The Compassion and Power of Jesus in Healing the Sick: A Narrative-Critical Study of Mark 3:1-6

Paul Danbaki Jatau

Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT

Mark 3:1-6 contains a mixture of controversy (3:2, 4), healing (3:1, 3, 5), and biographical (3:5a, 6) narratives. Without doubt, 3:1–6 concludes the series of conflict stories from 2:1–3:6. Jesus' authority underlying each pericope in 2:1–3:6 comes into mortal conflict here and in 2:1–12 with the religious authorities over the right to forgive sin and the use of the Sabbath, two issues that have to do with God's prerogatives alone. According to Mark, that claim of authority throughout 1:16–3:6 had its ultimate roots in the "beginning" of 1:1–15, the announcement of the time of fulfillment. This article, using the narrative-critical method, constitutes an attempt to analyze the Compassion and Power of Jesus in Healing the Sick. Jesus' activity in Mark 3:1-6 demonstrated his compassion and power by reinstating the sick man as a member of the community. However, by this healing, the Marcan Jesus was also restoring the kingdom of God by creating a new household as a symbol thereof.

Keywords: *Compassion, Power, Healing, Sick,*

INTRODUCTION

The healing of the man with the withered hand forms the last of this first series of five conflict narratives. It takes its place at this point naturally by topical association with the previous incident and demonstrates that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. The high point of the incident lies less in the act of healing than in the conflict between Jesus and his adversaries, in which they are left silent before his sovereign word. It is striking that Jesus takes the initiative in asking what is permitted on the Sabbath, and that his adversaries are silent before his question. This pattern recurs in the series of controversies which took place in Jerusalem.

Mark (12:34) notes that no one dared question Jesus further, while in 12:35 Jesus himself seizes the initiative in the concluding conflict narrative. This parallel in structural arrangement is undoubtedly due to the evangelist. It is Mark's way of indicating that 3:6, reporting the conspiracy of the Pharisees and the Herodians, points forward to the Passion narrative. The decision to seek Jesus' death is not the result of a single incident; it is the response to an accumulation of incidents.[1]

In the conventional perspective, Exorcisms and Healings in Mark narrative are understood purely in terms of spiritual and psychological sense, overlooking their social implications. This article, using the narrative-critical method, constitutes an attempt to analyze the Compassion and Power of Jesus in Healing the Sick. Jesus' activity in Mark 3:1-6 demonstrated his compassion and power by reinstating the sick man as a member of the community. However, by this healing, the Marcan Jesus was also restoring the kingdom of God by creating a new household as a symbol thereof.

POSSESSION AND SICKNESS IN THE WIDER JEWISH CONTEXT

The miracle stories of Jesus of Mark are situated primarily in the rural milieu of Galilee. The Jewish society was a community-oriented society which was predominantly characterized by the Purity-Pollution System, with its purity hierarchies. 1 In such a context, avoidance of any potential threat to ritual purity (uncleanness) was paramount, as it would ostracize one from the table fellowship and the fellowship in the community. Since any individual life found meaning in co-existing with the rest of the household and community, Possession and

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sickness had a larger social dimension, in the form of social stigma, and economic burden. The sick relied on social and familial connections for subsistence and support, as illustrated by the fact that sick people were brought to Jesus by immediate family members. (2:1; 7:32).[2] This brings those related and connected also under the influence of all the aforementioned impacts of affliction.

John J. Pilch, in addition to the above, finds that to be afflicted was also to be incapacitated from performing gender roles, which also resulted in economic repercussions. The Galilean society was a subsistence-based community,[3] where any loss of a work through an individual's sickness or possession that causes paralysis, deafness or blindness will amount to a substantial pressure upon the household. This means the man can perform his gender role as a man. Equally, sickness incapacitates women from performing their gender roles as women. The text, for example, highlights the inability of the hemorrhaging woman to perform her role of being a wife and having children (5:25) and also of Simon's mother-in-law to serve food, which she was only able to do after being healed (1:25).

