

# (Luke) 20 - the Withered Hand

by Ed Miller

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*The sermon explores the healing of the withered hand as a demonstration of Jesus' power and the importance of relying on God's enablement to fulfill His commands.*

**Duration:** 50:24

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:48, Luke 6:6-49, Ephesians 5:25

**Topics:** "Healing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the Galilean ministry of Jesus as described in the book of Luke. The first section of this ministry highlights the miracles performed by Jesus, while the second section focuses on his teachings through parables. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus is the friend of sinners, particularly the poor, needy, oppressed, and helpless. The sermon also discusses the redemptive nature of Jesus' miracles, as each miracle serves to communicate a spiritual truth. The speaker then introduces the next section of the book of Luke, which includes the healing of a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, the choosing of the twelve apostles, and the sermon on the plane.

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## Transcript

There you are. It's not on pause, is it? Huh? It's not on pause? No. Okay.

Yeah, that's why the red light's working. It's on pause. Okay.

Are you starting now? You're recording. No, I got it on pause. Mine's on pause.

Oh. Oh, no it isn't. Do everything right.

All right, I'll ask you please to open your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke and Chapter 6, if you would. Luke Chapter 6. We've come a little far to have a practical review. I'll remind you that these are being taped, and if you would like the tapes, just see Lillian, and she'll make sure you get them.

And there's no cost for the tapes. In our discussion of Luke's Gospel, Luke presents our Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind. Unlike some of the other books that have a stress, an emphasis on the Jew, Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of everybody, as the friend of everybody.

Not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. In our discussion, we've come to the heart of the book. Chapter 4, verse 14, all the way through Chapter 19 and verse 28.

We call this the Galilean ministry of our Lord Jesus. It appears that Luke, on purpose, breaks this up into two sections. The first section primarily talks about what Jesus did, and there's many miracles in that section.

The second section talks about what Jesus said, and there's many parables in that section. That's not to say there's no overlapping, because He certainly taught in the first part, and He certainly did in the second part. But we've been looking at Chapter 4, verse 14, through Chapter 9, verse 50.

And in a special way, this presents our Lord Jesus as the friend of sinners, the friend of everybody. In this section, He has shown Himself to be friend primarily in these three ways. Number one, He has shown Himself to be the friend of the poor, and the needy, and the oppressed, and the helpless.

Number two, this section is full of what we call redemptive miracles. Every miracle Jesus did, He did on purpose to communicate a spiritual truth, so that His miracles are parables. They actually teach some truth.

He healed the blind physically, to show that He healed the blind spiritually. He healed the deaf physically, to show that He who has an ear can really hear. He cleansed the leper, to show what it means when He cleanses our hearts from sin.

He healed the woman humped over to teach us how to walk upright before God and men, and so on. Every miracle is redemptive. And so He showed Himself as the friend of sinners by doing redemptive miracles.

And then finally, He was full of good news. And everywhere He went, He was the friend, because He announced good news to the sinner, and good news to the Christian. It is amazing how He continually presented the truth in paradox, and set His people free.

In fact, you know, the Galilean ministry began with a quote from Isaiah 61. He came to announce the Jubilee. And He fulfilled that whole thing about Jubilee.

When we left off last time, we had moved from some of His miracles, and we were talking about the liberating message He expressed in everyday experiences. Last time, we looked at two. What's more common than sitting down to eat? What's more common than going out for a walk? He took those two experiences, sitting down to eat, illustrated by Levi, Matthew's great thank you banquet.

After Matthew came to the Lord, he threw a great big party. And it was at that party that Jesus said, I'm the soul doctor. The sick need a physician.

I've come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And it was at that dinner that the Pharisees, remember, they brought up this whole thing. How come we're involved with rules and regulations, and why are we fasting? And the disciples of John the baptizer are fasting, and you guys are feasting.

It's not right that you should party, and we should be so ascetic. And the Lord Jesus said, because the Christian life is a wedding and not a funeral. If you had the groom, you don't need to fast.

Someday, if the groom is ever missing, then you'll fast. But as long as you're walking in fellowship with the groom, life is a party, and the Christian life is a banquet. Then the scene changes, and they're walking out in the grain field.

And once again, the Pharisees, who are so addicted to the legal side and the litter, are looking to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath day. The principle he had there is that the Christian life is strolling. It's walking with Jesus in the grain field, while he meets every hunger and every need of your heart.

