

Week of Meetings 04 Mark 4:-Sowing and Reaping

by David Clifford

The sermon highlights the unchanging nature of Christ and His ongoing work of restoration and empowerment in the lives of believers today.

Duration: 59:12

Scripture: Mark 3:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Faith Healing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the Word of God effectively and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He encourages young preachers to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through them and address the spiritual needs of the people. The sermon then focuses on the story in Mark chapter 3 where Jesus restores a man with a withered hand. The preacher highlights the significance of this miracle, showing that Jesus still restores those who obey Him. He also emphasizes that God can use small things and small people to accomplish great things for His kingdom. The sermon concludes by urging the audience to seek the Lord and attend gatherings where the Word of God is preached.

Transcript

I enjoyed that solo piece very much, brother. Thank you very much. I was inclined to sing a solo myself.

I said to a friend of mine, do you think I ought to have my voice cultivated? Well he said, yes, but for pity's sake, when you do, bury it deep. So I don't think I'm going to sing for you this morning, but we'll read the scriptures together. That's so nice to have this time of fellowship.

We're getting a bit thinner in numbers day by day, which is understandable for two reasons. One, it's the end of the season, and two, I'm here. People come up to me and say, I'm going tomorrow, and then somebody else says, and I'm leaving in the morning.

Terribly encouraging. Nice to see you. Delighted to have your fellowship.

Don't any of you run away this week now? You know, my friend Geoffrey Bull of Tibet was allowed during the time of his solitary confinement occasionally to walk on the roof of the fort in which he was imprisoned in a cell down below ground. And he said once he saw a Christian from the rooftop of this fort, and he was holding his baby in the distance it was. And he said, I didn't think he could see me, but just in case I raised

my hand slightly and waved it, and to my utter joy and delight he waved back.

And he says, the attention of the guard had not been attracted during the waving ceremony. And away from a brother, Geoffrey added, away from a brother in Christ in such circumstances as that was a veritable feast of fellowship. Now you've had a tremendous feast of fellowship here in the last three months.

But nothing to be compared what that must have meant to him. A brother in Christ giving a little wave in the distance after being confined for so long. Well now I trust that the Lord will bless us this morning again and draw us to himself through the reading of his word.

Mark chapter three. You will see from the sheet that you had on the Lord's Day If you want another copy, there's several outside in the foyer of the chapel. You will see that this morning's message is the Jesus yesterday and Jesus today.

We've already briefly gone into chapter one and chapter two. We'll read just parts of chapter three this morning. And he entered again into the synagogue with the Lord Jesus and there was a man which had a withered hand and they watched him, Jesus, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse him.

He said unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth, that is in the midst. And he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days or to do evil, to save life or to kill? That they held their peace. When he looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand.

And he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other. Verse nine, and he spake to his disciples that a small ship should wait on him. Verse ten, they pressed upon him for to touch him as many as had plagued.

He healed many. Verse eleven, the unclean spirits when they saw him fell down before him and cried saying, Thou art the Son of God. And verse thirteen, he got up into a mountain and calleth unto him whom he would.

And they came unto him and he ordained twelve that they should be with him, that he might send them forth to preach and to have power, to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. So may the Lord bless to us these verses from his holy word. Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews thirteen and verse eight. And when I was looking into Mark's gospel I was impressed with the fact that all that the Lord Jesus did in those days he's still doing today. For the Lord Jesus ascended on high and gave gifts unto men for the fulfilment of his own purposes in the world.

And not only did he give them individual gifts of varying kinds to be exercised in the local church, in and from it, but he gave them a very, very special gift so that this might be perfected through them. His own ministry through them. And that was, of course, his own Holy Spirit.

He said, it is good for you that I am going away because if I don't go away the Holy Spirit will not come unto you. Now you see, he said, I'm with you, you see, and the Holy Spirit will be with you. But he'll be more than that to you.