Worse was the case for those with contagious diseases. Such victims were quarantined outside their living quarters, mostly on the outskirts of towns and villages, where they died or found healing. Then, they had to perform the ritual offering of cleansing, which was a costly affair. The dualism of purity and pollution was derived and developed from the spiritual duality of God versus Satan. The ultimate foundation of the purity-pollution system is found in the Mosaic law: "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2). From this standard, the Israelites derived and established cultural and social boundaries, and these boundaries governed human approach to the temple to "keep God from withdrawing the divine presence from the temple."[4] The single most devastating impact of all uncleanness, therefore, was that one was denied entrance to the temple, and shut off from the centre of Israel's life.

MEANING OF EXORCISM AND HEALING

In the Theological Realm of Jewish Religiosity

Gerd Theissen says that the intention of the miracle stories in a theological sense is "to bear witness to a revelation of God that is directed to the whole world and seeks to bring all human beings to recognize that revelation. At the same time, however, they are influenced by the concerns of the lower classes in society."[5] He considers that miracles are not just extraordinary supernatural physical events but also contain in them a major element of the revelation of the kingdom of God. Therefore, he sees in them the miraculous transformation of the whole world into the reign of God was being carried out.[6] This also means that the miracles are "collective symbolic actions" through which a new lifestyle and society is born. In essence, taken as a whole, the miracles point to the eschatological universal salvation in the future and the episodic realization of salvation in the present.[7] This idea of miracles as the evidence and acts of the Kingdom can be illustrated by such statements as "Satan's kingdom is disintegrating" (3:24-26), "his house being plundered" (3:27) and that the casting out of demons is the first sign of the arrival of the rule of God.

In the Political Realm of Roman Imperialism

Horsley sees the miracles of Jesus as actions of liberation against the oppressive political structures of the first century.[8] The exorcism stories can be understood as political acts and some exorcisms more precisely as a form of political resistance and symbolic defeat of Roman rule. As the Romans and their local aristocratic support were viewed by the common people as an attack on traditional society, analogously, so demons were viewed as an attack on the body. In this sense, Jesus mission in Galilean villages focused on reverting the unbearable effects of Imperial violence. Hence, the healing activities of Jesus contributed heavily to an opposition at the centres of power. In this context, Pilch suggests that Jesus' healings would be seen as treasonous political behavior, that ultimately led to his violent death.[9]The gospel texts often call Jesus miraculous acts as "deeds of power" and the people are amazed at his authority (11:28). Since the notion of power and authority is integral to politics, it is not unreasonable to think that the social and political elite considered his actions as subversive.

Thus, Jesus' healings were not aimed solely at individuals but served as a way of transforming the wider community, which means that God was establishing his reign by creating an alternative society that is borderless

and brokerless. Jesus' healings, then, are not abstract spiritual truths but are also a program of community action and practical resistance to a system that alienates and frightens individuals. Through his healing activity, Jesus taught inclusiveness and liberation that negated the hierarchy and the discrimination of the Jewish system and Roman power. Horsley says that, in this manner, God's power was manifest and available to the long-oppressed rural population of the land of Israel.[10]

Mark 3:1-6 Its Synoptic Parallels

Mark 3:1-6 can be stated as a triple tradition passage as it is also found in Matt 12:9-14 and Luke 6:6-11.[11] The narrative style of the other two gospels varies from that of Mark, but the main theme of the Passage is the same. It contains a mixture of controversy, healing, and biographical narratives.

We can also see indications of Mark's redaction in 3:5. The grounds usually given are formal, stylistic, and thematic. Mark also directs us to the larger context of verses 2:15-3:5. Mark 3:1-6 concludes the series of conflict stories from 2:1–3:6. If, as has been maintained, Mark is responsible for placing the opening and concluding (3:1–6) pericopae in their present context, one cannot avoid the implication of these stories for Mark's narrative.

