

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

For our time today, I want you to come with me to Mark, and we're finally entering Chapter 3—a downright silly place to put a chapter division, but it is, nevertheless, how we keep track of what we're doing. Our text today—[Mark] Chapter 3, Verses 1-6—is an immediate sequel to what we looked at last week: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" and "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27-28, NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Jesus use a conflict with the Pharisees over the Sabbath to make those points, which was a proclamation of His deity and an exposure of the silliness of the Sabbath rules of the Pharisees.

Actually, what we come to today is the sixth in a series of six conflicts that Mark used in his gospel to make his point about who Jesus is. From the end of Chapter 1, starting with the beginning of Chapter 2, there are several conflicts—the 5 that we've already seen. The first one is Chapter 2, Verses 1-12: That was the situation at the home of Peter and Andrew, when Jesus claimed to forgive sins—which was a blatant claim to deity, because only God can forgive sins—and they called Him on that, and then He said, "Okay, you can say you forgive sins, but I can prove to you something," and then He healed the guy; He backed it up by healing the paralytic man who had dropped in on Him through the hole in the roof made by his four friends. Then there's Verses 13 and 14 of Chapter 2, where Jesus called Levi—the man whom we usually call Matthew—who was a tax collector. Well, why was that a conflict? "Why, *who would call a tax collector?* We don't *like* tax collectors! Who do You think You are?"

Then there's Verses 14-17 in Chapter 2—it gets even worse! It was utterly scandalous, not only that Jesus would *call* a tax collector, but then, all the much worse when He celebrated with sinners whom Matthew invited to his house for dinner to introduce them to the Savior. "What do you *mean*, eating with tax collectors and sinners?!? We don't like them—they are like us! How dare You?!?" Then there's 2:18-20, the next time the Pharisees chose to be offended—and they made the choice to be offended all of these times—that was when Jesus's disciples didn't fast according to the rules that *they* had made up. *They* decided that even though there was one day per year, in the Old Testament, that God asked people the fast—on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29; cf. Ps. 35:13)—they decided, no, "The real spiritual people, like *us*, you have to fast twice a week, and Your guys aren't doing this! You're not like us! We don't like that! We're offended!" That was their attitude.

Then there was Chapter 2, Verses 23-28 that we saw last time: The fifth conflict that Mark includes in this list was the Pharisees accusing Jesus's disciples of breaking God's laws. And remember what they were doing? Eating a little grain as they walked along on the Sabbath; something which not only doesn't break God's Law, it is specifically okayed as permissible and part of God's plan for Hi people in Deuteronomy (23:24-25).

So, what have these incidents shown us so far? Why did Mark put them together this way? Well, he's showing us that Jesus is God, because He forgives sins. He says Jesus came to "call sinners to repentance" (Lk. 5:32)—He doesn't just try to gather around Himself the ones who already think they're righteous. Jesus went out of His way to talk to sinners, and that was in direct contrast to the proud and arrogant and self-righteous Pharisees. We saw how Jesus intentionally refused to bow to the manmade, burdensome orders of the Pharisees to fast,

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

which they did as a show of their spirituality (Matt. 6:16). And then, Jesus went out of His way—specifically, intentionally, and in the most flagrantly public ways possible—to defy the manmade Sabbath rules of the Pharisees, to show that what they came up with *wasn't* helpful; it actually wound up overruling the Word of God (see Mk. 7:9). It's very clear that the Pharisees, and their scribes, were getting the message of Jesus.

You know, there are people who say that Jesus never claimed to be God? Well, that wasn't something made up by the people who were believing in Him; His *worst enemies* got that loud and clear—from the beginning of His ministry all the way to the end. That's why they regarded what He did as blasphemy and worthy of punishment by death. We have this statement over and John 10:31-33—"The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him"—you'd have to read the Gospel of John to get why the "again" is there; it wasn't the a first time—"Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?' The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.' " In other words, they understood exactly His message—He was God who became man, and He came to forgive sins (see Jn. 5:18; 19:7).

