

The Problem With Deliverance

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Deliverance

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Bible Text: Mark 3:1-12
Preached On: Sunday, October 3, 2021

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark 3. As you're turning to the second book of the New Testament, the third chapter, those of you that may be guests or visitors with us this morning whether in person or online, I want to welcome you somewhat midstream through a journey through the gospel of Mark. We're walking through what is known as the shortest of the four gospel accounts, but as we've seen already, it is one of the fastest moving accounts in all of the New Testament of the life, the ministry, and eventually the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what have we discovered so far in this journey? We have discovered that no matter what we are dealing with, no matter what we're struggling with, it may be a physical ailment, it may be a spiritual malfunction, it may be whatever it may be, that we have through Christ Jesus, we have the ability and the right to be set free.

When we talk about this concept of deliverance, it's one of those words that doesn't resonate real well within us but it simply means to be set free, to have the shackles or the bondage of whatever is holding us back, those strongholds removed, or even in some cases to be taken out of a scenario or situation and placed into another one. Today, as we turn to Mark 3, we're going to discuss the problems with deliverance, in other words, why is it that so often even though we seek it, we desire it, we want it more than life itself, what is it that oftentimes gets in the way between us being set free by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the story we're about to read is about a man who has the famous withered hand and though it is a story of his personal deliverance, today I want to look beyond the specific character, I want to even look beyond even how Jesus responds with his disposition and his attitude. Today, as we come to Mark 3, I want to resonate more on those who didn't want him set free. I want to focus on those that wished that he would stay in his condition of peril from that day forward because no matter how much you desire for God to set you free this morning, there are those in this world who not only want to but actually in some cases, they profit off of your bondage, they make a living off of you living in the shackles of life, but as we're about to see, Jesus Christ can, yes, and does overcome even the problems that arise with deliverance.

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 3, it says,

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. 3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. 7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Now notice the end of the story. Those that had physical issues were delivered. Those that had spiritual issues were delivered. But there is this scene immediately before where there's a group of individuals who arise to the environment to hope that it will not happen. So this morning, to understand that the same problems that happened in chapter 3 happen in our lives as well, I just want to walk through some of the basic questions of life to hopefully understand how this applies to our life.

Let's begin with the "where." Where does the story take place? Notice in verse 1: not only the city of Capernaum where he's been previously but he's in a synagogue. He is in a place of worship. If we were to draw a parallel for our lives today, it would be a church setting, a family of faith setting much like you and I find ourselves today. Why is that critical? Because this man with the withered hand went to the place that he had heard that healing and deliverance would take place and what did he find in that place? He found opposition. You do understand that the church of Jesus Christ was designed by the Lord to be a hospital for sick people, not a country club for the high and mighty. But that's what you see in this story because it's the "who" that shows up on the scene that is most critical.

We know they're at church. We know they're at the synagogue. We know a worship service probably took place. But then what we get in verse 2 is one of those proverbial words not just in life but in scripture, "And they watched him." Who are the "they"? Well, if you go back into chapter 2 and you go down into verse 6, we know that these are the Pharisees. Now don't get me wrong, in a context such as today, these guys typically

get a bad rap for valid reasons, but let's talk about the Pharisees then compared to the Pharisees now. What was unique about these individuals is they actually had a dual role. Yes, they were religious, they led the synagogue in the area of religion, but more than being religious, they were actually secular power-brokers. They were the ones that held the finances of the community, the polity of the community. It was beyond. They oftentimes – listen – just used the synagogue as their front or their shell for their secular business. You know, oftentimes today we use the word Pharisees much in a very limited fashion. We talk about someone whose religion, shall we say, supersedes relationship with the Lord, and rightfully so, but when we talk about those who come into our lives who try to hinder us from being set free, I want to look at modern-day Pharisees from the perspective of how these guys behaved.

So let's talk about who these guys were, what did they do in this scenario, how did they act. Here's the first thing you need to know about a Pharisee because you're wondering, "How do I know if I have any Pharisees in my life?" Here's the number 1 quality of a Pharisee: whatever it is you're struggling with, they're probably struggling with it too. Do you know the only difference is they typically have enough money and connections to hide theirs when you can't hide yours. You see, a Pharisee, remember the story in John 8, the woman that was caught in adultery? Last time I checked, there had to be another person there. He conveniently had enough wealth and connections not to be brought forth before Jesus. You see, they're doing the exact same thing, they just have the ability to hide. Their struggle, incidentally, is the same struggle that you probably have as well.

Here's the second aspect you need to know, that they relish and they cherish in the fact that they don't want to be set free, and because they don't want to be free, you can't be free either. That's what a Pharisee does. A Pharisee says if they're not willing to be free, if they're not willing to be delivered, then nobody else in their influence of power can experience the same.

And finally, you notice down here in verse 6, it says that they partnered with the Herodians. Now that's interesting. The Herodians didn't work in the synagogue, they didn't work in the religious circles. Do you know who the Herodians were? The Herodians were those who were sympathizers with Rome, the same people that were making their lives miserable.