He'll be in you. I can't be in you in that sense, but he is a spirit and he will be in you. Not only so, he said, he will be with you all.

I'm here in one place at one time bodily, although of course we believe in the omniscience of Christ. Some brethren these days don't believe in that which is rather unfortunate. The omnipresence of Christ as well as an omniscience.

But he was only bodily in one place at one time, but it is the Holy Spirit, you see, he'll be with you all wherever you are. And not only so, but I'm only with you temporally, but he will be with you forever. He will abide with you forever.

So he said, it's a good thing that I'm going away, the Holy Spirit will come and be with you and abide with you forever. Now Christ is on the throne and in his present session, as the present work of Christ is called in theological terms, in his present session he is not only our advocate with the Father and our intercessor with God, but he is the church builder. He said, I will build my church.

And this is his work today in the world through his Holy Spirit. And the Lord Jesus, it struck me as I read this portion, is just the same today as yesterday. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever.

He is still blessing those who come to him. He is still touching with power those who believe on him. He is still saving by his grace those who trust in him.

He is still calling some to serve him. He is just the same. God's immutability is a wonderful doctrine in the Word.

Thou art the same and thy years shall not fail. The immutability of our Saviour, his unchangeableness is a very great comfort to God's people, especially these days. When sinners to the Saviour came, the weary ones found rest.

He pardoned and he healed them all. Each one who came was blessed. O bring to him your load of sin and come without delay, for the one who welcomes sinners then is just the same today.

Now there's such a lot in this portion, I'm probably going to emphasise the first idea and the others will just have to leave those, I'm afraid, at this time. But notice, first of all in the first few verses, the Lord Jesus is restoring this man with a withered hand and this man becomes useful in society once more. And the Lord Jesus still restores those who obey him.

Then secondly, in verse nine, he wanted to use a small ship. He's just the same today. He still wants to use small things and small people to do a mighty job for him.

God is looking and Christ is looking for men who are small enough or who are big enough to be small enough to be used by him in a big way. And there were with him, we read in another part, other little ships. Lord, we are those other little ships.

Then thirdly, in verse ten, they came and touched him and they were healed of their plagues and he still saves those who touch him in faith. Then verses eleven and twelve, notice that he often confronted unclean spirits and they fell down and confessed him to be the son of God and he exorcised them. And he still has power today over the unseen world of evil spirits and people today in many parts of the world, even now in civilised countries like America and Britain.

Evil spirits are being exorcised by the power of the living Christ and people are being delivered. And then fifthly, in verse thirteen, he called unto him whom he would. And the Lord is still calling to himself a servant to serve him.

These were twelve typical men here, no two were alike, quite a cross-section of mankind so to speak, all very imperfect in certain ways, yet with one exception. Please note there was a place for each in the fellowship and in the service of Christ. In his sovereignty he called them and in their free will they responded to his call.

Please notice that Judas was not forced irresistibly to be faithful to Christ and he was unfaithful. We must always take the sovereignty of Christ along with the responsibility of man for all the way through the scriptures the two are inseparable. So you notice that he called them to him, that they might be with him.

This of course was their special training to be with him. And in all our training of young men and women, young men particularly for the service of Christ in Britain and in the Bahamas and Bermuda wherever the Lord shall take us, we seek to emphasise the spiritual side of the training, not just only the academic theology and the academic homiletical ministry, but the spiritual side, the spiritual emphasis, applying the word to the heart, preparing in a spiritual way for a spiritual service. And we are called to the highest service and it is a spiritual preparation we need and the important preparation is to be with him.

So he still calls men to be with him, that they might go out and serve him. Their appointment with Christ involves communion with him, companionship with him, and a commission from him. Now sixthly, in verse 14, he ordained twelve of them that they should be with him that he might send them forth to preach.

Now the Lord Jesus still ordains men to preach. Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today. And the top priority in the ministry of Christ is preaching.

