



rest for the weary

Sermon Growth Guide

June 9, 2024

Where Does Healing Begin?

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Rest for the Weary - Where Does Healing Begin?

Mark 3: 1-12

Key Verse: Mark 3:10

For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

Big Idea: Our brokenness can only be healed by going to Jesus before anything else.



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Foundations

This Sabbath controversy is the third Sabbath episode so far in Mark. All three events testify to Jesus' claim that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus exercises His lordship, not to abolish Sabbath but to return it to its original roots in creation and its re-creation in the Exodus from slavery.

When the Lord gave the Sabbath command to his people, he was showing them a way to live free of the enslaving demands of a greedy and power-hungry world. It was a way that fostered trust in God to provide all that was needed.

In this account, the words of Jesus have a familiar ring when he says, "Stretch out your hand." It recalls the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy 5:15 in which God says, "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." In fact, Some liturgical readings pair this verse with the Mark account because of that connection.

References to God's mighty hand and outstretched arm occur in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and many of the major prophets. But in Mark, Jesus does not stretch out his arm to heal the man. Instead, he asks the man to reach toward Him. On the Sabbath, God stretches out His arm and hand to save us and invites us to stretch out our hand to Him in response. The result is the healing, strengthening and new life we need.

Understanding God's Word

Psalm 92 is entitled a Song for the Sabbath Day. Verses 12-15 compare the righteous to a flourishing tree. By their lives, the righteous show that the Lord is their rock.

Read Psalm 92 together, then discuss: In what ways does this Psalm help you understand why Jesus, in Mark's gospel, asserts his authority over the Sabbath? What does it say about God's love and care for his creation and the people in it?

Applying God's Word

Scholar Walter Brueggemann has said: "Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms. Whereas the Israelites [like us] are always tempted to acquisitiveness, Sabbath is an invitation to receptivity." The man with the withered hand stretched it out to receive the healing and new life that Jesus offered. How do you think the example of this man could help you stop using your hands to grasp and open them to receive what God offers?

Witnessing God's Word

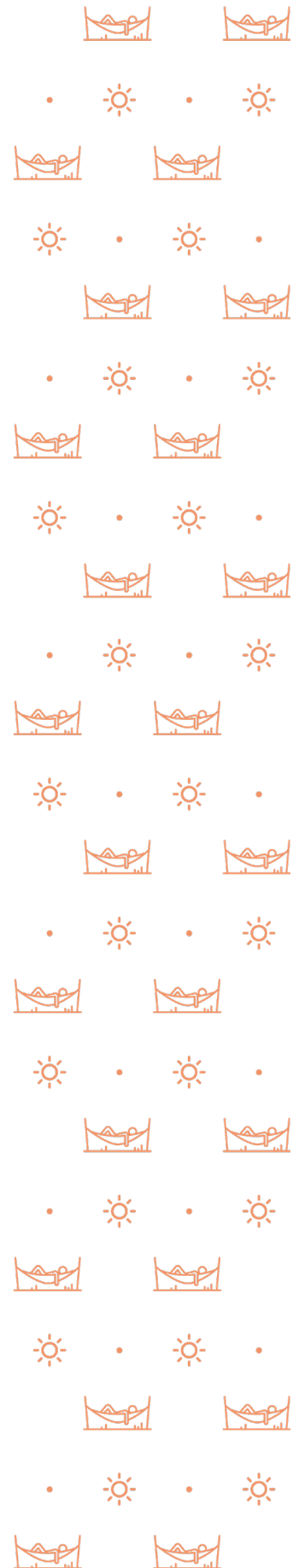
Jim Edwards, in his commentary on Mark says: "Faith is not a private wager but a public risk that Jesus is worthy of trust when no other hope can be trusted." How can you reveal that Jesus is who you trust before all others when you need help and healing?

Everyone is looking for a cure. Drug companies are making incredible advances. When I was a kid, all the commercials were for Doritos, Lucky Charms, Kool-Aid and McDonalds. Now all the commercials are for Rinvoq, Dupixent, Skyrizi and Ozempic! Maybe there's a connection there. Too many fruit rollups. We all want to know, when something is wrong, when will the healing start? Where Does Healing Begin? When we don't know where to find a cure, we look in all kinds of places. Let's look again at Jesus' invitation to us. This is what we are concentrating on during this series: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) Notice something. Jesus doesn't say, "Go try this," or "Do the following and you will meet with certain success." Jesus says, "Come to me. To me. I am the source. I am the fountain of life. I am the beginning of healing. Me." Jesus. Does Jesus have the power to heal? Where does healing begin?

"Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath." (Mark 3:1-2) If you were here last week, we talked about Sabbath. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. Here it begins to just stand in for religion. These Sabbath issues are emblems of the whole problem of religion. What is the point of religion if not to help? If not to heal? What good is religion if not to connect lost and broken people with a healing and loving God? Jesus just said a page back in this Gospel, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17) It reminds me of the old saying, sometimes credited to Saint Augustine, "The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners." This isn't a place for those who have their lives all together to come and show off their victorious success. This is a place for the hurting, wearied, burdened and burned to find help. It is a place of healing.

We have a reputation as a church full of people who have their act together. I don't know how to change that. I can't ask you all to go out there and screw up bigtime. Get out there and make some headline-grabbing mistakes! I don't think you want me to do that either. But I do wish sometimes—because I know you, and you know me—I do wish we could throw up some before and after slides. You've told me your stories. Now things are going well, but before, back when you were a mess... Let's put those slides up! Hit it! Oh, technical difficulties. You'd see some pictures of me. Anyway, I hope you understand what I'm getting at. People have a hard time believing this is a hospital because everyone in here looks healed! We need to share our stories of injury, and brokenness, and healing so the lost and broken have hope. The Pharisees weren't in for that.

Jesus decided to make it a point for demonstration. Come on out to center stage, my friend, where everyone can see you. "Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent." (Mark 3:3-4) Wait a minute. Is Jesus talking about healing or not? It's much bigger than that. Sabbath is a time and space to meet with God; regularly observed; one day in seven (the seventh day, until Christians shifted it to the first to honor Christ's resurrection). Sabbath is time and space to meet with God. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. What Jesus points out here is that the Pharisees' religious concern is getting in the way of someone coming to Jesus. It's much bigger than a healed hand. This is good versus evil. This is life versus death. If someone approaches the synagogue, if someone approaches the church, looking for healing, looking with hope for help from Jesus, and some cultural concern or unreasonable rule gets in the way of that, that's a problem. The Pharisees favored strict observance of the no-work restriction for Sabbath over relieving the pain of a suffering man.



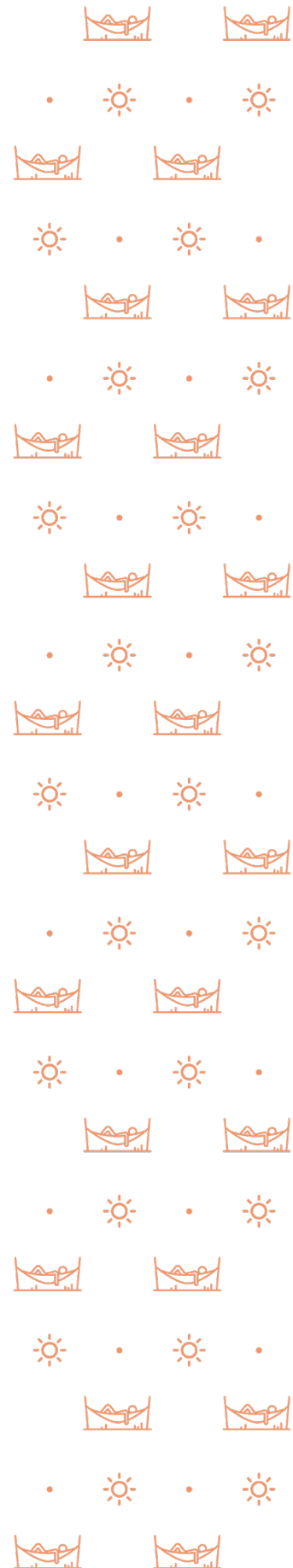
We are a downtown church. I just want to say I'm so proud of our Life Safety Team. They do everything they can to make sure anyone who wants to come in and worship can do so safely and without destroying the service of worship. It usually works great, but not always. And in those cases, they do all they can to bring the fellowship of Christ out to the person where they are in their confusion and hurt. We do a great job with that. I wonder if we are as effective among our own non-Christian friends and neighbors. Do they see First Pres as a place of help and healing, or a place where we polish our crowns? It takes sharing your weakness and your own stories of healing with others.

Jesus makes the point very clear. Actually, the text tells us he was angry: "He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored." (Mark 3:5) It's a rage healing. No. Jesus doesn't rage. In His anger He never sins. It's the anger of a good man in the presence of selfish evil. It's like the anger of a parent against the drug that has captured their child, or the anger of a husband against the cancer that infects his wife and takes her life. Jesus heals the man in demonstration—emotive, firm, angry, demonstration. "This is right. Doing nothing is wrong. Now watch." But the opponents decide to kill Him.

