

# Mark Week 9

## Stretch Out Your Hand

May 10, 2026



If you have done this, please don't raise your hand if you've ever done this, okay? Don't raise it. Don't expose yourself at all, okay? Many of you all will have not done it, but you will know exactly what I'm talking about. You've experienced it at some level. The rest of you all will be able to just understand and follow along.

If you have ever bought something around the Christmas time that says, assembly required, this should be an asterisk on that that said, this will test your sanctification if you are a Christian. Or if you've maybe purchased something from Ikea, like a desk or whatever, and it says assembly required, and you started putting it together. And as you put it together, you know as well as I do, those instructions are written in tongues. And if you don't have the gift of interpretation, you're done. But you start putting it together, and all of a sudden you realize that usually it's your spouse—sometimes it's a kid—that says, “It looks like there's a lot of parts here that are not in that. Are you sure you've put it all together?”

And for whatever reason, when you're the one putting it together, and don't raise your hand that you've done this, you say to yourself, “Well, these things always have a lot of extra parts that come with them.” Or you do, “You know what, I don't care what the instructions say, I know what I'm doing. This thing is pretty good.” I mean, in the face of all the facts that would say, you probably have not put it together just right, you dig in and you say, “I've done it right,” and everybody's looking at you like you're crazy. And then three weeks later, the big wheel tire comes off of the thing, and your kid ends up with a scuff or whatever.

But it's funny how we human beings can dig in on things, even when it seems so obvious that we're wrong. But we will dig in. I want you to hold that thought, because we're probably gonna intersect with that at least a number of times in the text that we will be in this weekend.

Well, we're in the Gospel of Mark. And we've been in a section that I've talked about for quite a while now, these conflict stories, and there's been five of them. And I made a note that Mark has a sub-unit here. There's 16 chapters, but in this sub-unit are these five conflict stories that run from chapter two, verse one, through chapter three, verse six.

And we have gone through each one of them, and we are now at the last one for this weekend. And it really does sort of build as it goes as we're looking through the text. This one is the fever pitch one. This is the one where it ends in the way Mark wants you to hear. He's assembled it this way to let you know that Jesus has had such an issue with the religious people. And we're gonna see here at the very end that they want to get rid of Jesus, which I think Mark writes this way

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for us to think as people who might consider ourselves to be religious people. Could we miss Jesus? And it's a sobering thought.

But we came out of last weekend where we had a Sabbath instance where they were eating, and we talked about all of those things, and now we're gonna sort of move right into another Sabbath moment. But this one is the one that sort of climaxes these five stories, and it really ends tense. And we will see that as we go through it. So let's get into the text, and let's see what we can learn.

We're told:

**“Again...”**

And this word 'again' is not necessarily chronological. It's just another story that Mark is giving us, these five stories that he's put together to make a point. To make a point that the religious leaders very early on wanted to get rid of Jesus. And so we know that at the very, very beginning of the gospel, because Jesus will be the suffering servant. He will be the one that gives his life as a ransom for many. So the 'again' here just picks it up.

And we're told here:

**“Again, he entered the synagogue...”**

Obviously this is on a Sabbath. That's what that means. And he's there again. He's at the synagogue again. And by this time, in the gospel as we're reading, we should know or should be able to intuit that him going into the synagogue, there is a really good chance that something will happen. Either there will be a healing, or there'll be a confrontation, but we should be expecting something.

So again, he entered the synagogue, and we're told that there was a man. There's a man, and a man is there. Now, when you're reading scripture, you ought to pay attention to what you've read before and what you've read after. Last weekend, if you remember, we had a passage that talked about a man. And it's just a few verses before where Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man.

And so we have a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath that the Sabbath was made for. There's a man. He enters the synagogue, and there's a man. But this man, there's something about him. The man was there. He had a withered hand. He had a hand that was immobilized. He had a hand that didn't function like maybe many of our hands function.

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I remember when I grew up, I don't know if y'all know this or not, but when I went to Lee College my first freshman year, I had a tennis scholarship. I played tennis. And I remember when I was playing tennis, we would pray when we got in this—anybody, if you ever grew up in church back in the day, the church or the school or whatever, they always had these really bad vans that would break down all the time. I don't know what it was. It was like during the 80s and 90s, church vans just, they were possessed. I don't know what it was.