Practically all the gifts of the Spirit given to the individual members of the church are preaching and teaching gifts. And that verse in John's epistle, second epistle, has been greatly misunderstood. You have me that no man should teach you.

It doesn't mean to say that we haven't got to listen to preachers and teachers at all or have Sunday school teachers. The idea is there in the context that the Holy Spirit is in you and you have the omniscient, all-knowing Holy Spirit in your heart. And in times of crisis and when you are brought before councils to give an answer for your faith in Christ, you have no me that any man should teach you.

The Holy Spirit himself shall reveal to you what to say and declare to you the will of God personally at that time. I believe that is the context of that. But it doesn't mean that we haven't got to listen to the teaching of the Word or go to Bible schools or come to conferences and listen to God's servants preaching and teaching the Word.

Because all the gifts are preaching and teaching gifts given to the church for the up-building of our faith. Now I said that he still ordains men to preach and of course it is the Saviour who ordains men to preach. Now in the New Testament you do get the idea of the laying on of hands in relation to ordination to preach.

But that is often misunderstood as well. And by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, said the Apostle Paul writing to the young men, the gift was given thee. Now the presbytery is just a company of elders.

Evidently what the elders did, probably in a public meeting, they laid their hands upon this young man to confirm and outwardly testify that they themselves believed that this young man had been set apart by the Holy Ghost for this special ministry that was given to him. Now this isn't done very often in brethren circles. It is sometimes.

A friend of mine who was a great missionary to Bolivia, one of my students, Bill Cotton, he married an American girl so he must be a very wise servant of the Lord. He came to me in the college chapel one day and said, excuse me sir, but will you, when you have the farewell meeting for me in the chapel here, will you please lay your hands upon me? I said, well it's very stricture so I must do it. And apparently the elders did it in the New Testament and I was an elder so I did it.

And at that special request. Well now the point is we are not ordaining anybody. The laying on of hands is an outward expression of faith that we believe God has set apart this man by the Holy Spirit for this ministry.

Baptism is just an outward expression of what has already happened in the life of the individual who is being immersed. And anointing with oil in James 5 is an outward expression that we believe it is the will of God that this brother or sister should be healed. So apart from the laying on of hands, the Lord Jesus Christ still does ordain men to preach.

He ordains them. He sets them aside for the special ministry to which he is calling them. And one of the Lord's servants put it this way, Christ the Son of God hath sent me through the midnight lands mine the mighty ordination of the pierced hand.

And of course when you know you are ordained and called and guided by God you can sing in the prison although the going is tough like Paul and Silas did in Acts chapter 16. Assuredly gathering they said a little while before, assuredly gathering the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them in Philippi in Macedonia. Were they assured now? They were.

It was the ordination of the pierced hand. It was the call of the Holy Spirit. It was the manifest power of God in the salvation of Lydia and the girl with the evil spirit.

And now in the prison they sang praises to God and the power of God was manifested not only in the earthquake but in the conversion of the jailer and his family. Thank God he still ordains men to preach. And seventhly, now don't think I'm finishing yet.

And seventhly and lastly he still gives them power. This is verse 15. He ordained them that they might go and preach and to have power.

He still gives power to those who go forth at his command and in his will. Now I want to emphasise preaching just for a moment. You I understand have very, very good preachers here at Park of the Palm.

When I look through the list and see myself at the bottom, I say thank God they put me at the bottom of the list. And then I, with fear and trembling, I come and preach after this great, long list of outstanding preachers. But I notice that some of these are well known as preachers.

You see, there is a trend today, especially in my country, to stand up and read a lecture or read a sermon. Now that's not preaching. It's nice to have an ordered address.

But you can give an address on a secular subject to all set out and so on perfectly and beautifully. But if you are preaching in the New Testament sense of the word, delivering the sermon, you not only have your theme and your outline, but you have places where the Holy Spirit can come in and say something through you to the blessing of the people there. And this is a very important New Testament idea.

