



## LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

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### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

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#### Restoring the Withered Hand - Fifth Miracle - Mark 3:1-6

Jesus was regular in His church attendance. When Saturday rolled around - the seventh day of the week was decreed as a day of rest and worship - Jesus was sure to be in the synagogue to delight Himself in the Lord. He was obedient to the will of God as expressed in the Old Testament: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy...Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest" (Exodus 20:8 & 34:21a).

The Lord says, "If you treat the Sabbath as sacred and do not pursue your own interests on that day; if you value my holy day and honor it by not traveling, working, or talking idly on that day; then you will find the joy that comes from serving me" (Isaiah 58:13-14a, GNB).

There was present in the synagogue a man with a withered hand. Either he came of his own accord or was "planted" there by the Pharisees to ascertain whether Christ would heal him on the Sabbath, "that they might accuse him" (3:1-2).

Jesus wanted the crippled man to be the center of attention, so He directed him to stand in the middle of the assembly (3:3). He then confronted the assembly with basic questions, "Is it lawful to do 'good on the sabbath days' - in this instance, to restore the use of this man's hand and so make him employable - 'or to do evil' that is, by preventing him from engaging in manual labor? In brief, is it lawful 'to save life, or to kill?' For instance, if on the sabbath a swimmer is about to drown, what shall one do? Labor manfully to rescue him or, by inaction, let him drown? Surely, the latter is tantamount to murder. The higher law of love must come first, not the inferior law of resting on the sabbath. The Pharisees did not know how to answer Jesus. "They held their peace" (3:4b).

Jesus was filled with two clashing emotions: On the one hand, with anger at their heartlessness; on the other, with sorrow over their stubbornness, i.e., their unwillingness to admit they were wrong. It should appear obvious to a rational being that every law can have its exception and thus prove the rule. Love must not be forfeited in favor of meticulousness in observing a general rule. In other words, works of necessity and mercy may be performed on the Lord's Day (3:5).

So Jesus said to the handicapped man, "Stretch forth thine hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other (3:5b). What a blessing! Now he could go seek employment. In that day, work was mostly in the form of manual labor, i.e., work done with the hands.

We feel the Pharisees should have been impressed with this undeniable miracle and changed their attitudes toward Christ. But no! There are three very difficult words to articulate in any language: "I was wrong!" Instead, the Pharisees made common cause with members of the political party called the Herodians, partisans of the Herods' and Roman rule (Matthew 22:16, Mark 8:15), to implicate Jesus with the government and have Him executed (3:6).

#### Healings Continue - Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew to the edge of the Sea of Galilee to escape the deadly intentions of the Pharisees and Herodians. However, His withdrawal did not go unnoticed. A great multitude followed Him and His disciples. What He taught, and the great things He wrought, spread like wildfire throughout Palestine and contiguous regions. People flocked to Him from everywhere: from Galilee, naturally, for that's where He was currently active; from Judaea, specifically from the city of Jerusalem; from Perea, east of the Jordan; even from distant Idumea (Edom, SE by S of the Dead Sea); and from Phoenicia or Lebanon in the NW, where the cities of Tyre and Sidon were (and are) located (3:7-8).

The crowd thronged Him so tumultuously that, in His humanity, Jesus feared they might crush Him. As a precautionary measure, He ordered His disciples to get a boat ready, with oars, sails, and provisions in place, in case it was necessary to withdraw quickly (3:9). Meanwhile, His healing virtues continued to flow from Him to those who were plagued, i.e., scourged, with diseases. They pressed upon Him relentlessly, hoping to derive benefit from merely touching Him. The demoniacs, however, did not touch Him, and likewise He never touched a demon-obsessed. When the unclean spirits saw Him they fell down before Him and shouted, "Thou art the Son of God." They immediately recognized His divinity and trembled in awe (3:10-11).