And he prepares a table before you in the presence of your enemy. And even while the Pharisees were there, and the enemies, and bringing up occasion, Jesus just allowed them on the Sabbath day, in rest, to walk with him. So what is the Christian life? It's just feasting with Jesus.

It's a wedding. What's the Christian life? It's just walking with the Lord in the grain field, as he provides all of our needs. In rest, on the Sabbath, in the presence of our enemy.

That brings us this morning to the next section. In chapter 6, there are three more stories. In chapter 6, verse 6 to 11, the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day.

And then verses 12 to 19, the choosing of the twelve apostles. And then chapter 6, verse 20 through the end, through 49, the Sermon on the plain. Now notice I didn't say Sermon on the Mount.

It's different from the Sermon on the Mount. It looks like Jesus grabbed the same folder of notes. He used the same ideas many times.

But this is a different occasion. This is the Sermon on the Plain, not the Sermon on the Mount. Now Luke's arrangement of these three stories, the man with the withered hand, the choosing of the twelve, and the Sermon on the Plain, Luke's arrangement of that is logical, not chronological.

In other words, he's telling redemption's story. And it ties in with his message. It's impossible, when you study Matthew and Mark and Luke, who mention these three stories, it's impossible to nail down the sequence.

Because they all tell it in a different order. So we don't know for sure which came first. Did he choose the disciples first? Or did he preach his sermon first? Or did he heal the man first? That's not important.

But the arrangement that Luke uses is because he's telling, he's presenting Jesus as the friend of all mankind. When Matthew tells it, he's presenting Jesus as King. And when Mark tells it, he's presenting Jesus as the servant.

And so we study it in terms of the great theme of each of those books. I'll call attention, by God's assistance, to these three stories as Luke gives them to us. Let me ask you to follow along from chapter 6, verse 6, as we read this record of the man with the withered hand.

Beginning at verse 6, It came about on another Sabbath that he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And there was a man there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse him.

He knew what they were thinking. And he said to the man with the withered hand, Rise and come forward. And he rose and came forward.

And Jesus said to them, I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or destroy it? And after looking around at them all, he said to him, Stretch out your hand. And he did so. And his hand was restored.

But they themselves were filled with rage and disgust together, what they might do unto Jesus. Before we look at the spiritual message of this wonderful miracle, let me give a little background to get us into the story. This is another Sabbath day.

It's not the same one that they walked in the grain fields. Luke's not the only one to tell us this story. Matthew told us this story, and Mark also told us this story.

Matthew tells us something the other two don't. Matthew adds that illustration, if your sheep falls into a pit. See, Mark and Luke don't mention that.

Is it lawful to pull it out? And then Mark tells us something that the other two don't. Mark tells us that Jesus got angry. He looked around at the Pharisees, and he knew they were out to get him.

And he got angry. Mark tells us that. Luke tells us six things that the others don't tell us.

And since we're in Luke, let me just mention them for you. Number one, from verse six, Luke tells us that this miracle took place on a Sabbath day. Number two, Luke tells us that this miracle took place in the synagogue.

Number three, I guess this is the detail of a physician. Luke, as a doctor, constantly... He doesn't just say, Peter's mother-in-law had a fever. He says, a high fever.

And he constantly gives us these medical things. And Luke tells us it was not only a withered hand, but his right hand. So we know which hand it was because of Luke.

Verse seven, Luke tells us the scribes and the Pharisees were present on this occasion. Verse eight tells us that Jesus read their thoughts. Mark and Matthew don't tell us that.

Jesus saw what they were thinking. And then finally, only Luke records the obedient response of the man with the withered hand. Jesus said, rise and come forward.

And he did. He rose and he came forward and then obeyed the law. I told you last week about some of the strange applications some of the rabbis and the Pharisees had concerning Sabbath day observances.

I won't go through that again, but I told you some of the strange things that they used to believe. They were very strict as to what you could do and not do on the Sabbath day. It was forbidden to work on the Sabbath day.

And what they interpreted as work is amazing. Don't drag your toe or you'll plow and that kind of thing. And there's a whole list I gave you last time.

One of the things that bothered the Pharisees more than anything else in the life and ministry of our Savior was from their viewpoint how he continually violated the Sabbath day. What he was doing actually, he wasn't rubbing it in their face. What he was doing was rescuing the Sabbath from their hands in order that we might know what it means to truly enter a Sabbath rest and rest.

