

It Is Always Right To Do Good

Mark 3:1-6

Introduction:

- ★ Sometimes fatal, or at least traumatic, collisions are inevitable in life. I, and millions of others, witnessed such a collision on Thursday, December 3, 2010, when NBA superstar LeBron James, now with the Miami Heat, returned to Cleveland, Ohio to play against his former team the Cavaliers. Feeling betrayed by his leaving, and the manner in which he did it, Cleveland fans arrived in a frenzy to spew their anger and outright hatred on their former icon.
- ★ ESPN noted that, “Before the game, fans peppered him with obscene chants and booed every time he appeared on the giant TV screens beneath the scoreboard. They held up signs like “Quitness” ... There were guys wearing a single letter each on their white T-Shirts that spelled out: “LeBum.”
- ★ For his part James said it was nothing personal, “I have the utmost respect for this franchise, the utmost respect for these fans.” Still, he spent part of the second half taunting Cleveland’s player’s bench, and following the game, refused to apologize to Cleveland or its fans for his rather rude departure carried on national T.V. For the record, Miami destroyed Cleveland 118-90. James scored a season-high 38 points, 24 in the third quarter alone.
- ★ In Mark 2:1-3:6 we have seen an evitable conflict building and escalating that, on both sides of the equation, has generated anger and ill will. The hostility now reaches a climax in this 5th controversy Jesus has with the Pharisees. For Jesus, it is anger over placing limits on when it was right to do good and save life. For the Pharisees and the Herodians, it was over the young rabbi’s continuous actions to swat their traditions, refuse to walk according to their

religious rules, and threaten the status quo. So great is their outrage, they will begin at this early stage of Jesus' ministry plotting how they might destroy Him (3:6).

- ✱ Jesus will not back off or back down though He clearly understands where all of this will lead. Consumed with the will of His Father and emboldened by an uncompromising conviction, He will move ahead with His face set toward the cross, unalterably convinced, "It is always right to do good!"

I. **Doing good for the glory of God will invite critical scrutiny. 3:1-2**

- For Jesus, doing good for the glory of God would not be restricted by date or location. Mark notes that "again he entered the synagogue", the local meeting house for Jewish worship. Matthew 12:9-13 and Luke 6:6-10 also record this event.
- Further he notes in v.2 it is the Sabbath. Jesus has just violated their religious sensibilities by allowing his disciples to pluck some grain on the Sabbath so they would have something to eat (2:23), a major no/no as far as the Pharisees were concerned (2:24). This is work, and we do not work on the Sabbath as we define work.
- One cannot help but believe Jesus is deliberately provoking a confrontation and religious showdown. Don't claim to forgive sins (2:5). Don't consort with sinners (2:16). Don't neglect fasting as we dictate (2:18). Don't work in order to eat on the Sabbath (2:24). Jesus' frustration has reached a boiling point. He actually invites their critical judgment by what He is about to do!

1) **Be sensitive to those who need compassion. 3:1**

- Jesus enters the synagogue and sees a man with a withered or shriveled hand. Luke 6:6 informs us it was his right hand. We are not clear on whether it was deformed, paralyzed or both. We are not informed if it was from an accident, a

disease or a congenital defect. What we do know is he was disabled and in need of love and compassion.

- This man would, no doubt, have been well known. Some may have even drawn the conclusion his deformed hand was a curse from God for a sin committed by his parents or him (cf. John 9:2-3) “And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” And what did Psalm 137:5 say? “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!”
- One can imagine the embarrassment he endured every time he came to worship and they lifted up their hands in prayers as was the custom.
- Jesus with sensitivity and compassion took notice of this man. He saw his condition and He determined to do something about it.

2) Be ready for those who always criticize. 3:2

- One of the unfortunate consequences of having a legalistic spirit is you become critical, always on the lookout for what is wrong, and seldom on the lookout for what is right.
- It at best colors your judgment so that you don't really see some things clearly. At worst, it blinds you all together about how things really are.
- The Pharisees are now “eye-balling” Jesus, watching Him very carefully (imperfect tense). Like one who keeps his eye on a convicted criminal, a known thief, they were locked in on Jesus' every move to see what He would do next.

- Indeed our text tells us they had one goal in mind: “accuse Him” (v.2). The import of this is that of a legal charge. The Pharisees permitted healing on the Sabbath only for the sake of saving a life. This man’s problem was not life-threatening, and so he and Jesus could and should wait. If Jesus healed him today, they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath, an offense punishable by death according to Exodus 31:14-17. “You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”
- Rabbi Shammai was so strict in this area that he opposed praying for the sick or visiting the sick on the Sabbath since it was to be a day marked by joy (Garland, *Mark*, ZIBBC, 23).
- Heal another day but not today!

Do good another day but not today!

