

The Word
Mark 3

John 11:1-44

Hebrews 4

Responsive: Psalm 119:9-16

So initially I was going to revisit the first few verses here in Mark 3 as a refresher and introduction into the following verses that we were going to look at today, but as I was working through this it sort of took on a life of its own. So today we are going to take a 2nd look at these first 6 verses here in mark focusing on the power of God to save. (Mark 3:1-6)

What we see here in this passage is a perfect picture of God's sovereignty and power. As I was reflecting on these verses again this week it really stood out to me not so much the miracles themselves that Christ performed but rather how they were performed. By the speaking of a command.

All of our reading this morning was to set up this fact, that in God's word contains immense power. With a word he brought Lazarus back to life, and throughout his ministry this is what we see, the power God expressed through his word. As Psalm 119 says, "I have said I will keep your words, I entreat your favor with my whole heart, be merciful to me according to your word." God promises to keep and protect his children, be merciful to me according to your word. And in Hebrew 4 that Clay read, we see the power of God's word in salvation. Much like with Lazarus, it is the power to resurrect our sinful dead heart's into one full of life, of faith, and love toward our Savior.

In the case we have here with the man with the withered hand, it is no different then any other miracle, Christ told him to stretch out his hand, which something that was entirely impossible for him to do, but with the command of God came the ability to obey. God spoke, and it happened. It is pretty easy to see where the word faith movement gets its ideas, but they are lacking one small detail, they are not God. Sure, they claim to call upon God and invoke his power, but really it is they who are commanding, they act as if they have God on a leash and they can demand what they want from him, but if course we know that is ridiculous, the created being has no power or sway over the one who created it.

Throughout all of these accounts we have read so far, the healings, and the casting out of demons, we see that Christ did so with only a command. There was no ritual, no using special herbs only the command of God. And with that command, came the power and ability to obey it. Just as we saw in the first 2 chapters of Mark here, with the command came the ability, and desire to obey. Chapter 1:16-20. And over in chapter 2:13,14. Christ did not ask, he did not plea with these men he called out to them and said, follow me and they did, and they did so immediately. It is the same with the miracles, the casting out of the unclean spirit in chapter 1 verse 25 "But Jesus rebuked him, saying. Be quiet, and come out of him!. Even the demon's obey the command of God.

Let that sink in for a minute, even the demon's obey the commands of God. This was not an exorcism like we see on tv or movies, the demon did not argue, did not fight back, rather he did as he was commanded. What power there is in the commands of God, with just a spoken word he is able to command the demon to leave this man. And we see the same with all these recordings of the healings here as well, with a word, with a command Christ heals the sick. In the case of the leper verse 1:41 it says that Jesus was moved with compassion, stretched out his hand and touched him and said, I am willing, be cleansed. As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

Again it was the word of God which had the power to cure. We see it again in chapter 2 with the paralytic, verse 11 “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Just like the man with the withered arm, Christ commanded this man to do something that was impossible for him to do, but with that command came the ability. But before that, before he healed him he also forgave his sins verse 5. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven you. And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts. Why does this man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone? But immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, he said to them. Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic your sins are forgiven you, or to say arise and take up your bed and walk? But so that you may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.

It is easy to say things that can not be proven, to make spiritual claims. yet Christ, to prove that he does in deed have the power to forgive sins, with a word he does the impossible and heals this paralytic from his physical infirmity. God's word has power over the spiritual, and the physical. As we all know how did God create the world? He spoke it into existence. God said, let there be light, and there was light. How often do we think about God's power? I mean truly, and honestly think about the almighty king of kings and lord of lords?

I will admit that I don't, and that is why this really stood out to me this week. Sure, we understand God's sovereignty, we understand and believe that he has power over all of creation, sure we believe in God's work in salvation, but do we trust it? Do we truly trust God? How often do we doubt God? How often do we worry about our life, our future? We fret over our finances, over car repairs, over our jobs, our health. We complain to God why are things this way? How quickly we forget his promise to keep us, to provide and care for us. This God, who created everything out of nothing by his word alone promises that he will watch and care for his children.