Now, in out text for today, which is the sixth in this series of illustrative conflicts that Mark put together, it's a direct sequel to that previous paragraph. It is really a silly chapter break that would go better after Verse 6 than before Verse 1, but that's okay; that's how we reference things. It's yet another Sabbath encounter with the Pharisees to teach us more about Jesus's message and the tragedy of the manmade religion. It's to help us understand that the Sabbath was designed by God as a gift to man: a day of rest. "Every week, take a day off from your job" is what He meant it to be (see Deut. 5:14; cf. Lk. 23:56), but the Pharisees had turned it into a weekly day of onerous burdens; that's why Jesus said "Come to Me, you who are *weary* of it all...heavy-laden" under the burden of all this junk that the Pharisees had added to Scripture (see Matt.11:28; cf. 15:3-9).

Now, our text comes with a fabulous economy of words--just six verses. I think my outline today is almost as long as the text. But we can go Verses 1,2,3,4,5,6—points one through six: the strained a situation, the shameless spies, the surprised subject, the shameful silence, the Savior's sadness, the shameful strategy, and then the thrashed thesaurus—no, that's what got me there—I mean, triple alliteration, come on! I get something for that, right? See how my face shines!

Alright, let's look at Mark 3:1-6—starts out with the strained situation. Mark 3:1—"He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered." That's just telling us facts about this. We don't know which synagogue. It doesn't matter which city. We know that Jesus's intent was to get to *all* of the synagogues in Galilee and preach the gospel of the kingdom, as He had done. Luke specifies it was "on another Sabbath" (Lk.6:6). In other words, not the same Sabbath as the previous one, but, likely these may have happened on consecutive Sabbaths, and that, too, doesn't matter. But we know that this incident took place in a synagogue in Galilee, and there's a tidbit from Luke. Now, this is one of those great passages were Matthew and Mark and Luke all mention it, so we have to put all the pieces

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

together, but there's a tidbit from Luke that says this incident took place while Jesus "was teaching" (Lk. 6:6) in this certain synagogue. So the verb tense implies, this thing with the guy with the withered hand took place *while* He was teaching. And apparently, Jesus included this right in the flow of whatever it was He was teaching, and we're not told *what* that was; it had to do with the gospel of God, we know it had do with who He was. We know that—it would lead to the conclusion: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17) because that was His never-changing message.

And there's another interesting detail—often when you deal with miracles, it's especially interesting to look at Luke because, you know, Luke was Paul's "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), he was the doctor, so he likes to throw in details about the healings that aren't there, and Luke tells us that it was his right hand. Now, given the fact that 90 percent of you are a right-handed and you're afflicted with that disability—unlike the rest of us—this was a debilitating situation for this guy. Now, none of the three gospels that record this incident tells us *how* the man came to have a withered hand, whether it was a birth defect or an accident or a disease; there is actually an old tradition, and we don't know has any legitimacy to it or not, but, the old tradition says that this man had been a stonemason and whenever had happened to his hand, it caused him to lose the ability to work, and so he'd lost his business and he'd been reduced to begging. Doesn't matter if that's the case or not, but we know it was a very severe situation. The word translated "withered" is from a Greek word that describes, medically, atrophy. It was used for things that are dried up or wasted away; he had a totally useless hand, and you know when a hand hasn't been used, it shrivels and the muscles atrophy, and it kind of begins to look like a claw.

So the setting, then, is this synagogue where Jesus is teaching somewhere in Galilee, and the stage is set for another miracle and yet another confrontation. We all know what's coming. Well, we have the strained situation—now, let's look at the shameless spies: Verse 2—"They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him." Now, you've got a flood of pronouns there: they, He, Him, and him. Who's that? Well, "they" is the Pharisees—that's the antecedent in the context. The Pharisees were the ones who came there *specifically* expecting that Jesus would probably heal on the Sabbath. Why? Because they knew He had done that, at least down in Jerusalem, if not in other places in Galilee, and their purpose was to "accuse Him." You have this totally polarized, mutually exclusive and contradictory pair of worldviews.