Does Jesus have the power to heal? Jesus healed this man's hand. Jesus went on to heal a lot of people. Verse 8 says they started coming from every direction and from far away, from Tyre and Sidon on the coast of the Mediterranean, from 125 miles southeast in Edom, they all came to find the Healer. They were crowding Him to the point He needed a boat ready to escape. "For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him." (Mark 3:10) Everybody wants to find a cure. Jesus was a miracle worker. An early historian named Josephus described Him as a wonderworker. "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds." (Josephus, Antiquities) Jesus was known for producing miracles. Does Jesus have

the power to heal? Yes. Then, you ask, why didn't He heal me? Why didn't He heal my husband or my wife? Why didn't He heal my child? I don't know, but He does. When Jesus heals, He is doing more than fixing the problem at hand (so to speak). When Jesus performs miracles He is forecasting the full arrival of the Kingdom of God, where there is no sickness, pain or death. So, He didn't heal everyone. He doesn't heal everyone. Some remained unhealed, in this life. But He nevertheless, in His healing, demonstrates the reality of the coming Kingdom of God, a reality the demons could see very clearly. "Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.' But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him." (Mark 3:11-12) Demons are not good emissaries to represent Jesus. "Thanks, guys. I'm going to go with a different marketing team."

Where does the healing begin? When we don't know where to turn, we turn anywhere. Rest for the weary is about coming to Jesus. "Come to me," He says. When we don't, we are restless. We turn anywhere and everywhere. A friend told me this week about how she lost her brother. It's a story, I'm sad to say, we have all heard too much. He was a Soldier, a Marine and then a Soldier in the Army, and he did a tour in Iraq. Iraq was a challenging war, if nothing else because the enemy was always all around you. Nowhere was safe. There was no front line. But, like all war, it was full of terrible violence and he saw men do things to one another none of us should ever see. And he had to do his own works of violence, which he always wondered about morally and could not find peace. My friend said her brother "self-medicated" with alcohol and drugs. He couldn't find a place for healing; he couldn't find where healing begins so he self-medicated. That's what we all do, isn't it? We do what we can to dull the pain, to distract from the anguish. When we can't find where healing begins we restlessly try every avenue. It isn't always alcohol, or marijuana, or other chemicals and drugs. We self-medicate with whatever distractions we can find. We doomscroll social media, binge-watch until Netflix has to ask us if we are still there, we overwork, overplay, over-sex...whatever. But this Soldier self-medicated with alcohol and



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it became an addiction. His organs shut down and he was found in his apartment by his mother. The bright spot was that he came to the Lord in his final weeks. Thank God for that.

Where does the healing begin? It begins with Jesus. Jesus has the power to heal. I'm not saying to drop your medicines and go with Jesus. But what I am saying is go to Jesus first. Go to Jesus first, then go with Him to the doctor. Turn to Jesus first, then go with Him to your therapist. Turn to Jesus first. Jesus is where the healing begins. Saint Augustine did famously say, without a doubt, in the opening lines of his spiritual autobiography called *The Confessions* that our hearts are restless until they rest in Christ. "Man is one of your creatures, Lord, and his instinct is to praise you. He bears about him the mark of death, the sign of his own sin... but still, since he is a part of your creation, he wishes to praise you. The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you." Our hearts are restless until they rest in God. How many things have you tried? Rest for the weary means turning to Jesus. "Come to me."

Would a restless seeker find Jesus here? Would the sick find the Great Physician here at First Pres? Sometimes our perfect appearance is off-putting to those who know their life is not all together. But our lives are not all together either. Our Counseling Coalition recently did a study to help us see some things in true light, just baseline statistics. Taking the most conservative numbers, in any group of 100 people, at least 19 are struggling with anxiety, 18 with depression; at least ten women are victims of physical abuse, six men of emotional abuse, ten wrestle with alcoholism, and a half dozen or more are carrying the constant pain of infertility. That's us. We're not saints polished like marble in a museum; we are the wounded who have found the Healer by grace.

What made Jesus upset was that the religious blocked the sick man from the only One who could make him whole. And this is big. Jesus says this isn't about rule

following or rule breaking, this is good and evil, life and death. It's that big, this mission we have. The demons are not a good marketing team for the Savior. Jesus does not allow them to be His witnesses. But you and I, we are His witnesses. Will the lost of Colorado Springs find Jesus among us? How can we be better at sharing the good news? "There is someone called Jesus. He healed my soul. He is where the healing begins." Jesus took all the violence on Himself when He went to the Cross. Jesus took all the sickness, all the pain, all the wounds. He took it all. Now, why is He where the healing begins? Because when He rose again from the dead, His very body walked out of death and into life, and life eternal. From evil to good; from death to life. Jesus is where the healing begins.