Eight different times our Lord Jesus did miracles on the Sabbath day. And he did those on purpose. They felt like they could have done some on a different day.

According to the Rabbi's Jewish literature, there were four things that were allowed on the Sabbath day. And they said you can't hardly do anything, but there's four exceptions. Number one, the priests are exempt.

They can work. They can do their thing on the Sabbath day and lead the people in worship. Number two, any act that would save a life could be performed.

You could save lives. If someone was in mortal danger, you could come to the rescue. That's why they couldn't say much about Peter's mother-in-law because she had a high fever.

Would she have died? Hard to tell. And so they couldn't say anything. But now, here's a man with a withered hand.

You know that's not terminal. And probably his hand would be withered on Sunday as well as on Saturday. And so they're thinking if he does something now, he's to be blamed.

Some of the other Sabbath miracles that he did were un-life-threatening. And it bothered the Rabbis so much. For example, one man's crippled for 38 years.

Well, you know if he's crippled for 38 years, Jesus can wait till Tuesday to heal him. Why did he have to do it on the Sabbath day? Another man was blind from his birth. All is life.

But Jesus picks the Sabbath day on purpose. Another lady was humped over for 18 years. Why couldn't he wait another day or a few hours? He did it on purpose.

By the way, one study that you'll probably want to do on your own is just study those eight Sabbath miracles that the Lord Jesus did. And every one of those miracles will shed light on the truth of rest. And if you want an object lesson form, a comprehensive view of what it means to rest, just look at those glorious miracles Jesus did.

Anyway, I said there are four things the Rabbis allowed on the Sabbath day. They allowed the priest to work. They allowed any life-saving measure.

They allowed a woman to have a baby. Isn't that nice of them? If you're going to have a baby, you didn't have to wait until the next day and the handmaids could assist and so on. And then, you know, they had a law that a male baby had to be circumcised on the eighth day.

Well, if the eighth day fell on the Sabbath day, that was all right too. You could circumcise your child and not violate the Sabbath. Now, in order to get into the heart of God, I remind you of the truth that we've been stressing all through these redemptive miracles, and that is that when you see the physical miracle, God intended spiritual reality.

I'm not saying He didn't do it literally. He certainly did. He really cleansed the leper.

He really healed the blind and the dumb and so on. He actually did that. But He tells a spiritual story as well.

And we've been attempting to get under the skin of the physical to see that spiritual side. The present miracle, the healing of the man whose right hand was withered on the Sabbath day, is no exception to that. And so the Lord helped us as we begin to look at the spiritual side of this tremendous thing.

There's a glorious principle of life illustrated by the healing of the withered hand. It's important, if we're going to see God's heart, to remember that this was one of those Sabbath day miracles. And if any truth is designed to bring rest into the heart of the Christian, it's this Sabbath day miracle.

They all do, but in a special way this one does. The heart of the miracle, I believe, is expressed in chapter 6 and verse 10. Chapter 6, 10 says, After looking around at them, he said, Stretch forth your hand.

And he did so. And his hand was restored. Now to get the power of that statement, put it in its context.

Don't just think, stretch forth your hand. Don't just think, stretch forth your right hand. Say it as it is.

Stretch forth your right withered hand. Think about that command. Stretch forth your withered hand.

On the level of earth, Luke is presenting Jesus as the friend of all mankind. On the surface, that statement doesn't sound too friendly. Think about it.

If you would walk up to someone with a withered hand and say, Stretch forth your withered hand. You wouldn't be too friendly to do that. Because on the level of earth, that's an impossibility.

It sounds cruel to go up to someone who is disabled like that. And whose arm and hand are atrophied and to say, stretch forth your hand. He can't if it's withered.

But that's the very point. The principle can be stated in these words. When God gives a command, he also gives an enablement to perform that command.

That's the friendliness of it. That's the rest of it. God is not trying to mock up.

Jesus tells him what to do. In fact, expects the impossible. Commands the impossible.

And when the man attempts to obey, he finds that God has miraculously provided the resource necessary to fulfill the command. I told you earlier that Luke is very careful as to how he arranges his material. He was determined to help the skeptic Theophilus to understand in order so he'd be full of assurance.