You want to know the difference between the outwardly spit-shined religiosity of the Pharisees, and true spiritual life of a person who's saved by God's grace? Nothing could be more polarized and those (see Matt. 23:25). Look at part of the Apostle Paul's testimony about his past. Remember, Paul grew up as a Pharisee; Paul became a *leader* among the Pharisees (Gal. 1:14). And he says this *amazing* thing in part of what he wrote to the church at Philippi—Philippians 3:6. He's talking about himself and he says, "As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." His Pharisee friends considered Paul absolutely above blame; in other words, having what they called righteousness. There are at least three times in the book of Acts that the Apostle Paul gives his testimony that he excelled among the Pharisees, and his words here in Philippians 3:6 are revealing that they believed that according to a *their*

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

system, which Jesus said "they were trusting in themselves that they were righteous" (Lk. 18:9); according to their system, they believed you could be absolutely blameless, and yet Paul knew—as every religious hypocrite does, if only he would look in his own hear—internally, he was full of covetousness and spiritual pride, misplaced anger. He thought he was serving God, going around getting Christians arrest and trying to get them killed (see Jn. 16:2). It was only after God transformed his heart that Paul came to realize that true righteousness comes *not at all* from your own religious achievements, but as a gift from God (Rom. 4:1-4; 6:23). Man can do good things; man can do nice things; man can build magnificent things; man can put together hospitals; man can study medicine and learn to be compassionate and help make people well; but, *none of that* will gain you righteousness in the sight of God (Is. 64:6).

So Paul went on to say this in Philippians Chapter 3, just a couple of verses later, starting a Verse 8. He says, "More than that, I count all things"—all what things? All these things that I have achieved in the religious world—"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (vss. 8-11). Paul eventually came to understand that, and *he* is a living illustration of the contrast between *the very best that man can do*—and he says, in the eyes of God, how much does that accomplish? As much as a pile of rubbish. And by the way, rubbish is a euphemistic translation for the word that he used. What do you really need? You need righteousness from God (Rom. 3:21-24).

And so, why were the Pharisees there that day? *One* reason: they came to spy; they watched "to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him." I don't know—maybe the Pharisees suggested to the guy with a bad hand that he ought to come to the synagogue there that day; we don't know. But the Pharisees took this day that had been designed by God to be a gift to mankind, a day for rest and refreshment and worship, and they had turned it into a day of drudgery and oppression. Remember last week, I gave you some samples of the absurdity of the Sabbath regulations that they had come up with? And since their distorted version of the Sabbath was the centerpiece of their system, that's why Jesus so publicly defied their version of the Sabbath.

Spiritual pride turns people into snobs, turns people into resenting others, causes them to judge others. When your religious system is all about spiritual pride in showing off, how brilliant of them to come up with the idea of, "Let's do it on the *Sabbath* as the weekly opportunity to show off the most of what we have, and to intimidate the most people...keep them under bondage." Well, if that's the way you think, you don't like it when somebody comes along and exposes that everything you believe is a fraud (see Matt. 23:1-7); everything you believe *contradicts* the Word of God. They weren't very happy about that (see Matt. 15:12; 26:4; 27:18).

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

So we have a strange situation; it's full of shameless spies. And now, I want you to look at the surprised subject: Mark 3:3—" He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and come forward!' " Now, I want to point out to you, this is the only time that I know of in the Bible that Jesus ever asked anyone to come forward during the service, okay—just saying...there's the precedent. And I say this man was the "surprised subject" because there's no indication that he had any idea that this was going to happen. In that culture, he probably kept his withered hand hidden; he probably wore a glove or kept it under a coat or whatever. He certainly didn't go around showing it off. To be sure, he may have *wondered* if the hand could be healed; he may have *wondered* if Jesus knew about it; he may have been praying for the opportunity to get to Jesus to *see about* being healed, because surely he would have known about Him.

Well, there's some interesting things, again, when you harmonize Matthew and Mark and Luke, you get the sense that Jesus was in the middle of teaching when He suddenly called this guy to come up front, in front of all the rest of the people there. Now, it's also interesting—apparently Jesus let the guy stand there, left him hanging for awhile while, in front of everyone, he's not knowing what's going to happen, and this next little conversation takes place. It's the strained situation—"strained" because of the shameless spies. Now we have a surprise subject, not knowing what's going to happen, standing up in front of everybody, and that leads us to the shameful silence. Look at Verse 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." Now, there's some things here I want to flesh out for you. Again, we want the fullest picture so, we're going to harmonize Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Why am I omitting John? He didn't mention this incident, so we have three records of this that we have to put together.