So here's what a Pharisee or who a Pharisee is: they have the same issue that they're speaking contrary to, they're not willing to be set free so those around them can't be free, and if you desire to continue to be free, they will actually partner with their enemies to make sure that you stay in bondage. If you want a great example of this in the Bible, all we have to do is look to probably one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, Luke 15. We know it as the famous story of the prodigal son, that young man who desired his inheritance early from his father. The story is told that he goes off with riotous living, finds himself broke and without a friend, without help. He's literally in the mud of life. The Bible says he comes to his senses. It says, "Even my father's hired servants have a place to sleep and that to eat. I will go to him and I will ask him if I can just be one of his hired hands." We know the beautiful story that on his way back when he repents of his

ill-doing, his father not only greets him, runs to him, but he has the fatted calf killed for the party, he has a robe, he has a ring.

We love to talk about the return of that prodigal, oftentimes we forget about his brother. You know, his brother is a perfect picture of a Pharisee and allow me to demonstrate. You see, the number 1 quality of a Pharisee is they're doing the same thing you're doing. When the father came to talk to the other brother about the situation, the brother had intel that only somebody who had been with him or close to him would have known what was actually happening. The second thing is this: he did not want his brother to be set free because he actually tried to talk his dad out of having the party. He said, "Why should we have the fatted calf? You've never even given me a kid." And finally, he does so outside of the house. He actually went beyond the sphere of the family to somehow rally up some support for his cause. What does this mean? When we seek to be set free, when we seek the things of the Lord in our life, oftentimes it is those individuals that have a part of our life that can be the greatest problem and hindrance.

So what is it that these individuals did? Notice what it says in verse 2, "they watched him." You know, I know that these guys have ill intent, it just reminds me of 1 Peter 5:8, it says that our enemy, the devil, that he seeks us by acting as a roaring lion, watching us and seeing whom he can devour. You know, the lion is what we call the king of the jungle and yet he sleeps 20 hours a day. In other words, he has the ability just to lay back, time is on his hands. He watches for just the perfect opportunity.

Now I know what some of you are thinking this morning: why is it that you would equate these individuals to the person of Satan himself? And so this morning, allow me to share an observation with you. This may be something that you struggle with but I think this passage verifies it. Some of the meanest, most vile persons in this world are church folks that the devil has ahold of. Now we don't want to acknowledge that but where did this situation take place? It happened in a church. What happened? Somebody who was a power-broker, somebody who had nothing but their agenda on their mind basically said, "I'm gonna watch this guy and when he comes into the presence of Jesus, we're going to do everything we can to keep him from being delivered because we are sinking in our own mess, we can't allow this guy to walk in freedom."

You know, it's the next question that resonates with me, is when did it happen? You know, there's this interesting one-way dialog in verses 3 and 4. Not only does Jesus tell the man to stand forth but then he poses this rhetorical question, and I say rhetorical because I don't think he really expected an answer, about the sabbath day. He wasn't asking the man with the hand about the sabbath day, he was asking these Pharisees, these men who had become the "killjoys" of the scenario and the situation. He said, "Alright, guys, is it okay to do this on the sabbath day because this guy, he's in a predicament and we can make this happen?" Why is that critical? I want to go back up to verse 24 of chapter 2. What we see in chapter 3 is the same song, second verse, we hope to get better but it's gonna get worse. Here we go, it says, "And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?" Listen to what Jesus says to them, "Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he,

and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them," listen to this statement, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."

So when is it that these individuals, when is it that these people who desire you to stay in bondage, when is it that they interject themselves into your life, when is it that they, as we're about to talk about, when is it that they speak up? It's when the word of God comes into conflict with their tradition, their position, or their agenda, because they used the sabbath day for their own benefit. They used it as a way to tell people, "Well, I'm sorry you need help but we don't help people on this day. I'm sorry that you're not feeling well but we don't treat people on this day." So what does Jesus say? He makes it clear the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath.

How does this happen in our lives? Well, one of the things that we discover with Pharisees, one of the things we discover with those who are the problem to us being set free is that it doesn't matter what the Bible says, their agenda or their tradition is more valuable to them. Now for those of you who frequent our Wednesday night Bible study, allow me to share something with you that I say frequently and I mean it from the depths of my heart: your goal in life should never be to be the best Baptist you can be. That should never be your goal and I know there's some of you saying, "Well, I'm a Methodist. I guess I get off." No, your goal should not be to be the best Methodist. Do you know what your goal should be? To be the best biblicist that you can be. How can I allow my life to line up with what God's word said? You say, "Jeff, why do you go there?" Because how many times have you been reading through the word of God, God has been working on you, and somebody, oh, they didn't put a poster up, they didn't say it with a vile attitude, they said, "Well, that's not what Baptists do." Well, it may not be what we do but it's in the Bible. Or how many times has somebody said, "Well, you don't want to do that because that's going to go against the grain," a promotion of their own personal agenda, whatever it may be.