And so he arranges his material that way. Now in a few minutes, actually not a few minutes, like next week. But as far as this record goes, we'll be looking at the sermon on the plane.

It's not an accident in Luke's arrangement of the material that before he gives the sermon on the plane, he tells about the man whose right hand was withered. Let me illustrate. Glance, if you would, at chapter 6, verse 27.

I say to you who hear, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those that curse you.

Pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also. Whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.

Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Right. You ever tried that hard? It's not hard.

Tell any other chief, stretch forth your withered hand. You know why he gave that first? Because every time God gives a command, he gives an impossible command. And every time we act to obey that, our natural, there's no better word than withered, to describe our own ability.

We can't do it. And he says, stretch forth your withered hand. Husband, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

As I attempt to do that, God will enable me to do that. You see, that's stretch forth your withered hand. Notice in verse 35, love your enemies.

Do good. Lend expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great.

You'll be sons of the Most High. He himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Matthew takes it one step further. He says, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. You ever try to be perfect? You ever try to count it all? Joy when you fall into diverse temptations? You ever try to give thanks for everything? These things are impossible.

When you come to a command of God, I hope God puts in your heart to remember this. When you see, love your enemy, then God will write in your heart, stretch forth your withered hand. And when you read a verse like, do good to those who hate you, that God will write in your heart, stretch forth your withered hand.

And when you read any command, bless those who curse you, or turn the other cheek, or go the second mile, or give them your cloak also, or with joy take the spoiling of your goods, or whatever the command is, stretch forth your withered hand. Say, Lord, there's no way. If I was an anatomist, and I tried to reason this thing out, I could never do it.

Because it's not possible. Every time God has ever given you a command, in all the word of God, he has never expected you to obey it. It is not possible for Christians to obey.

That's the frustration for most Christians. They try to live the Christian life, they set up the ideal, and then they fall on their face, and they wonder what's happening. We surprise us, we surprise ourselves, when we fail.

But we never surprise the Lord. You know what the only thing God's ever expected from you? I just broke my glass. You know what? You know the only thing God's ever expected from you? The only thing God's ever expected from you is failure.

And the only thing God's ever expected from me is failure. We need to see that our hand is withered. And you know what I mean by that? Our ability to respond and obey to God.

We cannot do it. But God has promised that if we would stretch forth our withered hand, that is, if we would attempt to do the impossible, that God would come through and perform for us. That's the dynamic of the Christian life.

And it's not me. It's Him. It's not my life.

It's His life. It's not my power. It's the power of the Lord.

It's as impossible for us, really, to fulfill any command as it was for that man that day, that Sabbath morning, to stretch forth his withered hand. Now, before we leave this point, I want to say it a different way. It's the same fact, the same truth, but I want to say it a slightly different way in order to burn it, hopefully,

indelibly, into our hearts.

And that's this. Because of this truth that God commands and enables, every command of God is also a promise. Every command of God is also a promise.

And what that means is that I can claim the command the same way I claim the promises of God. I don't need to become discouraged because I fall short and the standards are too high. I've heard Christians say, I'm just standing on the promise.

I'm claiming the promises of God. We used to have a game, and we'd go around a room, and somebody'd quote a promise, and I'd claim it. I'm standing on this promise, that promise.

But I've never been in a group where they wanted to claim the commands of God. I never heard anybody say, oh, let's claim some commands. Now, what's a command from God? You realize you can claim a command on the same basis and by the same grace that you can claim a promise.

Because every command is a promise. And if it's true that every command is a promise, and it is, then let me put it this way and say, every promise is an invitation. Every time God commands, He promises.

And every time He promises, He invites. And He says, stretch forth your withered hand. It's a glorious thing.

That's what I mean when Luke presents Him as the friend of all mankind. This is a great truth of wrath. Some Christians live many, many years struggling with the command before God ever daunted on their heart that He has made this provision.

And they think because God said so, I'm going to go try to do it. And then they try in their own strength, and you know what happens then. They just sort of fail and fall on their face.

This is such a glorious truth. If you must, you may. If I must, I may.

The duty is mine. The power is not mine. But the duty is mine.

The duty is yours. The responsibility to obey God is yours. The power is not yours.

The power is the Lord's. And so He comes and He says, you want to enter into wrath? Stretch forth your withered hand. Just as our Lord Jesus invited Peter out of the boat to walk on the water, He's constantly inviting us.