We don't know for sure what Jesus was teaching that morning in the synagogue. We *do* know, interestingly, it was the *Pharisees* who first brought up the subject of healing on the Sabbath. Now, it *might be* that they interrupted Jesus; it *might be* that they spoke to Jesus about this before He began teaching. But look what Matthew says in his record—It's over in Matthew Chapter 12, starting at Verse 10: "And a man was there whose hand was withered"—that matches Mark 3:1—"And they questioned Jesus, asking, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—so that they might accuse Him." So we understand—it was *the Pharisees* who first asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" And Jesus responded with something that only Matthew includes. Interesting. Read on, Matthew 12:10-12. He continues: "And He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable, then, is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'"

Now, lifting a sheep out of a pit would break, I don't know how many of the rules of what the rabbis and the Pharisees had come up with for things you can't do on the Sabbath. But He also knew that *they gave themselves a pass* if it was rescuing their precious property on the Sabbath! So, that means that, when Jesus said what we read in Mark 3:4—"Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?"—He was actually repeating back to them the question that they had asked, and He slightly reworded it. He was doing this to show how utterly absurd the question was. You see, the way the Pharisees asked the question, they made it a *legal* question—"Is it within the rules?" Remember, I described them

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

last time as, their spiritual custom should've been striped shirts and they should've had yellow flags that they'd go throwing, calling fouls on people all the time? That's how they thought; "Uh-oh, you stepped on the line—you're *out!*" Well, they made it a legal question set against the backdrop of their massive load of these onerous do's and don'ts about the Sabbath. The way Jesus *answered* the question, He showed it was really a *moral* question: What's *good* to do? Now, there's absolutely nothing in the Law of God that prohibits doing good on the Sabbath, nothing in the Law of God that prohibits healing on the Sabbath. So, do you see that when the Pharisees said "lawful," and when Jesus said "lawful," they were using totally different definitions of the word "lawful"? Jesus rightly spoke of what the Law of God actually said. The Pharisees defined "lawful" in terms of what *they* had made up—their manmade additions to the Law God—which had the effect of burying the Law of God so you couldn't even see it. They nullified the Law of God (see Matt. 15:1-9).

Now, you could have a similar issue today. Here's a free sidebar application for you: If you were to sit down with friends or neighbors or family members who are part of the Roman Catholic Church, and you start talking about what God says and all of that, you're going to encounter a very similar situation. Jesus said "lawful" based *solely on the Word of God*; the Pharisees said "lawful" based upon the Word of God and *everything they added to it*, which ended up contradicting the Word of God (Prov. 30:6). If you talk to someone who's a member of the Roman Catholic Church, they're going to be honestly, genuinely, interpreting your questions in light of what the Scripture said *plus* the full magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church—all the things that they have added to it—because you believe, correctly, that you and I and we at Heritage Bible Church and every church in the world, is directly responsible to the authority of the Word of God (Is. 8:20; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:16). They believe that the Word of God is a *possession* of the Roman Catholic Church. *They* determine what's in it, what's not in it; *they* determine what it says; they and *only* they can interpret it, and—their interpretations can change, but they have a whole bunch of accretions added onto it. So, understand, you've got to recognize what is the authority. Remember the number one issue of the Protestant Reformation: *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone is the authority (Matt. 4:4). That leads to grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

Now, there's something else lurking below the surface here that I want you to see. Remember from last week, among those ridiculous Sabbath rules that they had—thousands of them; I gave you several of them. Do you remember this one? They said, if a person became ill on the Sabbath, only enough treatment could be given to keep him alive; treatment to make him *improve* was declared to be work, and therefore forbidden. To determine just how much food, medicine, or bandaging would be necessary to keep a person alive, *but no more*—what a ridiculous, *impossible* burden that would be. And that's the way they thought—it was that convoluted. Now, here's an interesting thing: Jesus presented a situation they didn't have a rule for, because there was no rule about *healing* on the Sabbath. Now, you could just keep them alive, you couldn't make them better, and then after sundown, you'd work on making them better. But, there's a very good reason why they didn't have a rule about healing: There had never been a healer in Israel. Before Jesus, no one did *anything resembling* what He did. Now, God did miracles, here and there—God even raised the dead (1 Kings 17:22)—but nobody did what Jesus did (Jn. 15:24; cf. Matt. 9:22).