If we put this in the right perspective, we will start to see how little and insignificant all of our little whining, and sufferings truly are. What we are really doing when we whine and complain is we are not fully trusting God. We think it should be a certain way, and when it is not we complain, but the reality is that everything is exactly how God has intended. Look at us, this little group sitting here in this run down building, from the human perspective it would be easy to say that we are failure, and it could be easy to fall into doubt, and even despair at times wondering what God is doing here, but look at where we are today from where we were, a small, faithful rag tag bunch who gather together to worship our Lord and Savior. God has blessed us in many ways, and it is in that we rejoice and praise him!

One of the questions I would get asked by pastoral candidates when we were in the process of looking for a pastor was, What is our mission statement? It is trendy today to have a mission statement, and while I generally don't get behind this idea because it really is nothing more then American corporate lingo to encourage growth in the organization. I think I can say that we do in fact have a mission statement. our mission statement is to grow in Christ, be true to his word, and to remain faithful to him in all things..

Now this is not the type of mission statement that will cause droves of people to come flocking to our doors, but I believe it is the right one. Instead of trying to market ourselves and worrying about how to be appealing to people, we must remain focused on being faithful to God, lean on his provision, and glory in the blessings and gifts that he gives. Having faith that God will always provide, not just for our little group here, but each of us individually.

I think we so often have a little view of God and his power, I know we all understand it on one level but sometimes when the trials come, with things are not going as we think they should, when sin arises in our life again, and again, and again and we constantly fall short of where we should be, are we trusting God in that moment? Just look at the paralytic, look at the man with the withered arm, so that we would know that God has the power to forgive us of our sin, to cast it away as far as the east is from the west and remember it no more, he says, take up you bed and walk, and stretch out your hand, I command you to do that which is impossible, because I will make you able to do so.

God's command, and the ability to follow it is always about God and his power, it is never our will, our decision, our desire but it is God. In thinking about this, I think one could say that this is the stark difference between the old covenant and the new. With the old covenant came the commands, and with those commands promises. Do this, and I will bless you. But with the new covenant commands also comes the ability. Looking at Mark chapter 12, verses 28-31.

“Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all? Out of all of God's commandments, which one is the greatest, which one is the most important? And Jesus answered saying, “the first of all commandments is, Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

As we saw in our study in Galatians, these commandments sum up all of the commandments, if one loves God as they ought, and loves those around them with whom they have contact with as they ought then things such as thou shall not murder, covet, lie, steal, cheat, bear false witness all fall under loving your neighbor as yourself. But what I want to point out here, is that even this is not by our own power. John 6:41. “The Jews then complained about him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, is not this Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says I have come down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said to them, do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. No one can come to God until they are drawn, until they are called, and how does this calling happen?

Well Paul answers this in Romans 10:11-17. For the scripture says, Whoever believes on him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same lord over all is rich to all who call upon him. For whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord who has believed our report? So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by.....the word of God. The power of God, is in his word, and what we have sitting in front of us is not just a collection of quint stories but it is the word of God with the power to save.

2nd Timothy 3:16 and 17. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. We have sitting before us, the very word of God, the same power is in these written words to bring a dead sinner to life is the same power that Christ used to heal the paralytic, and the man with the withered arm. It is the word of God. If his word had the power to create everything, to heal, to cast out demons, and forgive sins then why do we at times doubt it? Why do we doubt God's promise to keep and guard us, why do we doubt God's provision in our life seeking more than he has given and complaining when we do not receive it. I think It is because we can have a small understanding of the power of God that is working in us through the holy spirit.

Our struggles with sin, our struggles with doubt, I think can be largely traced to a lack of trust and understanding in God's power to save, protect and enable us to get through it. Often times We do not give God's word the importance in our life that we should and because of that sin and doubt start to creep in. One of the best ways that we can protect ourselves from falling into sin is by reading the word of God. We need to be focused on God's word, we need to be a people of God's word. For in it, is the power to save, rebuke, and encourage.

Let us go from here today, determined not to have a small view of God's word and his power. But rather understand who God is, let us fully put our trust in the one who by just speaking a word created the world, by a word cast out demons, by a word brought life to a mans dead limbs, and by his word, promises and keep and care for his children, and by his word of the gospel brings dead hearts to life. Let us go forth, fully trusting God and his word, not letting sin leading to doubt creep in, but instead wholly lean on the word of God.