

Episode: Luke Series No. 7

Narrator: Right-Hand Man

Primary Scriptures: Luke 6

Story Summary: Healing of the man with the withered hand, early ministry of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 6:12-13, 6:27-28, 6:31, 6:36-37, 6:46

The Pharisees and Jesus start confronting each other early in his ministry. The Pharisees were religious leaders intent on obeying their strict interpretation of the laws of Moses. In fact, they created hundreds of rules to make sure that nobody would ever come close to breaking the laws. Unfortunately, in their efforts to obey the rules, they often forgot the reason for the rules, frequently neglecting the fact that God loves people and wants them to be healed, both physically and spiritually.

In the opening scene of this episode, a man with a deformity stands in need of healing. This man had a withered right hand, which was a disastrous event at the time, meaning he couldn't work at hard physical labor, couldn't be a full member of the synagogue, and would have a hard time finding a good wife. He would surely have died a little inside every time someone looked at him with pity or disdain. When Jesus heals him, it changes far more than just his hand.

However, the event occurs on the Sabbath when the Pharisees had concluded that any act of healing would be "working". Since it was prohibited to work on the Sabbath, Jesus was in violation of the Pharisees interpretation of the Law. No matter how much it helped the man, it was not appropriate to do on the Sabbath.

The healing of the man with a withered hand was just the start of how Jesus would show people that their worldviews were often contrary to God's desires, that they could follow the Law to the letter while completely missing its spirit. It would not be long before the people around Jesus began to understand the words of an ancient prophet, "God desires mercy, not sacrifice."¹

Sometimes it appears as if Jesus chose his apostles almost at random. It might be better seen that Jesus wanted everyone to follow him, but concentrated on certain people. His apostles, however were chosen from among many followers. How did Jesus choose them? After spending a night praying to God!

¹ Hosea 6:6

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the reasons a man with a withered right hand would have been at a huge disadvantage? How would your life change if your right hand was paralyzed or shriveled?
 2. The Pharisees made up rules that they wanted to force people to follow. Can you think of rules that churches used to try to enforce that they no longer do? Did those rules tend to help people behave like people of God or to alienate them from God?
 3. When Jesus warned rich people of the perils of being rich, what characters in the Old Testament might he have been talking about? How do you think the poor people reacted when Jesus said it was blessed to be poor?
-
1. He couldn't get a job doing heavy manual labor, hard to find a wife, would not have been accepted in some of the ceremonies at the synagogue, would have been ridiculed from birth.
 3. Lot, David, Solomon.

Application Questions

1. The Pharisees were sure their interpretation of the Mosaic Law was the "correct" one; Jesus upended that certainty. In what areas of your faith might Jesus be speaking to you along these lines?
2. Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before he chose his apostles. How long did you pray before making your last big decision?
3. Have you ever started a project that you hugely underestimated the costs in terms of money or time? What did you do when you understood your predicament? In retrospect, what should you have done?
4. Using a figure of speech, Jesus advised that we not criticize others for their behavior until our own is faultless. Have you done such a thing in the recent past?
5. How would you react if a man came into your church group and started criticizing your leaders and explaining the Scriptures in a way you could not agree with?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Your body may be healthy, but are there spiritual or emotional "withered hands" that are keeping you from living your fullest faithful life? In what ways would you like Jesus to "heal" those?
2. How can you get into the habit of praying before making important decisions?
3. How much would it take to change your behavior to never criticize anybody? Not to judge anybody?
4. If you measured what is in your heart by the words that come out of your mouth, what would you find out?