A New Testament prophet is a man who doesn't foretell the future, but tells forth the word of God as has been revealed to him in the meeting, revealed to him what the spiritual need is of the people there present. And he gets up under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit and gives the people what has been given to him during the meeting. And so the spiritual need of the people is met and God's people are exhorted and comforted.

And people who come in they say, God is with you of a truth. Why? Because they say, you've been speaking right to my heart. Somebody must have told the preacher about me.

Well of course somebody did. It was the Holy Spirit who told the preacher to get up and give that message. Now this is New Testament prophecy.

This is the preacher in the assembly proclaiming the word of God as he is led by the Holy Spirit at the time. Now brethren used to major on this years ago. They don't anymore you know.

And it's a great pity. And because there is not the liberty of the Holy Spirit, because there is not the guidance of the Holy Spirit in amnesty, he ordained them to preach. And the New Testament emphasis on preaching is very great.

And it's a very spiritual order to preach the word. And something is done. And the power of the Lord is manifested to save and to bless.

And he ordained them to preach. And he gave them power. This is why we teach homiletics in our Bible school work.

Because the exhortation is preach the word. And three things are necessary if you are going to preach the word. You must know the word to preach it.

That's why we teach theology. You must know how to preach the word in the New Testament sense too. Not your newfangled modern idea of lecture making.

You must learn how to preach. That's where homiletics comes in. That's the science, the art of sermon construction and delivery.

But that must not be taken to an unscriptural extreme. Because if we are going to preach the word effectively, we must not only know the word to preach it, know how to preach it, but we must know in our experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit that we might preach it in his power. And that's why we must be very careful to teach our young men to give an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to come in his service.

And say something to the people that should meet their spiritual need. When I'm going to in the last little while, they never tell me when to finish, you know. And it's a great joy to me, a great sorrow to the audience.

But for the last little while we are together this morning, I want us to go back to the beginning of the chapter. Because we're not able to spend time. I wasn't going to spend that time, it just came out while I

was reading it just now.

On those other six points. But the first one is the one I want to emphasise this morning. Because he still restores those who obey him.

As the man with the withered hand stood forth, then brought out into the light his withered hand and it and he were restored and it and he were made whole by the power of the Saviour that day. So in verse one, the Lord Jesus entered into the synagogue. Lots of people have met the Lord in the place of meeting, of worship.

You remember Joseph and Mary went back after journeying without him when he was a boy and found him in the temple, in the midst. Now that speaks to me of salvation. If you ever find Christ as your Saviour, you'll find him in the midst.

Not only in the midst of his people, but in the midst on the cross. There they crucified him on either side one and Jesus in the midst. And then you remember there was Thomas in the upper room.

There they were gathered together and there they were praying and Jesus came and stood in the midst. And this speaks to me of inspiration. Their faith in Christ was inspired and their love to him as well.

Especially Thomas who said, My Lord and my God. And in this case, this man met the Lord in the synagogue and this speaks of restoration. So I'm very glad to see you here this morning because you see the Lord is here and although we meet one another and fellowship like this is good.

As I am sharp and as I am so, the countenance of a man his fellow. Pleased to see one another. But the great blessing of a meeting like this is that we meet the Lord.

There am I in the midst of them. Forfeit not the assembling of yourselves together therefore because the Lord is there in the midst. And so there was a man there who had a withered hand but the Lord was there and met him at the point of his need.

So much the more therefore as you see the day approaching forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. They found the Lord in the place of worship. Now look at this man for a moment.

These are the ideas this morning. I'm going to put the last thing first. The inevitable results of the man's affliction a withered hand.

And then we'll suggest the indirect reasons for his affliction. And finally the invincible one who cured his affliction and brought him restoration. First of all then the inevitable results of his affliction.

He was unable to serve his master. He was unfit for real service. He had unfortunate problems at home and there was an unsatisfactory consecration.