Every time there's a command, there's a promise. Every time there's a promise, there's an invitation. And every time there's an invitation, there's a miracle.

And the whole Christian life is nothing but a miracle. It's walking with the Lord on water. You know this idea that it's often asked, what's God's part? What's my part? And constantly that's a struggle with Christians.

I know I'm not just supposed to sit back on my duff and let God do everything. But what is my part? And how do I know what my responsibility is? Some say God does it all. We do nothing.

And others say, no, man does it all. And God expects man to do it. Here's the truth of the balance of Scripture.

God won't do it. And I can't. See, there's the dilemma.

God won't and I can't. But He's promised. Together, we can and will.

And so in union with the Lord, we can. I like to word it this way and say, it's as I attempt to obey God that I find the resources to obey God. I can't wait and just sit around and say, all right, I'm going to wait now until God moves the commands in the Word of God.

When Jesus told this man to do it, he knew it was impossible. He wasn't mocking that poor man. The reality was he was teaching Sabbath truth.

He was laying out rest and what it means and how to obey God. It's a frightful thing. I remember in my early Christian life how I trembled because I couldn't.

All I could do was bail and my life was a mess. I had just so badly been burned by legalism and trying and trying. And they would say, surrender.

You're not surrendered. You're holding something back. And I surrendered my guts out.

Couldn't surrender anymore. I was one with the altar. There was no way to surrender anymore.

I didn't need surrender. I was totally surrendered to a God that big. I didn't need more surrender.

I needed a bigger God. I needed to see the Lord. And then when I began to see the Lord, he got that big.

Then I surrendered to that. And then he got that big and I surrendered to that. If you surrender to one horsepower, you'll do a lot of pushing.

You surrender to a hundred horsepower, you're going to do a lot of riding. And what we need to see is a bigger God. And we need to have our hearts set upon the Lord.

So Jesus called us to do the impossible. I remember how my will used to tremble on the verge of action. And even attempting to do some impossible thing.

But how faithful God has been. Test it. God's not afraid to say it.

Test it. Try it. See if it's true.

You've just come before the Lord. And God gives you some impossible thing. Don't just say, oh, I can't do it.

Say, Lord, my hand is withered. Nevertheless, at your will, I'm going to try to obey. And then you stretch forth your withered hand.

And it's amazing. You'll do it. And it's by the power of God.

So we just can't wait around for the Lord to flood our hearts with love so we love our enemy. But we attempt, even while they're throwing stones at us, Stephen, and so on. One thing that makes this miracle so dramatic is that the Lord commanded this helpless person to stretch forth his withered hand publicly in the face of all of this religious tradition.

I love verse 8. He says, rise and come forward. Jesus knew the Pharisees were there. Jesus knew the scribes were there.

Mark tells us the Herodians were also there. Jesus knew the Herodians were there. Their idea of Christianity was sort of religion.

A bunch of works. Do this. Do that.

Rules. Regulations. We do this, that, and the other thing.

We don't do this, that, and the other thing. I don't smoke. I don't chew.

I don't go with girls that do that kind of thing. But Jesus called this man to stand up publicly, right in the face of all that religion, and do an impossible thing. And how it angered them.

And Luke is actually mild in verse 11. It says, they themselves were filled with rage. One translation says they were mad.

Matthew tells us in chapter 12, 14, the Pharisees went out and counseled together how they might destroy him. They're out to kill him now. Why? Because he healed a man with a withered hand.

That isn't the point. He did it right in front of them, and he made their religion look as empty as it was. He showed them the vanity of it, and he showed them the possibility of doing an impossible thing through this man.

God does not primarily call. Of course, we'll trust him privately, but when it comes to display, we're going to have to get out there in public and confess that we are withered. We think as Christians that we're really somebody.

No, when we come to the Lord, we're helpless sinners. And after we come to the Lord, we're helpless Christians. And I hope we never get beyond that.

We need to see that we're helpless Christians. And then as a helpless Christian, he calls us to stand up publicly, and how are they going to get mad at you? You start enjoying the Lord and the simplicity of it, and just trusting God to work these things in you, and they're going to be pulling their hair out. They're going to think, oh, you're a strange kind of a person.

Anyway, that's the point of the miracle, that God enables me to obey as I attempt to obey him. In myself, I'm withered, helpless, weak. It's not possible.