But we would get in this van and travel to go play tennis, and our coach would pray. And at the time, we're younger guys. We're not thinking a whole lot about it. But looking back on it, it was pretty substantial. He would always say, “Lord, thank you for giving these young men the ability to have legs that run, hands that can hold a tennis racket, arms that can be used to serve.” You know, when we're sitting there, I mean, honestly, when you're 18, 19 years old, you're like, “come on, man, let's just get in the van.” But looking back on that, it was pretty profound.

Well, this man had a withered hand, had a hand that was immobilized. The Scripture doesn't talk a lot about it. Just tells us it was a withered hand. But you know as well as I do that that cost, it came at a cost in his life. Might have cost him with job, vocation, relationships, whatever it may be. And you know when you have a handicap like that, a hand that doesn't move.

It reminds me, many of y'all remember this. There was a senator many years ago, his name was Bob Dole. He had been injured in World War II, and he always carried a pen in his hand. And he did that so that you wouldn't go to shake his hand because his hand was sort of immobilized. His arm was immobilized, and he would do that. And when he would do that, you really wouldn't think that much of it. It was almost his way of hiding that malady.

You can sort of, it doesn't take a whole lot to think about this man with a withered hand, the trauma, the difficulty, the problems that he may have had. Probably the fact that in some ways, he didn't want people to know. A lot of times when you have those things, you try to hide them or you try to not expose them so that people see it.

But Jesus has walked into a synagogue, and there's a man that the Sabbath was made for that's there with a withered hand. And as you think about that and what that might look like and what this man might be like in a synagogue.

We're told that:

**“They...”**

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I like how Mark does this. He knows that you'll know who they are because he's been talking about them. They're the Pharisees, they're the religious leaders.

#### **"They watched Jesus..."**

Now, they weren't watching Jesus like you and me would watch a kid to see what they're gonna do and to rejoice that they rode their bike or whatever. They're watching in a sinister way. They're watching with almost a gotcha.

#### **"They watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath..."**

You gotta stop for a moment and go, "What? What would move somebody to think about watching someone, whether or not they would take a man with a withered hand that had cost this person you know in life to watch to see whether or not Jesus would heal this guy?" Like they were aware when they were in the synagogue that there's a man in there with a withered hand, and Jesus typically does do things for people. He definitely heals people.

They were watching and they weren't watching for good reasons, we're told so. This is the reason that they're watching. They're watching that they might accuse him, and you gotta stop and think what type of depravity do you have to get to as a human being that your rules and your policies and your procedures are more important than a person receiving the healing that they need.

And these are the people that thought they were right. They thought they knew they were right. They were right. They knew what God wanted, and they're sitting there waiting to accuse Jesus. You can feel the tension and especially if you've read the other four stories, you just know this is tense.

Jesus, he says to the man with the withered hand:

#### **"Come here."**

Now let's be for real for a minute. The text doesn't say anything, but the beauty of Scripture, a lot of times, is what it doesn't say, prompts you and me to think about some things.

How would you have responded if you were the man with the withered hand? This is your synagogue, you know that the religious leaders do not feel that you should be getting up and trying to get healed or anything on the Sabbath. Jesus says, "Hey, I want you to come and take front and center right now in the synagogue." Somebody usually who has a withered hand or a handicap or a malady usually doesn't want to be front and center with their ailment.

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He says, “Come here.” I want you to feel the moment. I want you to feel the depth. I want you to feel the tension.

**“He said to them...”**

The religious leaders—the Pharisees—[he] says the easiest question in the history of the world to them. He says:

**“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm...?”**

“You tell me. Should I do good or should I harm somebody?” Or how about, “Should I save a life or should we kill somebody on the Sabbath? You tell me,” Jesus says. The next part of the passage is just shocking.

**“But they were silent.”**

They couldn't answer. They no longer—because of their allegiance, their posture, their beliefs—they no longer could answer the easiest question ever because to do that would mean to say that they were wrong.

And I would say to all of us, when we're in a position where we can't say something's wrong because of our allegiances or our idols or whatever we put our hearts to or the things that we've committed to, we're in trouble as believers. Because right is right all the time and wrong is wrong all the time. Right's not just right when it's on your team and wrong when it's on somebody else's team. The bottom line is right is right and wrong is wrong. And as the prophets say, woe to those who call evil good and good evil.

They were silent. A lot of Christians sometimes get tripped up. “Ooh, if I said that, that might....” They were silent. Look here:

**“And he looked around at them...”**

I can imagine the tenseness here.