I'll tell you what I mean as we go on. The first result of his affliction was this that he was unable to serve his master. Probably this man at Capernaum was a fisherman.

Now I've been in this synagogue. Maybe you have too. The ruins of it trodden upon the flagstones that maybe the saviour trod upon.

They told us they were the same ones but you never know. It's good to walk in the steps of the master but it's better still to have a confrontation with him when you're in spiritual need and needing respiration. If this man in need that day was a fisherman well I've noticed on the Sea of Galilee that fishermen are forever using their hands more than anything else all day long.

They have to throw out the nets and then they have to draw them in and they have to sort out the fish and then they have to put them in boxes and they do everything with their hands and now that he's got a withered hand he's unable to serve his master to whoever was the owner of that boat in which he served. One of the results therefore of this affliction was that his service was no use anymore. I think we have to realise too that we are called not only to be saved but we are called to serve.

And if there is something in our lives which is not of the Lord we shall never be able to be any use to our master until we find restoration from him. Not only so but he was unfit for real fellowship. You can't shake hands if your right hand is with it you know.

It's a very, very difficult thing to do. I have a friend in Britain who is the leading brother that's not a very helpful phrase but he is anyway one of the leading brothers in the London area in the St Albans Assembly, O.C. Hartridge. We call him O.C. for short.

O.C. is a great servant of the Lord and he does a lot but he can't shake hands with you. And shaking hands in Britain of course is a sign of real fellowship. Phillips in his translation at the end of, right at the end, the very end of 2nd Corinthians where it says, to greet all the brethren with a holy kiss, he puts it this way, shake hands with everybody all around or something like that.

A hearty handshake for everybody all around. Well that's very modern and up to date. But my friend O.C. can't shake hands because his right hand is all with it like this.

He tries to drive his car you know but he mostly does it with his left hand. Occasionally if he wants to put his left hand out he's going round the corner, he just hooks this withered hand over the steering wheel and does this, does something with his left hand. But of course it is a hindrance you see.

And when there is need of spiritual restoration the hindrance is manifest to all and sundry. And this man found that he couldn't shake hands. So similarly spiritual unfitness often ruins Christian fellowship.

I mean to say how can you be in heart fellowship with another brother when there's something wrong between you and the Lord and he's in touch with God. No doubt in this man's case there'd be unfortunate problems at home. There would be poverty.

He's not able to do his fishing or whatever was his job. Now he had no weekly or monthly income and poverty comes to his home in that little cottage by the lake of Galilee. Maybe they have to give up the cottage now and go and live in a cave.

There are many caves around that area. And of course it's quite true in the spiritual sense that spiritual poverty will come to our homes when one parent has a withered hand in the spiritual sense. If there's something blocking and hindering our spiritual lives even one of us has a parent then the whole family will suffer.

Spiritual poverty came to his home unfortunately because of his withered hand. And I said also forcefully it'd be unsatisfactory consecration. I say that because in the Pentateuch when it's talking about

consecration it says, If any man therefore is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord and the word literally from the Hebrew the word there is for consecrate fill his hand.

The idea is to fill your hands full as an offering to the Lord in consecration. And if a man has a withered hand how can he fill it full for the Lord? And of course spiritual affliction spoils Christian consecration every time. However there's one thing I must say here that as a young fellow I tried to consecrate myself to the Lord and it just wouldn't work.

And I found as I've been going around the world that quite a lot of young Christians very sincere, anxious to be consecrated to the Lord. And they try to consecrate their own holy selves to Christ and it doesn't work. Maybe you've found that out, I did many a time.

But I realised in more recent years it's very, very important to get out of the captivity of Romans 7 into the conquering of Romans 8 by the Spirit before you can get to the consecration of Romans 12 verses 1 and 2. It's no good taking Romans 12 out of the scriptural order and the divine pattern of things. We must first of all know that we have been crucified with Christ baptised into his death. In the divine reckoning we are one with Christ in his death.