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

So you can see their thinking; they're probably thinking that, "Well, it is the logical extension of our rule"—they forgot to say "our *absurd* rule"—"against making a sick person better," the logical extension that would be that healing should be prohibited as well. So they didn't think in terms of compassion or goodness—only the *rules*, and, "Can we throw a flag and call a foul?" Now, what I want you to see is that Jesus knew exactly what He was doing; He *always* knew what He was doing, but you can see it here for a special reason: This man's withered hand—it must have looked grotesque, must have made you sad to see it—but that was not a life-threatening situation. Healing him could easily have been postponed till after sundown, so the Sabbath was over; it could've been postponed until the next day, or later, so that's why did this exchange went the way it did. The Pharisees come in, and can put on their scholarly voice and they can look all significant in their own eyes, and they say, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" And Jesus said, "Would you rescue your sheep that fell in the pit on the Sabbath? Of course you would! Well, of how much more value, then, is a man than a sheep? So, then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

So, now you see how Jesus reworded it in Chapter 3, Verse 4—"He said to them, 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?'"—and then I love this—"But they kept silent." Their silence was shameful...probably the smartest thing they could do; the smartest thing they could say was nothing. They couldn't answer without making things even worse for themselves. If they said, "No, it's not lawful to do good on the Sabbath," they'd be contradicting *how they lived!* And, surely, they wouldn't want to stand up and say, "Well, it is lawful to do harm or to kill on the Sabbath"—oh, and by the way, they would have killed Jesus on the Sabbath in a heartbeat, if only they could. It's no wonder they kept silent.

So as He had done countless times already—as He will do many more times in His ministry—Jesus goes beyond the Law, and especially beyond *man's* law, to the reason behind the Law. And the point is that God is good (Deut. 32:4) and God is compassionate (Neh. 9:31); that's the character of God and the character of God knows no days off (Heb. 13:8). So it's lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Oh, it's coming in for a landing here, this strange situation with the shameless spies and the surprised subject that leads to the shameful silence, but first: the Saviors sadness. Look at Verse 5—"After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man"—I don't know how long this took to develop, but the poor guy's been standing there, like I said, this whole time—"He said of the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' " He may have still had it hidden, but can you see him stretching it out, and as he stretches it out—it's perfect, and it works. "He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored."

And I love this: "After looking at them"—that paints the picture of a spectacular, dramatic pause. Jesus took, who knows how long, to look at them; I don't know how many people were there that day—I imagine it was always packed wherever He went. And remember the antecedent of the pronoun "them"—it's the Pharisees. Apparently, Jesus took whatever time it took to specifically lock eyes one-at-a-time with *every single one* of the Pharisees that was there that day in order to try to find a reason to [accuse] Him. Jesus let their shameful and embarrassing silence linger. And in that deafening silence came His piercing gaze on each one of those hypocrites. Wouldn't you love see this in real life? I'm pretty sure that, locking

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

eyes with Jesus in any situation would be pretty dramatic. It would probably either be the greatest blessing or the most terrifying thing that could happen to you, if you were in His presence. Well, in this case it *was* terrifying; He looked at them with *anger*. The word translated "anger" is the Greek word *orge*, which is the word used in the New Testament for God's wrath. God's wrath is His settled attitude toward sin and rebellion; God's wrath is going to be poured out in the Day of the Lord during the Tribulation (Rev. 16:1). Picture it this way—it's the way I've always thought of it; somebody suggested this to me years ago, and it fits: Think of it as this giant vat, and every time anyone's sins, a drop of wrath is added to that vat (Rom. 2:5). It's all being stored up, and when that "great day" of the wrath of "Him who sits on the throne" and "of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16-17)—when the great day of Their wrath comes, that begins to be poured out on Earth (Ecc. 12:14). Well, Jesus looked at them with *that*—that look! Now, obviously He throttled it *back* that day, because He could've incinerated them with that look. It was a look of righteous anger; it was holy indignation. It was anger over the spiritual *tyranny* that these people imposed on others; it was anger over disregarding and contradicting God's Word; it was anger over their pride; it was anger over their hypocrisy; the consciences of those men should have *exploded* on them with conviction. How can you *possibly* withstand the angry stare of the King of kings and Lord of lords? But, withstand it they did.