Jesus' authority underlying each pericope in 2:1–3:6 comes into mortal conflict here and in 2:1-12 with the religious authorities over the right to forgive sin and the use of the Sabbath, two issues that have to do with God's prerogatives.[12] The root of the conflict goes to Jesus' claim of authority. According to Mark, that claim of authority throughout 1:16-3:6 had its ultimate roots in the "beginning" of 1:1-15, the announcement of the time of fulfillment. Consequently, Jesus' authority represented a fundamental challenge to the Jewish religious authorities.[13]

At first glance Mark 3:1-6 which is the story of the healing of a man with withered hand seems like a 'Conflict Story' in which Jesus is portrayed as attempting to justify by means of a question on the legitimacy of doing good and saving life on the Sabbath. He performs a healing that under the Mosaic Law and its prohibitions against "Sabbath work" would ordinarily have been forbidden.[14] However, a closer inspection of the story reveals that this is not the case. Mark 3:1-6 is a 'Sign Story'.[15] This work agrees with Jeffrey Gibson because A 'sign' story is one whose theme is how a claimant to divine authority, facing hostility or disbelief, finds it necessary to produce or work a 'sign', a 'proof or 'token of trustworthiness' either to certify the truth of a prophecy he has uttered, or to establish the validity of his claim that a certain course of action he has undertaken is 'of God. It has the following form:

1. introductory narrative framework
2. objectionable utterance or action
3. objection to, or expression of doubt over, the validity of the utterance or action (this sometimes takes the form of a notice of hostility toward the claimant to divine authority)
4. proposal of means by which the validity of the action or utterance may be certified (stipulation of the 'sign')
5. carrying out of the proposal (effectuating the 'sign')
6. reaction of observers

All these elements are captured in Mark 3:1-6.

Mark 3:1-6 in its Wider Context of 2:1-3:6

The section from Mark 2:1-3:6 contains five controversial stories (the healing of the paralytic, the eating with tax collectors and sinners, the question about fasting, plucking grain on the Sabbath,and the man with the withered hand). Mark himself has gathered these stories in order to indicate how Jesus' authority was rejected by his opponents. His insistence of the authority leads to his rejection and ultimately to his death, a fate

foreshadowed in 2:20 and 3:6.[16] J Marcus rightly indicates that even more important is a linear development of opposition in the controversial story in which the Jewish religious leaders first question Jesus silently (2:7), then question his disciples about him (2:16), then question Jesus about his disciples' behavior (2:18, 24), then seek a legal reason for condemning him (3:2), then plot hi s murder (3:6).[17]

The final note of the Pharisees' intention to exempt Jesus from the increasing effect of his action emphasizes the close connection between Jesus' activity and his ultimate death. Mark is probably using this collection, "to show how the authority of Jesus was rejected by the Jewish authorities.... It is this refusal to accept Jesus' authority which leads to his rejection and ultimately to his death, a fate foreshadowed in 2:20 and 3:6. This chapter, therefore, is not simply a collection of'conflict stories'.[18] but a demonstration of Jesus' authority and the refusal of Jewish religious authorities to recognize it." From the first to the fifth controversial stories (2:1-3:6),the opponents' unbelief, stemming from the hardness of their hearts,appears as hostility toward Jesus, which gradually escalates and intensifies.[19]

For the reader/hearer, the linear progression of the controversial stories in 2:1-3:6 combines with 'the circular progression' to increase the tension and to constitute a climax in the final story.[20] Furthermore, the fact that the hostility in 3:1-6 is information given to the reader/hearer alone and not to the internal actor of Mark' s Gospel, indicates that a major function of 3:1-6 is to make the reader/hearer aware of the Jewish religious leaders' insensitivity and incredulity.[21] The conclusion in 3:5-6 is used as an ending of the story of the withered hand, the total controversy section, and the first stag e of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Thus, Mark employed the controversial stories theologically to indicate that Jesus and his opponents are on a collision course that will culminate in Jesus' death.[22]

Despite its wide-raging structural parallels with the first story in the section 2:1-12, our concluding narrative (3:1-6) is more thoroughly saturated with the element of conflict, as befits its position at the end of the controversy section.[23] In the course of the passage, one sees from the side of Jesus,provocative behavior (3:3), anger, and sorrow (3:5); from the side of the Pharisees, a desire to condemn Jesus (3:2), hostile silence (3:4), hardness of heart (3:5), and the instigation of a murder plot (3:6). It is symptomatic of the difference between 3:1-6 and 2:1-12 that the latter begins and ends with reference to hostile opponents.[24] Typically for a miracle story, there is no acclamation of the miracle from the audience; instead its Pharisaic observers go out and begin to plot Jesus' murder (see John 1 1:45-54; Marcus, 250). Corresponding to this emphasis on conflict, the man who is healed plays a relatively minor role in the story , serving primarily as a spotlight to focus the attention on the tension between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.[25]

