

## Healing story...about the withered hand?

Mark 3:1-6 / Matthew 12:9-14 / Luke 6:6-11

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<sup>1</sup>Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. <sup>2</sup>They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup>And he said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Come forward.' <sup>4</sup>Then he said to them, 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. <sup>5</sup>He 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. <sup>6</sup>The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

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The healing (of a man) on the Sabbath.

This is the headline in the German translation of Martin Luther 1984.

So, what is it about?

About a healing?

The healing of a man?

About the healing on the Sabbath?

More confusion come with other headings from other translations:

"Legalism and Love" (The Good News).

"Sabbath, Healing and Plan of Killing" (Catholic Einheitsübersetzung)

"The Healing of a Disabled Man on the Sabbath" (Swiss Zurich Bible).

What all the headlines fail to mention: The withered, dried up hand. Is it unimportant? Is it merely a means to an end? Just as the disabled person is for the Pharisees and scribes?

And Luther and all the other writers of Bible headlines use him again for their own interest?

As if Luke, in view of this situation, would say to this man: "Stand up! Come forth! Come out into the light! Come out into the open! Into the midst!" (Luke 6:8)

Let me see...!  
That's a question we often don't like.  
To be seen.  
To stand out.  
Let our shortcomings be seen.  
Be exposed.  
And everything that goes with it.  
Those who did so far not know, start noticing and speculate.

A withered hand!  
Oh my God!

Everyone who can see, sees at first, or more precisely, perceives at first the handicap, - all that is not possible with a withered hand. What is still possible is of no interest. That is the standard, the norm for all of us. We see what doesn't work...!  
Have you ever tried to chop wood with one hand, put on clothes and shoes, change a child's diaper, prepare food, harvest vegetables, ride a donkey or a horse (first mount with one hand, please), with your left hand alone? In Luke's gospel the withered hand of the man is the right hand.

The man is everything that cannot be done.  
He is what he cannot do.  
It is not only his hand that is withered.  
His self, his soul have become so too over time.  
Or was it them first?  
Perhaps the withered hand is a symbol that he could not give and he could not take.  
Life does not flow away from him through giving.  
Life does not flow towards him by taking.  
Life does not flow.  
Life is drying out...

How is it with us - about giving?

Delicate topic, I know.  
Being able to give.  
Being able to let go.  
Being able to have a little less.  
Consciously not falling prey to holding, clinging, greed.

And what about our taking?  
Yes, we can do that.  
We are takers.  
But that's not what it means.  
Not grabbing, holding, possessing.

To be able to take.  
From a friend.  
Being able to admit that I need something that I don't have myself,  
which I can't work for.  
Being able to be depending on others.  
This is harder than giving.

And then come the thoughts:  
That I now owe something to other persons,  
that I have to give something back,  
that I have to do a favour in return.  
Such thoughts are there immediately.

But: No.  
That is not what I mean!  
Being able to take gives us something, too...

Remember the Zacchaeus story.  
Jesus simply takes from Zacchaeus his hospitality as if it had always  
been there...and at the same time gives infinitely much which will  
turn Zacchaeus' whole life upside down. In the moment of taking  
from Zacchaeus, Jesus already turns Zacchaeus' life upside down....

Being able to give.  
Being able to let it flow.

Letting it flow over to the other.  
Without fear for myself.  
Being able to take.  
Allow the flow.  
Letting it flow over to me.  
Without fear of being exposed.  
Being the weak one.  
Being the needy one.  
Yes, I am needy.  
We all are.  
Without exception.

Give and take.  
Step forward!  
Stretch out your hand!  
Let the withered things of your life be seen!

The environment of the disabled man used him.  
There wasn't much he could do.  
He couldn't keep up with others.  
The scribes used him. They were not interested in him, the man, his history, his pain. Nor were they interested in his restoration. They used him as a means to an end, they used him to trap Jesus.  
Even in the headlines of the (Luther) Bibles he is used: To emphasise healing. To save the true Sabbath.