Here's an interesting bit of trivia: We know that Jesus burned with holy anger other times, like when, at the beginning and the end of His ministry, He went in and cleared the temple (Jn. 2:14-16; Matt. 21:12-13). That was pretty amazing. We know that He felt such anger, but this is the only place, in all of the four gospels, that it specifically ever says that Jesus was angry. Many times in the Old Testament, it mentions the Lord's anger at the hard-heartedness of Israel and their idolatry. But it's the same thing here when Jesus was angry at the Pharisees. But would you notice—along with His anger was His grief. How could anyone be so hard-hearted as to reject this message? How could you stand up to the Son of God and disagree with Him and call *Him* a blasphemer, and plan to kill *Him*? Hardness of heart is the inability to understand spiritual things due to pride and a rebellious attitude (Matt. 13:15; cf. Jn. 5:39-40). But would you notice—that's *God* described right there in that verse: Anger over sin, grief over the ones who choose to remain in it; anger and grief, compassion and righteousness.

Well, at *last*, the guy with the withered hand gets what everyone there expected—his hand is restored; no more paralysis, no more atrophy, no more pain, no more contortion. Just like every healing of Jesus, it was instantaneous and complete. And would you notice that, not only is this the only time we know that Jesus asked anyone to come forward, it's also the only time we know of that He might have said, "I see that hand!" Not enough of you have been to "revivals" to get that; I'll have to change that. Remember, a generation has rolled over here on the odometer of time.

Sad, glorious, wonderful, *gut-wrenching* situation. It *is* a strange situation, there *are* the shameless spies; the surprise subject—he's now healed; there's the shameful silence, there's the Savior's sadness, and finally: the shameful stratagem that they came up with. Look in Verse 6—"The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him."

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

Now, you would think that *anyone* would have responded in faith and repentance after seeing what just happened, after hearing what Jesus just said—and He said it last week also! At the very least, you would think they would go and *talk* about it, maybe search the Scriptures, maybe hightail it down to Jerusalem and have a meeting with the Sanhedrin to discuss whether these things could be so (see Acts 17:11), but—that's not how self-righteous people respond. They were more angry than ever; it must've been *extra* excruciating for them to be so humiliated and embarrassed in public in front of the whole synagogue!

Again, it's interesting how Luke describes this; Mark just says they "went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." Luke 6:11—he says this: "But they themselves were filled with rage"—God the Son has just looked at them with the *orge* of God, and they just get all the more enraged, "and discussed together what they might do to Jesus." Now, the word that Luke chose for "rage"—it's not the same word as Jesus's anger here; [he] chose a word for rage that literally means "mindlessness," or "folly." They went *absolutely crazy*—they were *out of their minds* with hatred for Jesus (Prov. 19:3; cf. Jn. 15:24). Notice it says "they were *filled* with rage." When you're *filled* with something of an emotional nature, it means, you're under its control. Filled with sorrow, filled with joy, filled with grief, filled with sadness, filled with rage—filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), it means to be "under the control of that thing."

So back to Mark. The Pharisees "went out and immediately began conspiring"—now, here's a new wrinkle—"with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." They immediately got to work on furthering the plot, that was already afoot, to destroy Jesus. I'm sure they would've tried to kill Him on the spot; they knew they couldn't get away with it, they would've been lynched, as popular as Jesus was, even though it was the Sabbath, I'm sure, you mess with Jesus, that many people would have turned on you (see Matt. 21:26, 46; Lk. 20:19). Then there's the fact that, when you get right down to it, they were planning futility (Prov. 21:30). No one took away Jesus's life—no one could! He voluntarily gave His life at the perfect moment (Jn. 10:17-18; cf. Jn. 7:30). They worked it all together, they did all these machinations to get Him to the cross, and He didn't die until the moment *He* chose to die (see Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). And He could come down, He could have called 10,000 angels (Matt. 26:53).