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF MARK 3:1-6

Verse 1: *kai eisēlthen palin eis sunagōgēn* (He entered again into a synagogue). This opening statement contains several clues of Mark's redactional insertion of an independent, traditional unit into the context of 2:15–28. The main verb *eisēlthen* ("entered") in the singular with no reference to any companions (cf. 2:15, 23) last appeared in 2:1–12 and 13, traditional units most likely added by Mark to 2:15–23. "Again" (*palin*) signals Jesus' habitual practice of attending the synagogue, though that feature is not to be denied. *Palin* is only loosely linked to the immediately preceding conflict-story.The 'again' is simply a narrative connexion formula. France is right in noting this is the same synagogue at Capernaum and that Pavlin suggests as much.[26] Johnson holds that *palin* can also mean 'here is another example'.[27] Possibly that here is another example of controversies surrounding the Sabbath, and or in the Synagogue in which Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit 1:26. Robert H. Stein believes it is possible to be in Capernaum since the choosing of the twelve takes place in close connection in Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-49, Luke 7:1, and Matthew 8:5.[28] Although Mark may not be in chronological order this seems to be the case that Jesus is there *palin* (again) at the Capernaum Synagogue. It is interesting to note in the account of Matthew it has *sunagōgēgn autōn* which may give more evidence to be the synagogue in Capernaum. Finally, the absence of Jesus' name, the time, and place of the synagogue at the outset may reflect Mark's adaptation of this unit to its present context, especially 2:23–28.

Ēn ekei anthrōpos ezēramenēn echōn tēn cheira ("A man was there who had a withered hand" see 1:23) sets the stage for the conflict and healing scenes that follow. Unlike the possessed man, whose presence dominated the synagogue scene in 1:21–28, this crippled man plays more a supporting role in the conflict between Jesus

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and his opponents.

Verse 2: *Paretēroun auton* (They were watching him closely) introduces the opponents without specifying who "they" were. Their identity, now supplied from the context of 2:23–28 (see 3:6), may have been dropped from the opening of the traditional unit or its context. "Watching" (*paretēroun*) can have the more malicious connotation of "to lie in wait for". Their intention to catch Jesus in the act of a transgression and charge him would support this stronger rendering. The opponents' anticipation suggests their knowledge of similar healings on the sabbath (see Luke 13:14).

ei tois sabbasin therapeusei auton (If he would heal him) provides the opponents' unstated question of the conflict story. Whereas the question was posed in 2:16, 18, 24, the question went unstated here and in 2:6–7. In fact, one could argue that the question was moot in these two pericopae, since in 2:7 the opponents accuse Jesus of blasphemy and their intention here is to *katēgorēsōsin autou* (charge him) with breaking the sabbath law. Their response is now a calculated one.

Verse 3: *Egeire eis to meson* (Stand in the middle). Those attending a synagogue sat on stone benches around the walls or squatted on mats on the floor. With this command, Jesus had the crippled man arise (e*geire* for all to see. This direct action of placing the man at the center prior to posing his own question (3:4) or restoring the hand (3:5) has led many to see this as a provocative gesture. The fact that neither the man himself nor a friend came to Jesus for his healing underscores at least the demonstrative character of the action. Jesus' statement of forgiveness in 2:5 prior to the healing in 2:11 had the same effect, especially as seen in the rhetorical questions of 2:9–10.

The opponents' "watching closely" (3:2) and Jesus' placing the man in "the centre" of attention (3:3) graphically draw the lines of conflict. But does the nature of this conflict lie in differing views of the Law or in a much more fundamental claim by Jesus for his ministry? The answer lies in the significance of his counter-question.