So how does it happen? How do they actually infiltrate your lives and convince you not to go forward with the Lord? How do they convince you just to take a step back and go, "Well, I may not enjoy my situation but I guess that's all I can do"? Notice what it says in verse 2, it says, "And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him." Back to verse 6, "the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." So how did they actually implement and try to infiltrate the situation? They communicated their opinion and they rallied other people around them to assist them in doing so. In other words, they injected their opinion, they injected their philosophy, they injected what they thought into the scenario and they said, "Whoa, whoa, time out! That's not what you should be doing. You don't really want to be free, you don't really want to do it God's way because everybody else is doing it this way. And according to the latest research, this is the best way to do it," and you can just hear it coming.

How does this work out in our lives today? We've been living in a world where for the last 18 months we've actually promoted the phrase "social distancing," and we've had times where interactivity among each other has been limited at best. But that's okay. You see, Pharisees have found a better way to communicate with us, it's called the internet. It's amazing. They have a way, they may not knock on your door, they may not even ring your phone, but they can send you an email. They can send you a text. They can do or give a social media post. Can I give you my opinion of why, and I think it's based on Mark 3, why social media can be such a hindrance in our "deliverance"? It's because you know what social media does? It gives an equal platform to unqualified opinions. Now do we have unqualified opinions here? Who should be the ones speaking truth, Jesus or these guys? Yet both of them feel as if they have equal opportunity. One of the problems with social media is you're working out things with the Lord, everything is going great and all of a sudden somebody who you either A., respect, or B., like, whatever it may be, they'll put something out there that just throws cold water all over the hot flame of whatever God's doing in your life and what does it do? Aw, man, it sets you back. You see, you and were designed, we were created to be set free, we were created to walk in the ways of the Lord, not in the traditions of men, not in the agenda of man.

The final question is simply this: why? Why is it that some people would rather live in bondage than hope that you would walk in freedom? Notice what it says in verse 6, "the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him," listen to this phrase, "how they might destroy him." You understand that misery loves company and those who do not want to be free, and those who do not desire to do it God's way, those who are completely against and contrary to the things of God, they will exhaust everything they have to somehow persuade you not to be free because they cannot stand the fact that you actually can and have the ability to walk in freedom. They want to destroy you. They would rather see your demise than be free themselves.

You see, the problem with being set free, the problem of deliverance, the problem with what we've talked about this morning is this: oftentimes the ones who we respect, oftentimes the ones who we appreciate, oftentimes the ones whose voice actually bear weight in our lives can be the greatest hindrance to our freedom because we listen to them rather than listening to the Lord. You see, the big lie today is not just why they wanted to do what they did but the real big "why" is this: why would we, why would you, why would I rather listen to the voices of those who want us in bondage versus the voice of the Lord who according to his word came to give us life that we may have so more abundantly and freely?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. This morning as we talk about the difference between freedom and bondage from the Lord's perspective, you know, maybe you're that individual today, maybe you're here on our campus, maybe you're watching online, maybe you're listening on the radio, and maybe this is one of those days where the Spirit of God took the word of God and even though you understand the story and the dynamics thereof, deep down within you the Lord spoke very clearly that you have been in bondage to sin for too long, you have been shackled in rebellion against God for too long, but for whatever reason, you've given excuses, you've given reasons to listen to

those voices other than the Lord's, and maybe today is the day for the very first time you heard the Lord's voice in your life saying that you were designed to be free and you can be free indeed. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Today is the day to take all those other voices, allow them to be drowned out, and to just hear the voice of the Lord who says, "Call unto me and I will save you."

If you're that individual this morning, can I encourage you just to do so? You don't have to do so out loud. You don't have to say maybe what I or others would say. This is your heart's cry before God, but maybe your heart's cry would go a little something like this. "God, today I confess to you I have been listening to the wrong voices but, God, today I believe that the only voice I need to hear is yours and you have made it abundantly clear that you love me so much that in spite of my sin condition, in spite of my rebellion, you sent Jesus Christ on my behalf. God, you love me so much that he not only came but he lived a life rejecting all temptation and sinlessness. Not only that, God, he came and he bore the punishment, the weight and the price of my sin on his cross and, God, I believe that as we sung this morning numerous times, that when he rose from the grave, he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers of the issues and the struggles and the problems of life but this one thing I know, right now in this moment the only voice I'm listening to is yours and I'm here to declare that I believe in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of my sins, the salvation of my soul. In the best way I know how, God, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person this morning, you had that conversation with the Lord. I've got great news, in a moment I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing together, we've got a whole team of folks who would love just to hear your story, pray with you, pray for you. So let me invite you just to step out and step forward. We'd love the privilege of hearing what God's doing in your life. But maybe that person who you believed years ago, maybe even decades ago, today is not about stepping out and stepping forward, it's about stepping out of here in a moment realizing that the only voice that will truly bring freedom in your life is the voice of the Lord. How easily even us as believers get caught up in the rhetoric and the static of other voices.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, you've made it very clear we have two choices, we can either listen to what you have spoken or we can listen to anybody and somebody else. Help us this day to do as they did in the book of Joshua, may we choose this day whom we will serve. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.