In yourself, you're withered, helpless, weak. It's not possible. But then by the power of God and the life of God, you do it.

I turn please to chapter 6, verse 12. Let me say a couple of words of this before we close. The choosing of the twelve apostles.

Beginning at verse 12, it was at this time he went off to the mountain to pray. He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when the day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them whom he also named as apostles.

And then it gives their names, Simon, he also named Peter, Andrew his brother, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon, who was called a zealot, Judas, the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Different of these men had different names in different lists, so it can get a little confusing. According to verse 13, there were many disciples there.

You see that also in verse 17. A multitude of disciples. Jesus called the twelve out of the group.

There were a whole bunch there. It's always mysterious when you see a group and then somebody says, I want you and you and you and you and not you, not you. And that's what he did with the twelve.

Of course, the mystery comes and probably everyone who's been earnest with the Lord at one time or another sat down in a corner someplace and scratched his head and wondered, how come God chose me and not my neighbor? How come he chose me and my family and not one of my other loved ones? What's going on? This choice of God is very, very mysterious. And so he went up and he prayed all night and then he came by and he chose the twelve. Now, the lists are given, Matthew 10 and Mark chapter 3 here in Luke 6 and in Acts chapter 1. You have the same list and they're not always in the same order.

Peter is always first. Judas is always last. And the first four are always mentioned together but they're mixed up in the different lists.

I don't know if you've ever tried to memorize the twelve. There's no glory in memorizing their names but some people like to do that kind of thing. I've memorized them just by linking them together.

Here's my little memory aid. Did you know there were three sets of brothers in the twelve? See, you've already got six of them down if you know that. Peter and Andrew, James and John, and then the sons of Alphaeus, James and Jude.

And then there were two that were almost brothers. Remember the man that led the other one to the Lord under the fig tree? Philip and Nathanael. And then you've got the two opposites.

Matthew, of course he worked for the Roman government. He was a tax collector. And then Simon the Zealot, he worked against the Roman government.

The Zealots were the political group and they were out to assassinate any Roman official they could. They hated the Romans. And so he put them two together and unfortunately that leaves me to link dear Thomas with Judas.

But it helps me remember. I hate to put Thomas near that guy. So that's how I remember them.

Like I said, it's no big deal to know their name. And especially since their names are changed. Livius and Thaddeus and Judas, that's all the same guy.

And Simon and Peter, so it depends on Bartholomew is also Nathanael and again, that's not important. So you read this and you say just a list of boring names. Not a Pharisee, not a scribe, not a ruler, not an elder among them.

Just a bunch of humble individuals just like we are. And out of these twelve, you know the record. God has built his church.

They became the foundation for everything that God was going to do. Now it seems clear that God deliberately chose twelve because he's writing his Bible. Say, what's the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament? The difference is this.

The Old Testament is the New Testament in seed form. The New Testament is fully developed. Say, what's the difference between the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles? The Old Testament is seed, the Gospels are the bud, and the Epistles are the fully developed.

It's all the same truth and it's the same method. So you had the twelve tribes of Israel, now you've got the twelve apostles. You had Israel the nation, now you're going to have the Gentile church.

But it's the same truth. I think it's important in verse 12 to notice that our Lord Jesus spent all night in prayer before he chose these twelve disciples. Luke especially mentions the eight different times our Lord Jesus prayed the different crises of his life.

And of course because he's the son of all mankind. If the son of all mankind needed to pray, how much more do we who are his followers, the followers not above his master, and the way of the king is certainly the way of the king's subject. It would be nice, and I don't have anybody in mind or anything in mind, but when we decided to choose people, church officers or something like that, I'm not saying pray all night, but it would be nice to pray a little bit.

Sometimes we just choose people and for whatever reason and we don't commit it to prayer. I think the early church applied this very much. In Acts chapter 6, when they chose the elders, remember, to wait on the tables, it says that they went to prayer first.

They did that first. In Acts 13, when they went to send out Barnabas and Saul, it says that they went to prayer. They prayed about that.

In Acts chapter 14, when they appointed elders in every city, before they appointed elders, they prayed about that. They committed that unto the Lord. And so Luke calls great attention to that.

Now you might get the idea because I'm saying, twelve apostles, the great mission, build a church. That Jesus chose the twelve in order to do the work. That he chose me because I've got a job to do.

That he chose you because you've got a job to do. Not primarily so. Not primarily so.