Verse 4: *Ezestin* (is it legal) on the sabbath?" introduces Jesus' question (see 2:24) by using the technical language of scribal legal discussions. Concern for the sabbath had led to extensive discussion in Judaism about what was legal on the sabbath (see Comment on 2:24). Jesus appears to enter into that discussion. This expression shows Jesus' desire to act in obedience to the Law. But as the question develops, it implies either that Jesus was over his head in the debate or that something other than casuistic scribal debate was at issue.

agathon poiēsai ē kakopoiēsai (To do good or to do evil) is the first of two antithetical parallelisms that complete the question. Taken by itself, this alternative begs the question, since keeping the sabbath law was the "good," unless a greater "good" called for actions that otherwise would have desecrated the sabbath. The real question then becomes, what standard determines the greater good that would permit one to transgress the sabbath? The criterion for "doing good" and, conversely for "doing evil," comes in the second antithetical parallelism. And the second parallelism stands in synonymous parallelism with the first.

*Psuchēn sōsai ē apokteinai (*To save a life or to kill) leaves us with a life or death situation, which appears to have been the one constant principle in all the Jewish debates over the Law. Thus Jesus' opponents would have found no fault with a definition of doing good based on the saving of a life. Even more certain is the illegality of the antithesis, to kill (*apokteinai*), which defines doing evil.

Consequently, this question of 3:4, expressed in synonymous parallelism, really leaves no choice. Not only was it legal to save a life on the sabbath, but it was illegal to kill, according to the Law, seven days a week! There was only one answer. The opponents' reaction, however, makes clear that much more was involved than scribal casuistry. They remained silent (3:4) and later took counsel to destroy him (3:6). What led to their response?

Many have sought the answer in Jesus' apparent attack on a calloused system of legalism that had lost the sense of human worth: 'There is no escape, nor is there any justification for a legalism which merely for the sake of orthodoxy fails to do the good and therefore produces evil." But if it were merely a question of doing good on the sabbath and prohibiting doing evil, what makes the sabbath so special, when the same would hold for any day of the week? This principle, in effect, would actually set aside the sabbath law. Furthermore, if that were the

intent of the question, as some would indeed argue, why does Jesus' response narrow or define "doing good" and "doing evil" to "saving life" and "taking life?" The former set of alternatives must be read in light of the latter.

Yet, the question of saving a life or taking a life makes the opponents' silence the more surprising. On the one hand, the Jewish authorities would have concurred that saving a life was a legal possibility. On the other hand, the opponents could easily have dismissed the case in question, by countering that the man's crippled hand was hardly a life threatening situation. The strict Jewish-Christian apocryphal Gospel According to the Hebrews appears to work within this casuistry by having the man inform Jesus that he needed his right hand as a stone mason to earn his living. But no such need appears either here or in the parallels of Matthew and Luke. Therefore, the ruler of the synagogue's exhortation in Luke 13:14 to limit healing to the six work days with a request that Jesus wait until sunset would have been an appropriate response.

Consequently, removing Jesus' question from its context and using it as a general rule for sabbath conduct would leave us with essentially the same governing principle found in Judaism regarding the sabbath. Yet the question obviously does not function in this manner in 3:1–6. Why not? Because the healing of the man with a crippled hand qualifies Jesus' meaning of "doing good" and "saving a life." That is also why the healing story and the controversy narrative cannot be separated. By defining "to do good" and "to save a life" in terms of healing a crippled man, Jesus alters the Jewish understanding of saving a life in terms of mortal danger. How does healing a crippled hand equal "saving a life"?

Jesus' question and the opponents' response only become intelligible when set against the broader scope of Jesus' ministry as summarized in 1:14–15 and the implicit claim in the previous controversies. "To do good" and "to save a life" takes on the eschatological ring of the coming of the day of salvation, the fulfillment of God's promised activity in history (cf. Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22; see 7:37), which Jesus came to announce and effect. In other words, "God's redemptive rule is realized in the making whole of a person". To this extent every healing was "clearly a question of life or death" for the one whose moment had come in his encounter with Jesus. Much more was at stake than the restoration of a crippled hand. This one was brought into a new life relationship with God through Jesus' healing. A similar claim underlies the healing of 2:1–12 and Jesus' fellowship with sinners in 2:13–17. Therefore, Jesus' question and subsequent action had far more at stake than simply a protest or provocative challenge of a rigid legalism that placed the good of keeping the sabbath against the good of healing a crippled hand.