We must enter into this in experience reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Enjoy the blessings of liberation and victory by the Spirit, not by selfly effort, fleshly effort. By the Spirit as in Romans 8 before we can get to the consecration of Romans 12.

Because the word there is I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice wholly acceptable unto God. Now your body is not a living sacrifice if you are not living by the light of Christ and his Spirit in you. You cannot consecrate something unholy to God.

It won't go. Living, holy and acceptable if you are out of the will of the Lord there can never be actual consecration in your Christian experience. You know those three chapters 9, 10 and 11 in Romans are in parenthesis.

They are historical and prophetic in relation to the Jews. So you go straight on from Romans 6, 7, 8 to chapter 12 and this is the great confirmation of the whole teaching of our union with Christ in his death and his life. Entering into it by an exercise of faith day by day we can thereby consecrate our bodies to Christ and it will go, it will work and God's power will be manifest through our ministry and our Christian life.

Well after the inevitable results of his affliction we ought to look at the indirect reasons for his affliction. Why was this man going around with a withered hand? You say well I would imagine brother that he was afflicted that way because his hand had never grown since he was born. Well maybe you are right.

Sometimes we do find this is true. Certain parts of the body don't develop with the rest of the body. And I have a friend in another country who has two baby feet.

He is a grown man and his feet are about that big. And they have never grown. And when this happens of course it makes the parents very sad.

And when it doesn't happen when the growth is not manifest it makes the parents very very sad indeed. No growth of certain parts of the body since birth. Maybe that's why he had a withered hand.

He just hadn't grown. Or perhaps grown so far and withered up. You know lots of Christians are like that.

And that's why they are spiritually impotent today. Because since their new birth through faith in Christ they haven't developed. They haven't read the Scriptures daily.

They haven't sought to understand the doctrines of the Word. And they haven't placed themselves at the Lord's disposal in His holy service. There's been no manifestation of spiritual growth.

And the Scripture plainly says so walk go on step by step in newness of life and they just haven't done that. And that's why their right hand so to speak as it were in the spiritual sense is withered. Now we are born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

And that's wonderful to experience the new birth through the Living Word. But we are day by day to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by living on the life-giving Word which is life-sustaining as well. Only that which is living is life-giving and only that which is living is life-sustaining.

And the Word of God is for us to grow thereby. And we are to feed on the Scriptures of truth and on the Saviour Himself through direct communion and personal day by day communion with Him. Or else we shan't develop and we shall have a withered hand.

The Lord Jesus is the bread of life sent down from Heaven as we listen to His voice in the Word and commune with Him. We are feeding spiritually and developing spiritually and growing thereby. Will you say perhaps it was that His right hand had never grown? Perhaps you're right.

Somebody else says, well brother, I think perhaps it was because He had a stoppage one day in the flow of the life blood through His arm and His right hand became withered. Well it would, wouldn't it? Maybe your guess is right. I think it was going on wonderfully until one day for some reason there was a stoppage in the flow of the life blood from His heart through His arm to His hand.

There was a stoppage and His right hand became withered. This is often the case in the spiritual realm. You know very well as I do that occasions come when the life of Jesus by His Spirit in us is blocked.

The Lord Jesus has given His Spirit to indwell us, to flow through us in every department of our lives, every avenue of our being. An explanation of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is this, the absolute and direct control of the Holy Spirit who is indwelling in every, His control in every part of our being. His control.

You cannot have more of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit can have more of you and more control. Is He controlling your feet and your eyes and your tongue and your hands? Is He in you altogether and completely controlling? That is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And when the Spirit of Christ is blocked and there is a stoppage in the life flow of the life of the Son of God by His Spirit, then my right hand in a spiritual sense will become withered.

The flesh you see is a terrible thing, it will stop anything. Self-confidence will stop the Lord Jesus working because no flesh of glory in His presence. Self-devotion is the sort of thing that God will leave us to show how vain it is.