But it's interesting to think about how wicked these Pharisees were, and how their judgment was completely blinded by their pride and arrogance and self-righteous and, indeed, their rage. They knew why they wanted Jesus killed; the plot had already been hatched when Jesus was in Jerusalem those weeks before this, remember—that's when He healed the man who had been sick for 38 years, and in John 5:18, we're told: "For this reason therefore the Jews"—and John doesn't use terms like Pharisees and Sadducees, he's not writing for Jewish people, he says "the Jews" when he was referring to the leaders of the Jews. He says, "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him"—they already wanted to kill Him, this just made it more. Why? "Because He not only was breaking the Sabbath"—as they mis-defined it—"not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." So, they considered Him to be a blasphemer for claiming to be God, and they considered Him a lawbreaker for disobeying *their rules* about the Sabbath.

Sermon Title: Lawful Use of the Sabbath
Scripture Text: Mark 3:1-6

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-25-18

But they really had a problem with how to get Him killed. They didn't have the authority to execute anyone—they couldn't impose the death penalty (Jn. 18:31)—and they knew they would need Rome to help them with that, but the Romans wouldn't bother to deal with such things like—"We don't care what you do on Saturday! We don't care about your religious stuff," so the way they finally got Pilate to agree to sentence Him to crucifixion was by saying that Jesus was a threat to Rome (see Lk. 23:2; Jn. 19:12). *That's why* Mark Chapter 3, Verse 6, is significant: They "went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians"—now, who are *they*? Are they a motorcycle gang? We never heard of these guys! Who are "the Herodians"?

Well, do you see the word "Herod" in there? The Herodians were an irreligious, very worldly political group among the Jews, that supported the dynasty of Herod the Great. And when Herod was gone and it went into the four tetrarchies—the four subdivisions of his dynasty—they supported that; so they were supporters of Rome. Secular Jews, they were viewed by their religious Jewish counterparts—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots—they were viewed as loyal to Rome and, therefore, *traitors* to Judaism. So, they couldn't have been any more different from the Pharisees, and normally the Pharisees and the Herodians were archenemies—but this brought them together. Just like, normally, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were archenemies, but Jesus brought them together; these two groups found a common enemy: The Pharisees hated Jesus because He openly exposed and opposed their hypocritical system of works-righteousness (Matt. 23:25-26; Lk. 18:9-14), but the Herodians hated Jesus because His popularity with the people made Him a potential threat to the power of Herod and of Rome, which they supported (Matt. 27:18; Jn. 11:48). And so, they both rejected God's Son. That is being blinded—*blinded*—by rage and hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

What a contrast! They're going to quibble over rules about the Sabbath and then scurry out the back door of the synagogue and go plan a murder. Take it a step further—"Let's bring somebody in that we would *never, ever* talk to or have anything to do with, except—well, maybe they could help the kill Jesus." So they bring in the Herodians. What a contrast between that and the compassion that Jesus had. Remember, He reached out to all those people and said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden"—of all these spiritual burdens they're putting on you—"I will give you rest...rest west for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). He was the only one there that had compassion, or showed compassion, for the man with the withered hand; and, yes indeed, He had anger for the false teachers.

My friends, do you understand—God is a God of goodness (Ps. 25:8; 119:68; 145:17; Is. 45:21). God is a God of compassion (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 25:6; 116:5; Lam. 3:22-23). There is no day, there is no time, that any attribute of God takes a day off (Ps. 90:2; 121:4; Is. 46:4). Go with His message. You don't have to be under that burden of all those do's and don'ts—they won't do you any good anyway! You need something *you* can't produce! You need a righteousness only God can give you (Rom. 4:1-5; Phil. 3:9; Eph. 2:8-9), and you can take that glorious message, and countless ways you can show His compassion along the way, which often is what opens the door for someone to hear the wonderful message of the Savior (see Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:8-10).

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Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You again for—well, ultimately, for Your Son. Thank You for eternal life that we have in Him. Thank You that, no matter what earthly good, human good we've done, we realize, none of that is enough to bring us, ever, into Your presence, so we thank You for that righteousness which is not of ourselves. Father, please send us from this place as examples of Your compassion, Your goodness, Your truth. Put the gospel on our lips, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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