Hoi de esiōpōn (But they remained silent) gives the initial response by the opponents. This silence, however, does not reflect the casuistic persuasiveness of Jesus' answer. On the surface, from the opponents' perspective the answer was clear, but the question was irrelevant to this situation. Their silence and subsequent response (3:6) show their perception of a much deeper issue that challenged far more than their interpretation of the Law. Thus, the following verse describes this silence as a "hardness of heart."

Verse 5: *periblepsamenos autous met' orgēs* (Looking around at them with anger) is the first of two asyndetic participial phrases that precede the main verb. "Looking around" (*periblepesthai*) is a characteristic verb in Mark (6x, Matt has none, Luke has only the parallel here), which may indicate that it is Markan redaction. Perhaps an underlying expression of irritation by the healer toward the one in need (see 1:41) was altered to focus on the opponents.

Sullupoumenos epi tē pōrōsei tēs kardias (Deeply grieved at the hardness of their heart) follows without a conjunction. This too has been attributed to Mark's redaction, because he alone makes use of the term hardness (*pōrōsis*) of heart and in similar miracle situations (see 6:52; 8:17).

Whether Mark or his tradition formulated one or both of these phrases, the meaning remains the same. Jesus perceives their silence to be culpable. Their response is described in language reminiscent of Israel's response to the prophets' message (e.g., Jer 3:17; 7:24; 9:13; 11:18; 13:10; 16:12; Ps 81:13; Deut 29:18). Thus, Jesus' reaction to their response gives additional support to the veiled Christological claim behind his question in 3:4.

Legei tō antheōpō (He said to the man) turns the attention back to the man standing in the middle of this scene.

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This time Jesus commands him to extend his hand. When he does so, it is *apekatestathē* (restored). This verb occurs rarely in the NT and twice in an explicitly eschatological context (9:12; Matt 17:11; Acts 1:6). It occurs again in a healing narrative to refer to the complete restoration of sight (8:25).

Jesus has acted according to the opponents' expectation (3:2) but in terms of his own ministry (3:4). Nothing further is said about the man or his healing.

Verse 6: *Ezelthotes hoi Pharisaioi* (The Pharisees departed). The contrast between Jesus *eiserchesthai* (entering) a synagogue at the outset (3:1) and the Pharisees *echerchesthai* (departing) may be coincidental but it accents the difference in direction between Jesus and his opponents. *Euthus*—The immediateness of this act is noted by Mark only, and is quite characteristic of his style, hitting off a situation with a word. The immediateness is here a sign of the violence of the feeling excited against Jesus.

Hoi Pharisaioi (the Pharisees) have featured in each of the three preceding conflict stories (2:16, 18, 24), and the assumption that it was again they who were watching Jesus' actions in the synagogue *hina katēgorēsōsin autou* (so that they might accuse him v. 2) is here confirmed by their going out (from the synagogue, presumably) to make plans against him. But their association with the *Hrōdianon* is unexpected. The two groups will be associated again in 12:13, again with hostile intentions towards Jesus. The Greek term *Hrōdianos* follows a standard Latin form to denote the supporters or adherents of a leading figure (other examples of the form in Greek are *kaisarianos, Christianos*); Josephus uses similar terms, *hoi Hrōdeioi* to refer to those who supported Herod the Great, but in Galilee at this time they must have been supporters of Herod Antipas. The Pharisees were zealous patriots, and as such were generally opposed to any foreign yoke. But here was an opportunity to use the foreign power against a common enemy.[29]

