

Mark 3:1-6

John Nordin December, 2006

^{NRS} Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ²They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

³And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward."
⁴Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.

⁵He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

No evident context for which synagogue this is.

"They" – presumably a reference to the Pharisees.

'withered', ἐξηραμμένον, participle of ξηραίνω, 'to dry up', some form of paralysis. cf. Lk 8:6, J 15:5, 1 Pt 1:24, *inter alia*.

In the synagogue of the Jews was a man who had a withered hand. If he was withered in his hand, the ones who stood by were withered in their minds. – Athanasius

Watching to see if you can catch someone in a violation is close to hoping they violate the law, which is not a very moral stance.

... [Jesus] hoped that the mere sight of the misfortune might soften them ... - Chrysostom, Gospel of St. Matthew, homily 40.

Cf. Jesus' questioning in 2:9.

Deliberate violation of Sabbath law to be punished by death: Ex. 31:14-15, Numb 15:32-3
Mishnah (redacted ca. 200CE) called for warnings before the punishment. But there were exceptions: "saving life overrules the Sabbath" (b. Yoma 85b) Was extended to cases of a minor risk of death.

If angry emotions which spring from a love of what is good and from holy charity are to be labeled vices, then all I can say is that some vices should be called virtues. When such affections as anger are directed to their proper objects, they are following good reasoning, and no one should dare to describe them as maladies or vicious passions. – Augustine, The city of God, book 14

Feelings cannot exist in anything but a living soul. These events show that just as Jesus had a human body, he had a human soul. ... Likewise it is clear that he experienced the ordinary fully human experience of interconnectedness between his body and his soul. He was hungry; he slept; he was tired from his journey. – Augustine, Against the Apollinarians, 80

Note the brief pause in the narrative for Jesus to look around.

Is Jesus doing 'work' by commanding the man to make the physical action? Did Jesus do the work, or did God? Has the man also broken the sabbath to seek healing in response to God's command?

Herodians – not clear what group this might refer to.

Context

Final story in 2:1-3:6, a record of growing opposition.

2:27-8 And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath."

Questions

Sources

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Thomas C. Oden & Christopher A. Hall, Mark (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture),
InterVarsity Press, 1998