Some people say, especially if they're in a close accident and they're almost killed but not killed, they say, well the Lord left me here because I've got a job to do. And I'm not going to go until the job is done. No, you're not here because you've got a job to do.

You're here because you've got a God to know. And there are ways that earth reveals him that heaven cannot. Try to understand that.

When you go to heaven, do you think you'll ever know him as the one who delivers from trials? The one who restores? The one who forgives? The advocate? You can't know him like that up there. Because there's no troubles up there. There's no trials up there.

You won't need a lawyer up there. An advocate. If you don't know him that way down here, you will miss that revelation forever.

That's why you're left on the earth, because you've got a God to know and I've got a God to know. And Mark, when he gives this record that Jesus chose the twelve, listen to Mark chapter 3, 14. It says, he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that they might go out and preach.

But the first reason he chose the twelve was not because they had a job to do, but that they might be with him for fellowship. It's the knowledge of God. And that's why he chose the twelve to walk with him and then later, yes, there's the job to do as well.

Let me close by suggesting why Luke put the man with the withered hand and then the choosing of the twelve and then he goes into this great sermon on the plain. I think the order is instructive. Just as really, as the man with the withered hand illustrates that the responsibility is mine, but the power is his, so the fact that he chose the twelve before the sermon on the plain illustrates that the privilege is mine, but the responsibility now is his.

And what I mean by that very plainly is this. Jesus prayed all night and then chose twelve disciples. There was a whole group.

They weren't out there saying, choose me, choose me. I volunteer. Somebody pick me.

There were no volunteers. They didn't sign up for this. Jesus, by election.

Jesus, by sovereignty. You, you, you, you, you. Jesus chose them.

I get great comfort out of that. I didn't volunteer for this. Sometimes I wonder if Lillian, in 1958 when I first met her on a bus on the way to Boston.

I wonder if she knew then what she knows now if she would still choose me. Isn't it a glorious thing? Jesus knew all about you before the foundation of the earth. And he chose him.

He knew all about you and he chose him. When you open your Bible, you might have Genesis 1.1 as the first verse in your Bible. You open my Bible, you won't see Genesis 1.1 as the first verse.

Because I wrote in another verse in front of Genesis 1.1. I wrote in Ephesians 1.4. Because Ephesians 1.4 says we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. And so I come before Genesis 1.1. I was chosen before the foundation of the world. And so I'm first, see, when you read my Bible.

The point is this. When I mess up, and I do, and when I fail, and there's still a lot of uncrucified filth in my life and a lot of ground to be possessed, I remember that he chose me. I didn't choose him.

He chose me, and it's his fault. I'm serious about that. It's his fault.

He makes a bad choice. Great comfort comes in that. You read the lives of these disciples and some of the blunders that they had.

Oh, it was so thrilling. And then later he reminds them, you have not chosen me. I've chosen you and ordained you that you could go forth and bring forth.

And so before we look at these impossible things, love your neighbor, turn the other cheek, go the second mile, he reminds them, look, I've chosen you. You're going to fall on your face a lot of times. You need to know your hand is withered and I'm the one that made the choice.

Then he gets into this great, the laws of the kingdom, especially the law of love. We'll introduce that next time. Comments or questions? There are people, but I was thinking about this thing.

The more you go forward with the Lord, the more God will erase the demarcation between secular and spiritual. There is no line. For the Christian, everything is spiritual.

You can play ball, you can go bowling, you can praise the Lord. It's all redemptive. Yes? May I ask you a question? Yeah.

What do you mean by that? The difference between our seeking and his seeking is that our seeking is responding to his seeking. He chose us and we responded, but he's the first seeker, so he chose us, I should say, he chose us first, because we didn't choose him. No, no, no.

I'm not saying that. I'm saying they didn't respond to it. He chooses.

He said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me. He draws all equally. They don't always respond, but everyone is drawn, and so it's the response to that.

Now let's bow before the Lord. Our Father, we thank you, not for what we think we know this means, but for everything you've inspired it to me. Will you work that in our hearts? Thank you for the perpetual miracle that you always do for us as we go out to obey you.

You constantly empower us and give us the resources. Teach us as never before to stretch forth our withered hands and to become that public testimony that we live by a life not our own. Work it in us, we pray.

Bring us back together in your will to meditate around our Lord Jesus, we ask.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15120.mp3>

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