It is not likely that we should take *sumboulion edidoun* (a unique idiom, for which most MSS substitute the more familiar *poieō*) too strictly as 'adopting a plan' in the sense of a formulated strategy for bringing Jesus to trial and death; the succeeding narrative does not suggest anything so definite at this stage, but rather last-minute measures by the Jerusalem authorities at the final Passover (14:1–2, 10–11), following a further resolution to 'destroy' Jesus in 11:18. Here we have an agreement in principle that Jesus is to be opposed and, when the time is ripe, silenced. If the agreement is that he is willfully breaking the sabbath, capital punishment properly follows (Exod 31:14–15; m. Sanh. 7:4).[30]

Mark 3:1-6: Jesus' Demonstration of Compassion and Power in Healing the Sick

Repeatedly, the doctrinal beliefs are shown to be in error. The evangelist portrays Jesus as condoning the breaking of the Sabbath. The situation is similar with regard to the question of Sabbath observance. While there is uncertainty over whether the historical Jesus actually broke the Sabbath commandment or merely engaged in legitimate debate over what was permissible. It is clear in Mark that it is a concern for human life as well as for the original intention of the Sabbath that makes Jesus challenge the imputed casuistry of the Pharisees, and which leads to the evangelist's Christological conclusion.Thus, the Sabbath law must give way, not before a set of amended regulations but before a God who has only one choice when it comes to saving life or destroying it, and before the Son of Man who is the Sabbath's lord.[31]

The Pharisees were more concerned with catching Jesus then worshiping on the Sabbath, and in many of our lives we can find ourselves in the same place. Maybe we do not plot to have someone killed, but we may lay a trap so someone, our 'brother' or 'sister' who disagrees with our perspective, emphasis of scripture, or political stance. Do we like the Pharisees use their compassion for others against them? Do we break a few 'small' rules like lying or slander to allow others to see 'what kind of person' they really are? Do we as the Pharisees take an innocent bystander to be used as our bait, when the issue is not really about right or wrong but what we think our rights should be? The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus for healing a man who was no longer able to work to support his family if he had one, but they only saw an opportunity to expose Him.

In the text under study, Jesus demonstrates His compassion and power by healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. This act of kindness and restoration reveals Jesus' character and mission, challenging the religious norms of His time. His compassion is evident in His observation of the man's condition and His

willingness to act, despite knowing the controversy it would stir. He sees the man's need and responds with empathy, demonstrating God's care for the marginalized and oppressed.

Moreover, Jesus' power is displayed in His authority over the Sabbath and His ability to restore the man's hand. By commanding the man to stretch out his hand, Jesus takes initiative, and the man's obedience results in complete /restoration. This miracle showcases Jesus' divine authority and His capacity to transform lives.

Furthermore, Jesus' teachings and actions often targeted the Pharisees' legalism and hypocrisy, revealing His concern for people over religious rituals. His approach emphasized mercy, forgiveness, and love, challenging the *status quo* and showcasing His compassion for humanity. If you'd like to explore this topic further, you can try searching online for more information on Jesus' teachings and interactions with the Pharisees.

The reinstatement of the man with the withered hand in Mark 3:1-6 showcases Jesus' compassion and power, highlighting His mission to restore and redeem humanity. This episode encourages us to embrace God's love and mercy, prioritizing the needs of others and trusting in Jesus' transformative power.

CONCLUSION

Mark 3:1-6 recapitulates the first section of Jesus' Galilean ministry (1:16-3:6). Although Jesus proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom through his authoritative teachings and miracles, the Jewish leaders refused to respond to Jesus' message, because their hearts were hardened (3:5). Mark describes "hardness of heart" as the ultimate cause of the Jewish religious leaders' unbelief. Since their hearts are hardened, they did not believe in the truth that Jesus was introducing the eschatological Sabbath conditions, when there will be ongoing relief from death. Thus, with regard to the Jewish religious leaders the concept of "hardness of heart", the conscious refusal to believing Jesus, delineated their unbelief and hostility. Mark uses the motif of the unbeliever's hardness of heart to awaken his readers to repent of their unbelief and to follow Jesus with faith during the period of suffering. Thus, Mark forces the readers to distance themselves from their unbelieving attitude, blindness, deafness, and misunderstanding. He calls on the readers to respond differently by imbibing Jesus' attitude of compassion and love especially to those estranged because of their conditions/situation.

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FOOTNOTES

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