Self-importance is so obnoxious to the nostrils of the Holy God. And self-love and self-pity and self-reliance will block the flow of the life of Jesus through us. For we as Christians have to depend upon Him and Him alone because Christ is made unto us all that we need, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption and Christ is our life.

Self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, just plain selfishness or self-will, anything to do with the old nature will block the flow of the new nature. For you are partakers of the divine nature. You are partakers of the Holy Ghost.

You are partakers of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of the Father and the Son and He is in us.

And if there's anything stopping His life flowing through us then our right hand is going to be with us. And we'll be no good to the Master. When you say perhaps it wasn't that.

It wasn't that it hadn't grown since He was born or there's stoppage in the life of flow or the flow of the life blood through His arm to His hand. You say I know what it was. I expect this man hadn't used his hand for some reason.

Perhaps some form of penitence like the Kafirs in India, these holy men. They show how holy they are by raising their right hand up in the air and they keep there for weeks and months. And when they eventually take it down they find it's useless and sort of half withered.

You say He probably hadn't used His hand so it gradually became useless and withered. Of course God gives us hands to use them. God gives us feet to use.

God gives us a tongue to use. We have been made for His pleasure, for His glory we were and are creative. But more than that as I say in another connection, God has given to us gifts to be used.

God has given to us His Holy Spirit to be used if I can say that reverently. So that it can be not I but Christ and His Spirit in me and through me. And if I'm not using what God has given to me then the gift will become useless as it were my right hand will become withered.

I was speaking to the students in the Bahamas only the other day about this. Or was it in the assembly at Shirley Heights I forget now. But saying that God has given to everyone of us a gift.

What is yours? Have you found out? What's your special gift? There are sixteen gifts altogether. Sixteen! And there is no scripture to suggest that any of them have been taken away. I know some brethren say so but you can't find it in the word.

I challenge you. But I will tell you this that God doesn't use all the gifts all the time. Only when He will.

And there's government in the church. Over this weekend in this church you've seen the benefit of the gifts of government in the church. Helps in the church.

We have some marvellous helps in this church I understand. Look at that beautiful meal they've prepared for you now. Do it for the Lord's sake and for the glory of His name in this assembly.

And of course there are all kinds of gifts in the church. Some say there are, some of them are foundational gifts. You can't say that.

In Ephesians where it talks about on the foundation of the apostles and prophets they say, there you are that's a foundational gift, apostles and prophets. It doesn't say they are foundational gifts. Because in the same verse it says Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone He was not just foundational only and has been removed.

He's still in the glory building the church through His Holy Spirit and through the gifts that He Himself has given unto men. Let us make sure we know what gift God has given to us and develop that by the enabling of His Spirit and use that and ask God to give us opportunities to exercise the gift that He has given to us in His church. Maybe His right hand wasn't used and that's why it became withered.

You'll be no use to God if you don't use the gift that He's given to you. Now don't try and use somebody else's gift or be jealous of somebody else's particular ability. I don't mean natural ability, I mean spiritual gift.

You remember once God's servant, the prophet said to his servant, he said, go and take my rod and put it on the face of the boy and see if you can bring him back to life. And nothing happened. It's no good.

You can't do that, prophet of the Lord. You must use your own gift yourself. And when he came then the power of God was manifested and new life was seen.

You can't use somebody else's gift or spiritual talent. You must use what God has given to you. Find out what it is and put it at his disposal.

Well now fourthly, it may be that, well once somebody said his hand had never grown since birth, like some of us, since our spiritual birth, not very much. Somebody said there was stoppage in the flow of the life blood. Well perhaps that was true.

They just suggested that it wasn't used. That's why it became withered. Well I'm going to make a suggestion now if you'll allow me.

We'll look upon those as yours. This one is mine. I'm going to suggest that one day while he was working he was suddenly, suddenly overcome by great pain and right down his right side he was paralysed and he dropped his tools.

