



## Wednesday Prayer

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Courage to Speak and Act

**Again, Jesus entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched Jesus to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And Jesus said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” Then Jesus said to them, “is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But the Pharisees were silent. Jesus looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against Jesus, how to destroy him. Mark 3:1-6**

There are few times that Jesus gets angry, and every time it is in the face of systemic hardness of heart. As usual, in this text his anger is directed at a group of religious leaders. These leaders are more concerned with politics and power which often get in the way of caring for our neighbors – then and now. The system often gets in the way of what Jesus would have us do.

Jesus is not asking a theological question of the religious leaders in the temple. He is asking an incarnational question, a flesh and blood question. Jesus is wondering if those who claim authority in the seat of power, the temple, have the courage to do the right thing. And he is disappointed. They were so afraid of being called out on their love of power that they can't even answer his question. This question wasn't about breaking the sabbath, it was about breaking the system.

Caring for others at personal risk is a threat to personal power. This is true.

Our current hardness of heart is constantly on display. That there are hungry children, children in constant unresolved trauma, children afraid to go to school, children suffering the loss of a parent to an unjust legal system, and children who must be resilient simply to survive are all signs that the law sometimes gives us cover to make excuses to turn away. We are constantly given a choice between protecting the status quo or doing the right thing. To protect the status quo means that we can look at images from Gaza, the border, the food pantry, Ukraine, storm zones and landslides and turn away because there is too great a political or personal risk to do the good thing and save a life ... or we can follow where Jesus leads.

With Jesus the choice is clear. It is always to “do good” and “save a life” that is not your own. Jesus knows the risk of what he is asking of us, but he doesn't shove us ahead of him, he leads us to where hearts are softened, and the world might be healed.

**Gracious Savior, you invite us to see the value of those around us, to do good for them, and to value their lives. Soften our hearts to act with compassion even when systems give us excuses to pretend we don't see. We ask this in the name of our Savior who does not ask us to do anything he did not dare to do himself, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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