**“And he looked around at them with anger.”**

He was angry. These were the same people that were gonna nail him to a cross because of the hardness of their hearts. Looks around with anger, but it's tempered. Because there's also grief. He's grieved at their hardness of heart. It grieves him. It hurts. But he's also angry. How could the very people that read the scriptures that were divinely inspired by me Jesus would say, how could they have read this and got it so wrong?

**“...and said to the man...”**

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Now the focus of the whole synagogue. And if you don't think it was tense in there, you're not really paying attention to the passage. It was tense. You ever notice when somebody's angry? You ever grow up when your mom or dad is angry? You knew it, didn't you? They knew it. They saw it.

He says to the man with the withered hand:

**“Stretch out your hand.”**

He can't. It's a withered hand. I mean, he can put a shoulder out. He can bring it up like this. I mean, he can do something, but he can't really stretch it out because it's immobilized.

It's interesting too, because when Jesus says to this man, “stretch out your hand,” the very people that are in that room are gonna lead Jesus down a path where he himself will be told to stretch out his hand and it will be immobilized so this man's hand can be healed. It's the kindness of God that leads you and me to repentance. It is the kindness of God. It is the grace of God. It's the overwhelming love of God.

He says, stretch out your hand. He stretches it out in whatever way that looked. He obeyed. He did what he could do.

**“And his hand was restored.”**

Restored. He doesn't use the word healed. Restored. Put back sort of together. It's like a compound word to put back in place because the Sabbath was for restoration. This is an incredible moment on the Sabbath. This man's hand is restored and then we're told this:

**“The Pharisees went out immediately and held council with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.”**

It's like wow. Man. That's six verses of wow. There's a lot in there. Well, I've got three things that I wanna share with us and I want you to really lean in. I do my best to try to teach it the best I can. I don't try to add to it. I don't try to take away from it. I try to just let the text be the text and then I like to try to come at the end here and say, “Hey, what are some things that we can take home? What are some things that we can think about? How can we take this text and apply it to our lives today?”

Well, the first thing I would tell you is this—and I want you to really, I really believe this is for somebody and online too, this may be for you. Maybe it's, I believe it's for somebody. I want you to hear this. First thing I see in this passage is that **God's awareness of need is not limited by our ability to articulate it.**

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What I mean by that is whether you've told God you have a need or not, he knows that you have a need. He knows more about your needs than you could ever have any idea. Because Jesus comes into the synagogue, there's a man there with a withered hand, and he says:

**“Come here.”**

The withered hand man never says a word. He never exposes it. He never says anything. He never talks about it. Jesus knew he was there. He knew he had a withered hand. He knew that he was a man in need and I want you to hear this. I want every single person to hear this. Those online, I want you to hear this. Please hear me here: God knows what everyone here is going through and needs right now in this moment. You're not here by accident, okay? He knows that.

And I say that here on Mother's Day weekend. He also knows you moms—the things you have need of, the things that are heavy on your heart. Not here randomly. Every time the people of God get together, there's somebody there with a withered hand. There's somebody in the church that needs a touch.

But let me tell you something, and I want you to hear me here. It's incredibly difficult at times, let's be honest, to trust God with our deepest hurts and needs, and especially so when his ways are not our ways. Because we think that the answers that we need for our hurts, the answers that we have for our needs, we think we know them—well. But sometimes God says, “No, no, no, no, no. This is what I want you to do. I want you to go this way.”

“I know, but God, I don't wanna go that way. I really believe that this is where I need to go. This is the path.”

And He says, “No, that path's gonna lead you down the wrong direction. This is the path to walk on.”

“I know, but I don't feel that way. I don't think that way.”

God says, “Trust me.”

Listen to your pastor here. The Lord has a love for you as his children more than you could ever even imagine. You just cannot—we cannot fathom the love that God has for us who are his children. We just can't even begin to understand.

And let me tell you something. He knows your hurts and needs more than you know your hurts and needs. And he knows what those hurts and needs really need. He knows how to restore you. And that guy probably didn't think his hand was gonna get

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restored by coming and standing with the spotlight on him and doing something that he couldn't do. But let me tell you something. When God says, "Do it my way," He says, "Trust me. Believe me."

I wanna tell you something. Your heavenly father cares for you more than you could ever even imagine. And whether you can tell him or not, He knows it.

Second thing, and this is a tough one. It's a tough one. **We can feel so right, but be so wrong.**

I've lived that many times. I know you guys are probably sanctified and holy. It's the 8:30, 10, and the 11:30 tomorrow services—they're the ones that... But this is hard. It's hard for us sometimes to go, man, we can feel so right, but be so wrong.

They watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so they might accuse him. These people were so far, listen to me, please hear me here, look here. The Pharisees had deeply held and studied biblical points.

These weren't people that didn't know the Old Testament, folks. They knew it very well. Many of them could recite chapters. They had traditions they could appeal to. Rabbi so-and-so said, Rabbi so-and-so said. And they felt they were upholding their relationship with God, but completely missed Jesus.

I mean, that should be like, for all of us, we should be like, "Whoa, man, hold on. Lord, search me and know me. Get in here inside of my heart. Lord, whatever idols and allegiances and stuff, Lord, I wanna be focused on you. I wanna follow you, Lord. I just want to do the things that you wanna do."

And I've wrestled with this, and I really believe that there's, this may be universal, it may be all over the world, but I do believe it is something that is part and parcel to American Christianity. And I want you to hear this. I think oftentimes in church, we don't recognize the difference between a profession of salvation or a profession of faith, and the actual possession of salvation and the possession of genuine faith.

Because see, a lot of people profess they know Jesus. A lot of people profess that they're saved. A lot of people profess certain things, but there's a difference when you possess it. Because, and I'm not trying to give anybody a hard time. I'm just trying to say, as a pastor, when I think through these issues, and I go, wow, man, these people missed it. My role is to make sure that nobody under my teaching or my pastorship, that nobody here would somehow sit under years of teaching and miss it. That would lead you in the wrong direction. I don't wanna do that ever in any way, shape, or form.

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A lot of times I think people profess, they go, well, yeah, I believe in Jesus. I said the sinner's prayer and I did this. Yeah, but I know, but I'm gonna live life my way. I'm gonna do the way I wanna do it. And I know that scripture says some things and I know that it says this, but I really genuinely am gonna do it my way. I found a YouTube video that actually supports my idea and this stuff and whatever. And there's like a profession of faith.

But somebody who really possesses faith, they may stumble, they may fall, that they may butchered, but deep down inside, you know that you wanna hear the voice of God and you wanna do what God wants you to do, no matter how hard it is, no matter what it costs, you have a desire to wanna serve God.

And I don't say that to say that I'm the one to make the, I can't tell you who has a profession or possession. That's the Lord's job, not mine. But I can tell you that Paul tells the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 13 to examine themselves, to see whether or not they're in the faith. So sometimes we can be so, so right or feel that way, but yet so wrong.

I read a quote, a couple of quotes that really, I thought just really spoke to this. And they're not probably completely right, but I think they do make us think a little bit.

One said, the greatest single cause of atheism, and I don't know if this is true or not, but it's definitely an issue in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle.

C.S. Lewis said it a little tougher, I think. He said, of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst. Because remember, Jesus asked him, is it good to save a life or to kill on the Sabbath? That they made their decision. They said it was better to kill on the Sabbath because they left trying to destroy him. Religious people.

See, the most dangerous people are not always the openly wicked, but the morally certain who can no longer recognize mercy. They can't extend to another human being, you know?

One of the most dangerous places to be spiritually is hardened certainty. You're so rigid, you're so right, everybody else is so wrong, even though you got all these parts laying out and the big wheel tire just fell off, you still determined that you're right and nobody can tell you differently.

Because you see this, they were silent. They were hard in their hearts. Their hearts were hardened. Hardened certainty is best recognized when we're so sure of our position that compassion feels like compromise. It's the best way I can put it.

"Oh, we're not helping those people."

What, why?

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“Well, because this and that and the other”

Those are people.

“Yeah, but you don't understand. We're gonna do it for the Lord. We're doing...”

Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold on. It's like the Lord said it was pretty simple. He said, “If you really wanna boil it down—it's love God. Love neighbor.”

“No, no, no, no, the Lord called me. Stand up for the truth.”

Well, okay, I can understand that. But Christianity at its basics, Jesus didn't say, you wanna know what the, all the law does, it boils on one thing—stand up for the truth. No, he said, it boils down to two things. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and body, and love your neighbor as yourself. That's Christianity. That's what it looks like.

And it doesn't mean that we throw truth out or we jettison truth or whatever, but I can tell you something. People need to understand who God is before they're gonna fully understand what the truth of God is. I mean—I just sometimes, I think we just get so hard in our hearts that we can't even give people any type of compassion because we think it's compromise. Whenever our belief systems make compassion suspicious, then our belief systems are the problem.