Let's suggest that he was a stonemason working up the hillside from the lake of Galilee in a little shed there carving some beautiful pieces of work very, very useful to his master and then he's taken ill. These pains overcome him. He says oh my head, my head and he's paralysed down his right hand his mallet drops down his right side, his mallet drops out of his right hand and he goes home.

He's in bed for a while and he's no more use to his master. He can't hold the mallet. He can't chisel anymore.

Looks as though his stonemasons days are over and as poverty comes into his home. Now of course suddenly sometimes in our experiences we get sudden spiritual pain overcome by sin and temptation but failure is not final. The Lord is here to restore as he restored this man this day.

Because you see he had a good policy in spite of his illness as soon as he was able to get around he would go as usual to the house of God where the word of God was read. He went to the synagogue and there he met the Lord. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together and the greatest blessing of it all is meeting the Lord.

There am I in the midst of them. Now the Lord saw him in his need. The Lord knows exactly what our need is this morning.

That's why we want and pray for his Holy Spirit to meet our need as we sit before him. I might prepare the wrong sermon for you but if God's Holy Spirit is guiding then the blessing is for you because God knows our every heart. The Lord Jesus was there.

He knew this man. He knew his need and he knew what he'd got tucked inside his gown there or his cloak there. It was a withered hand.

The master in his omniscience knew it all just as he knows your deepest, deepest need. He said to the man stand forth and he obeyed and there were crickets around and having silenced them in a moment or two he said to the man with the withered hand stretch forth thine hand, bring it out now outside, out of that cloak bring it out into the light stretch forth thine hand and he did and the moment he obeyed the word of the Lord he was made whole. His hand was just perfect as the other one.

And he went down to see his wife when they got outside because she was another department of the synagogue. He said to her, look at that my dear. And I'm sure she kissed his hand.

And the next day being the first day of the week he went down to his old boss to the workshop. He said, how about that? And his boss gripped him by the hand gave him a hearty handshake and he got hold of the mallet and he stuck the mallet in his hand. He says, you've got your job back.

You'll be useful to me again. And into his home joy and prosperity came. Blessing into the home once more because now he was useful to his master.

What a blessing meeting the Lord and finding restoration obeying his word bringing that ugly thing out into the light. If we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Then going to the master and saying see thou hast restored me.

He'll say right, go work today in my vineyard my son and we shall be useful to the master. We cannot afford to have any ugly sin any compromising thing any bit of worldliness any bit of jealousy or envy in our souls as Christians. It will make our right hand withered and make us useless to our master.

As I close let me give you the third point just as I have it here without comment. The invincible one who cured his affliction and brought restoration. See the Lord manifested in the story so much.

The Lord was at the meeting and the Lord met the man at the point of his need. The Lord gave the command and his command must always be obeyed. The Lord silenced the critics and the Lord wanted him to bring the hindrance out into the light which he was willing so to do.

And the Lord restored him and his home and his business too. And every department of our life shall feel the blessing when we are spiritually restored and no longer have withered hands and we are useful to our master. See the results of the fullness and the absolute control of the Holy Spirit in the verses that follow in Galatians chapter 5. The blessings of the Christ life by his spirit in the believer in his ordinary life manifest in natural relationships between those at home and those in his business as well as the blessing in his own inner life.

God blessed to us his word this morning and show to us that these days of meeting are days of opportunity because the real meeting is with him who is here not only to save us by his grace and inspire us by his presence but restore us in his wonderful love. I have loved you saith the Lord and I will restore him and heal him. Let us pray.

May this tactical word from the third chapter of Mark be a blessing to us all this morning. Our Father we pray as we meet thy dear son in this meeting and as we bring it out into the light and as we confess our need and as we come to him for restoration in any way we may need just that. Accept of our thanks then for our fellowship together and especially our fellowship with the Saviour himself.

Make him real in our personal experiences and make us real and effective in his service for his name's sake. Amen.

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