But: What about him? The man? The person?  
No one seems to care.  
No wonder: He has become small.  
Withered to the soul.

Rise up!  
Come out!  
Show yourself as a human being!  
Let yourself be seen, creation and child of God!

Have courage.

Let it flow again.  
Let your soul bubble over again.  
Let your hands open up to give.  
And close your hands when you take.  
But for now: Step forward!

Do I dare to do it?  
Do I still know how to step up and forward?  
What if nothing changes?  
It will be hell afterwards...

Heaven or hell?

I show myself with all my pain.  
Everything that was done to me.  
All the wounds and scars.  
Every injury tells a life story, tells of withdrawal, tells of dying of  
thirst and withering, withering away.

And so, the man reaches out.  
Perhaps with physical and emotional pain.  
But he does.  
He lets it flow.  
Lets Jesus heal him.

The story tells this in such a way that it all happens in a moment.  
Healing process accelerated.

In a human life, such healing can take a long time.  
Until my encrusted soul becomes soft again.  
Until everything that has become hard slowly loosens up again.  
Until I am ready to let myself be looked at again, to show myself  
again.  
Until I am convinced that there is someone standing in front of me  
who does not want to use me, but help.  
Until I can trust again.  
Until I can break open again.

Until I can let it flow again.

Tears will flow in that process.

People will see my tears.

Tears,

until I can give and take,

receive

and let myself be blessed.

To be healed,

to be and become a source of living water,

needs time,

needs courage,

needs trust and faith...

needs Christ at my side.

Salvation needs me focussing at myself.

Turning away from the others by whom I have let myself be used,  
who have used me. I begin focussing at myself.

I become independent.

I stand up.

I step out.

I experience healing.

Slowly.

Over weeks, months, years.

But I heal.

I am,

I become,

I remain a creation of God.

I am a creature of freedom.

Of the Sabbath.

Of the memory of the Exodus.

Of the rising of the people of Israel.

Of the coming forth of the people of God.

Of the long journey, the 40-year journey to freedom.

I take the first step.  
I step forward.  
Leave those who have used me.  
Surrender myself to the Christ. Who wants me to be greater. Healer.  
Who wants me to be able to give and take.  
Then his peace overflows, his goodness begins with me, reaches further to my neighbour.  
And the goodness of the neighbour may enter back into me.  
I step out.  
Into the light.  
I become healer and healer.  
For a lifetime.

No more need for greed.  
No more grasping and grabbing.  
No more the feeling of: must have and have and have some more.

I finally open my heart, soul and hands, let others take and let them give.  
Bless and be blessed.  
I step forth.  
Life flows where there was withering.  
...a drop falls from the rain that makes deserts into gardens...

So many things in life were or are withered!  
My soul had dried up.  
Souls wither when we do not give.  
Sharing is the magic word.  
Sharing thoughts, feelings, fears and worries...sharing my life, my dreams, my longings, my despair too, my plans and reflections.

And: to let go of my gifts, my time, my preferences and my egoism, to give myself away, also my money, yes, that too. A spiritual exercise.

Giving is spiritual.

What I give does not hold me captive.  
Where I break down walls, where I open prisons around myself, I  
create space.  
Life begins to flow again.  
Springs and wells open.  
There is a wideness.  
God places my feet and my soul on wide and sacred ground!  
Greens,  
blossoms,  
scents embrace me...  
My giving is a mustard seed only...  
it is enough.

The hand that is no longer withered can finally be tender again.  
The soul that is no longer withered can finally give life again,  
can comfort,  
can cheer,  
can love.

So, stand up!  
Step out!  
Stretch out your hand!  
Hold your soul into the warm light of God's goodness!

And it was the Sabbath.  
Behold, the day of the deliverance from slavery.

And God saw that it was very good....  
So, evening and morning became my new day....