And let me say this here because this is so important to hear. The greatest need in the synagogue wasn't a withered hand. It was withered hearts. Jesus didn't heal their withered hearts. He healed the man with a withered hand. Withered hearts are impossible to heal until you humble yourself. Hear that.

And the last thing I want to say is this, and I really believe this is for somebody:  
**Desperate action in the midst of chaos, doubt, and criticism of others is often where the healing that we're looking for takes place.**

I see it. This guy has to get called up in front. It's chaotic. You can feel the tension in the room. There's doubt. He's like, “Man, am I walking up here? What's going to happen?” There's questions and all this stuff and criticism. He knows that others are going to criticize or whatever. But it's sometimes in that craziness of, “I'm going to walk through this crowd and I'm going to touch the hem of his garment. That's what I'm going to do. It's chaotic. There's criticism. There's doubt. There's all of this stuff. But I'm going to do it.” You cannot walk on the water unless you're willing to get out of the boat. Period.

Sometimes it takes that almost dogged, deterministic sort of mindset that I'm not going to let something hold this back. This has been something that I've struggled with for a long time,

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and I'm tired of struggling. I'm going to do something different. I'm going to step out in the midst of chaos, doubt, and criticism.

Because you see it here. He says, "Stretch out your hand."

"I can't stretch out my hand."

"Stretch it out."

So many times in church, I know people come in heavy, and we're worshipping, and I'm like, just throw your hands in the air and tell God, "God, I am desperate for you." Sometimes you just gotta stretch out those hands. Sometimes you got to say, "God, I can't continue doing it."

And listen to me. Jesus often commands what exposes our inability. This dude couldn't stretch out his hand. He says, "Do it." Because what God wants you to do is he wants you to do things that you're incapable of doing to show you that he is the one who is capable of doing it.

And sometimes the weakness just needs to be brought into the forefront so Jesus can heal it. Because so often we hide in the shadows. We don't want anybody to see that. Put a pin in it. Hold it here.

I don't know. I suspect, as your pastor, there are a lot of people in here, a lot of people online, who have a withered hand. That withered hand may be all kinds of different things. But I can tell you something. The same Jesus that walked into that synagogue at Capernaum and healed that man's hand, he's here today to do things that are beyond anybody's understanding.

And maybe, just for you, maybe it is that step. Maybe it is, "God, I don't even know how I could put this relationship... I don't even know how I could put the stress I'm under. I don't know how I could put the depression. I don't know how I could put my financial situation. I don't know how I could put the fact that I'm so sick. I don't know how to put..." But maybe this is your moment. Maybe this is your moment to stretch out that hand and say, "God, I can't do it, but I believe you can, and I'm going to do that."

Would you bow your heads for a second? Just bow your hearts. The worship team will come in just a second and sing a final song. We're going to have a moment with God.

But I'm going to ask you—not for me. I'm not even really going to pay attention or look. Maybe you're here right now with a withered hand. Maybe what the Lord is saying is, "Hey, stretch that out. Stretch that out."

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I don't know. I can't promise you anything. I'm not some faith healer. I don't believe that God always has to do what I want him to do or what you want him to do. But I do believe sometimes that when we step out in faith, and we trust God, he does exceedingly, abundantly above all we ever ask or think. What do you got to lose?

I don't know what you're struggling with. I don't know what your withered hand is right now. But whatever it is, I'm going to ask you, between you and God—not for me, not for anybody to see, not to look around—just take that hand and stretch it out, whatever that is, and say, “God, I'm stretching. I can't even get my hand up. I can't even get my hand out. But God, I'm stretching this out to you right now. I'm stretching it out to you to do something.”

Father, right now, in the name of Jesus, as we pray, as the worship team comes, as we sing a final song about how worthy you are, I pray that we would stretch out those hands, Lord. As we're here in the house of the Lord, I pray that you would move in the lives of many, many people.

And Lord, I specifically also pray for all the moms that may have a withered hand in some way. I pray that you would strengthen them and love on them right now in Jesus' name.

Lord, as we sing this final song, let it be a moment here in this church. Do the miraculous, Lord. As we sing this final song, for those at home, I pray that you would do the miraculous as they watch online.

Lord, we love you. We praise you. And we say there is no one else worthy. Who else is worthy but you? We pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus. And everybody said, “Amen.”

Would you stand with us and let's worship the Lord.