What manner of madness is this?! The type that grows out of a life of criticism and fault-finding, one that enslaves itself to man-made rules and regulations and then like a spiritual Gestapo, hunts others to enslave them too. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 23:2-4, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat,

so practice and observe whatever they tell you— but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.” Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 23:15, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”

II. Doing good for the glory of God will require personal conviction. 3:3-5

- One could probably cut the tension with a knife at this point. The showdown at the O.K. Corral has nothing on this confrontation. They are eye-balling Jesus (v.2) and He is eye-balling them (v.5). Will He blink? Flinch? Back down? Give in? Just this once to keep the peace?
- No, this Servant-King came as Matt 10:34 says, “not to bring peace, but a sword.” There will be no retreat in His message and there will be no retreat in His actions. With the courage of His convictions, He will press forward, obedient to the will of God regardless of the consequences. Note how He moves forward and the example He provides for us.

1) Be right in what you do. 3:3-5

- Jesus commands the man (v. 3) to “stand up” (imp.) “in front of everyone” (*NIV*); “step forward” (*NKJV*). He intends to make a public scene. He is deliberate in His provocation.
- Jesus commands the man (v. 5), “stretch out your hand” (imp).

- His hand is restored (v. 5), made whole, the ravages of the curse in this instance are reversed as a for-taste of life in the kingdom when as Rev 21:4 says, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
- Jesus will actually fulfill the intent and heart of the Mosaic Law by what He does. He will make this clear when He answers one of the scribes in Mark 12:28-34, a scribe who asked the important question, “which commandment is the most important of all?” (v. 28). Note the answer Jesus gave [read].

Application: Sometimes in life and ministry we must confront and provoke others. It is not easy and it is seldom fun. However, sometimes it is absolutely necessary, especially when the right thing is not being done.

2) Be right in what you say. 3:4

- Jesus raises a good question and the right question given the situation of the man and the foolish regulations of the Pharisees.
- He raises 2 important issues: regardless of the day, including the Sabbath, as to what is the right thing to do?
 - 1) Do good or do harm?
 - 2) Save life or kill?
- Jesus frames the questions in terms of clear cut extremes! This should be an easy call.
- Matthew 12:11&12 provides a famous and helpful addition/illustration that silenced our Lord’s critics, “He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep,

if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

- It is sad to think that the Pharisees should have easily answered the question that it is right to do good and save life. Their silence condemns them. It also reveals a tragic flaw in their theology concerning the nature of our God, a God of grace and mercy, love and compassion.

3) Be right in what you feel. 3:5

- Jesus surveys the room carefully looking into the eyes of each Pharisee.
- With righteous indignation, he is 1) angered and 2) grieved at their hardness of heart.
- The *NLT*: “He looked at them angrily and was deeply saddened ...”
The Message: “He looked them in the eye, one after another, angry now, furious at their hard-nosed religion.”
- It is troubling and convicting for me to note that Jesus never became angry at tax-collectors and sinners, only self-righteous religious leaders! It was right for Him to feel that way then, and it is right for Him to feel that way today.

III. Doing good for the glory of God will encourage hostile opposition. 3:6

- It is amazing to realize that doing a really good thing for someone made others really mad, simply because he did not do it the right way.
- Today, I have noticed a similar mindset among some of my own brothers and friends! For them, it is not enough to do the right thing. If you do not arrive at the same destination as they by the same route, then you get criticized and misrepresented.

- You may even find them aligning themselves against you with persons they formerly opposed, so great is their hostility toward you. Why?

1) The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

- The Pharisees and Herodians were hated enemies. However, their common disdain for Jesus made them strange bed fellows as they made a pact to get rid of this Galilean troublemaker. “Immediately” (!) they conspired together.
- The Herodians show up for the 1st time in Mark. They do not appear to be a distinct group or political party like the Pharisees and Sadducees. They appear to be wealthy and influential supporters of the Herods and their dynasty and rule. There are only 3 passing references to them in the New Testament (3:6; 12:13; Matt 22:16). They appear each time in a surprising alliance with the Pharisees. This is unexpected because the Herodians would be supportive of Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) influences and sympathizers to Roman rule, things strongly opposed by the Pharisees.
- Thus the proverbial truth rings true again, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend, even if I hate his guts!” Their common hatred of Jesus was greater than their hatred of one another.

2) The enemy we fear most we will seek to destroy.

- The Pharisees and Herodians did not want to slow down or stop Jesus. They wanted to destroy Jesus. They wanted to assassinate Him, kill Him, and get him out of the way. This would be their full-time occupation for at least the next year to year and a half.

- Their hatred was coupled with fear, and both emotions were held with great passion and fervency. As a combination, it would lead them, as it can lead us, to do unspeakable evil.

Conclusion: 1) Did you notice something interesting in our text? Just how did Jesus violate the Sabbath? He prepared no ointments and lifts/moves nothing. He simply spoke the word and the man was healed. Perhaps it was the day of the man's salvation as well, for Jesus came to heal our diseases and bear away our sins that we might have life more abundant (John 8:32).

2) I am so glad Jesus, as Acts 10:38 says, "went about doing good." He did a good thing in healing this man. He did a good thing in saving our souls! He teaches us well: it is always right to do good!