Silence was imposed upon the demons. Jesus could ill afford to have Satan and his henchmen proclaim His Saviorhood. Who would believe him anyhow, for Satan "is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44b). Jesus wished to be known not primarily as a miracle-worker but as a Teacher sent from God (1:21, 2:13). He desired to be accepted as the Servant of the Lord who by His perfect life and innocent suffering and death achieved salvation for mankind. He "wanted the people to accept His Word and come to the knowledge of Him as the promised Redeemer through the Gospel" (P. E. Kretzmann). Therefore he charged the unclean spirits that they should not make Him known (3:12).

#### The Twelve are Chosen and Ordained - Mark 3:13-19

From the many disciples who followed Him, Jesus chose twelve to companion Him constantly, to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils (3:13-15).

#### The Meaning of the Word Apostle

In the narrower sense, Apostle (written with a capital A) means one of the Twelve, plus the Apostle Paul who was also called directly by Jesus into the

ministry. In the broader sense, the term refers to any missionary who opens a new territory for the Christian religion. In the broadest sense, it refers to any one who is a messenger of the Good News (Romans 10:13-15, 2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25).

Names of the Twelve Apostles - Mark 3:16-19  
(Matthew 10:2-4, Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13 & 24-26)

Mark lists first the three who later formed the inner circle of the Apostles:

1. Simon, Peter, or Cephas;
2. James, the son of Zebedee and Salome;
3. John the brother of James, inspired writer of the Gospel According to St. John, also of three General Epistles: 1, 2, & 3 John, and The Revelation. Jesus by-named James and John "Boanerges" or the Sons of Thunder. Why? See Luke 9:51-56. James became the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2).
4. Andrew. He was originally a disciple of the Baptizer, heard John preach the shortest possible sermon: "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36), and followed Jesus (John 1:40). Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus (John 1:41-42).
- 5,6. Philip and Bartholomew or Nathanael (John 1:44-51).
7. Levi-Matthew, son of Alphaeus (2:14, 3:18). A Tax Collector. Eventually, writer of the Gospel According to St. Matthew.
8. Thomas or, in Greek, Didymus, the twin (John 20:24). Sometimes referred to as "Doubting Thomas" because he temporarily questioned Christ's bodily resurrection (John 20:24-29).
9. James the Younger or James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (not the same Alphaeus as the father of Matthew).
10. Thaddaeus, or Lebbaeus, or Judas Lebbaeus. He has an impressive list of names, but we know practically nothing about him.
11. Simon the Canaanite, "called Zealot" (Luke 6:15). He was "a member of the fiercely nationalistic party, the Zealots" (Franzmann).
12. Judas Iscariot was the only one from Judaea, from the village of Kerioth. An appendix is usually added to his name, "who also betrayed him" (Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:19, Luke 6:16b).

The Scribes Concocted an Explanation - Mark 3:22-30

The power of Jesus to drive out unclean spirits is what perplexed and irritated the rabbis in Galilee. And so the big-shot lawyers, or scribes, came down from Jerusalem to aid and abet the local rabbis. They planned to slander Jesus and thus lower His reputation among the common people. They did this by saying: "He is in cahoots with Beelzebub. He is in

partnership with the prince of devils, the Ruler of the demon-world."

They said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth He out devils" (3:22). That was their official evaluation of this new prophet's ability to drive out evil spirits. His supernatural capability could not be denied. The big question was: From whence did He get His power? From within Himself? From above or from below? They hypothesized: Satan himself must have taken up residence in Jesus and commandeered His underlings to carry out whatever order Jesus issued.

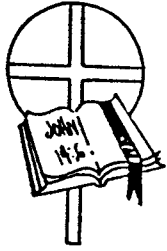
Jesus countered by virtually saying, "It is ridiculous to say Satan abdicated his role as Ruler of the kingdom of malevolence and transferred his regal prerogative to another, in fact, to his chief opponent. Surely, he wouldn't act contrary to his own interests and purposes. It is not done so elsewhere in the world, for a family at loggerheads with each other could not survive as an integrated unit. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end" (3:26 RSV).

