the company and they were wrong and where did they find him they found him in the house of God Thomas seemed to have lost his faith and he found it in the company of the disciples the man with the withered hand was in the synagogue that Sabbath day but it was not the synagogue that healed him but he found the savior in the synagogue and it was not the upper room nor the blessed company assembled in the upper room that dispelled the doubts of Thomas it was the fact that he found the master there and recognized him as his lord and his god and it was not the temple that relieved the distress of Joseph and Mary it was the fact that in the temple they found

Jesus and when his mother spiritual though she was when she was found on that occasion to be unspiritual her complaint her querulous rejoinder to him to the 12 year old shows that how little she understood she was a very very spiritual woman but the incident shows how little she understood but he corrected her how did he correct her he pointed to his father and his father's house and his father's business amen let us pray oh lord we bless thee for the eternal father and his house and his business we thank thee for eternal transactions for eternal loyalties for eternal proofs and promises we would praise thee oh lord help us to seek thee in order to find thee in order to find thee in order to glorify thee as thou art for christ christ seek amen for really again for an or

[43 : 08] Drige what Japan