

The Character of Jesus 16
Healing a Withered Hand on the Sabbath
Matthew 12:9 – 14, Mark 3:1 – 6, Luke 6:6 – 11

- Characteristic: Love – doing what is best – doing good
 - (9) Right after the gleaning incident, confirmed by Luke (the chronological gospel)
 - (10) Jesus healed on the Sabbath also in Mark 1:21, 29, John 5:9, 9:14, Luke 13:14, and 14:2, plus the parallel accounts. No objection was raised in Mark 1. In all the others, the healing caused a negative reaction due to the day of the week. Therefore, observing the Sabbath was a hot-button issue. Review:
 - The Law says to do no “work” on the Sabbath (*e.g.* Exodus 31:13), but “work” is not explained.
 - A man who was picking up sticks for firewood on the Sabbath during the Wilderness period was stoned (Numbers 15:35). He had had the opportunity to plan or he could have borrowed from his neighbors (as manna was to teach).
 - The people were not to carry “burdens” out of their houses or through the city gates on the Sabbath (Jeremiah 17:21 – 23, Nehemiah 13:19). The exact nature of a “burden” was not given, but the idea was commerce.
 - (11) Various rabbis wrote about this type of situation, but some were stricter than others. In general, it was permitted to rescue an animal which was in danger. Some rabbis taught that, if the animal were safe in the pit, the owner could carry food to it, and a covering if the weather demanded.
 - (12) Rather than continuing the argument of consistency, Jesus introduced a different rationale: doing good.
 - Many rabbis developed “Good Samaritan” teaching long before Jesus based on such laws as Leviticus 19:16 (Nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor) and Deuteronomy 22:2 (You shall restore [his property] to him). The work required to save a life was permitted on the Sabbath.
 - James 2:17 To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.
 - (13) Jesus did not make a comment about healing. He just told the man to stretch out his hand.
 - Mark included the comment that Jesus was angry.
 - Luke included that He knew their thoughts.
 - By not speaking directly about healing, accusations would be more difficult.
 - Having defeated the Sabbath arguments only the previous Sabbath, Jesus stuck with the “doing the right thing” scenario.
 - (14) The sanctity of the Sabbath had become so strong that questioning the rules of the rabbis was elevated to blasphemy, a capital crime.
 - Mark added that the Pharisees went out to join forces with the Herodians. The Pharisees usually considered Herodians (those who recognized the Herods as legitimate kings of Israel, and allowed pagan temples) to be non-Jews due to their differences.
 - Hatred and tradition are the roots of genocide.
- Applications
 - What hot-button issues have obscured doing the right thing?
 - Sexual sins, from adultery to “living together” to homosexuality.

- Race or ethnicity
- Denominationalism resulting in war or genocide.
- Under what conditions are traditions ignored?
 - Financial considerations
 - Time commitment
 - To maintain ethnic or class separation
- Besides consistency and love, what other arguments could both we and Jesus make?
 - “But I can do these miracles.”
 - “Does the Bible actually say that?”