"How did I drive out devils?" Jesus is asking. Answer, "By entering a strong man's house, the throne-room of Beelzebub, limiting him in his governance, and ordering his entourage about, as I please. Satan is indeed strong, but I am the Stronger than the strong. You teachers of the law are wrong when you state that the Unholy Spirit dwells within Me and aids Me. It is the Holy Spirit who supports Me. He is the only Force that changes man's heart to a favorable acceptance of me as the Son of God (3:11b). Quenching the Holy Ghost, as you scribes are doing is a sin with eternal consequences. Every other sin can be forgiven, even blasphemies against Me, but when you blaspheme the Spirit of God, you clog the only channel through which saving faith can be imparted." Forcefully, devastatingly, did Jesus thus rebuff the scribes, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (3:30).

#### Who is Close to Jesus in Kinship? - Mark 3:31-35

His brethren and His mother, Mary, (Matthew 13:55, John 2:12 & 7:3-5, 1 Corinthians 9:5, Galatians 1:19) approached the house where Jesus was and sent word for Him to come out. He answered, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And looking round about on them that encircled Him, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister, and mother."

Spiritual kinship is oftentimes closer than blood relationship.



LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea,  
Unknown waves before me roll, hiding rock and treacherous shoal.  
Chart and compass come from Thee, Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

Mark 4:1-9

1. The multitude that came to hear Him teach was so great that Jesus had to provide an outdoor lecture hall. What arrangement did He make? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Previously He had presented His teachings directly (1:15; 2:2). Now He decided to teach them indirectly. Through what means? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The first "earthly story with a heavenly meaning" was that of a sower spreading seed upon his farmland. The seed fell upon four different kinds of soil. List and explain these:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 4:10-20

4. What did some who had heard the parable ask Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How did Jesus interpret the four types of soil to mean four kinds of heart-soil on which the seed of the word of God falls?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It is easy to criticize, let's say, the preacher, his message, or his mannerisms, for not producing congregational growth. Where may the fault actually lie? \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 4:21-29

7. A candle or, rather, an oil-lamp, is not stowed away where it cannot shed its light. Now that the fullness of God's plan of salvation, which as to details was a mystery in the Old Testament, has been fully revealed in the coming of Jesus the Messiah, what are the apostles to do with the light of this full knowledge? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Blessings accrue to those who spread the Good News of redemption by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The more they testify and bear witness, the more blessings will they receive. However, what happens to those who do not use for the good of others the spiritual knowledge they received? (4:24-25)

How are you personally spreading your knowledge of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

9. The kingdom of God is like seedtime and harvest, with a period in between when the seed, "of herself" (KJV) and the soil - endued by God with self-acting, autonomous power - produce "first the tender stalk, then the head, and finally the head full of grain" (4:28 TEV). What do each of these references say about the increase? (4:26-29, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, Isaiah 55:10-11)

Mark 4:30-41

10. What parable did Jesus tell to indicate the sure future growth of the Christian Church? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What advantage did Jesus' own disciples receive in understanding His teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

12. List all the recorded activities of Jesus on that one day which is called "the busy day," beginning with the visit of the scribes from Jerusalem.

3:22-30 (sample) The visit of, and debate with, the scribes from Jerusalem

3:31-35 \_\_\_\_\_

4:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

4:3-9 \_\_\_\_\_

4:10-13 \_\_\_\_\_

4:14-20 \_\_\_\_\_

4:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

4:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

4:26-29 \_\_\_\_\_

4:30-33 \_\_\_\_\_

4:34 \_\_\_\_\_

4:35-41 \_\_\_\_\_

13. List the happenings in the account which set forth the quick succession of surprises in verses 35-41. \_\_\_\_\_

14. What lessons do you gather from the Stilling of the Tempest for your life? \_\_\_\_\_

15. How would you answer the significant question found in verse 41? \_\_\_\_\_