

Notes from Sermon given by Ian Stackhouse – 1 February 2009
Mark 3 v 1-6 "Caught in Controversy"

The Sabbath is concerned with renewal of the world, the hope that God will break in.

Between the Old Testament and New Testament the Law became an obsession to the Pharisees. There are a number of instances where Jesus offended the Jewish leaders by his actions; the passage in Mark is just one of them.

In Mark chapter 2 there are confrontations between Jesus and the authorities; these included

- Jesus going with Levi the tax collector to Levi's house (Mark 2 v 13-17)
- Jesus walking in a field and the disciples pulled off ears of corn on the Sabbath (Mark 2 v 23-28).

Such instances cause the Pharisees to question whether Jesus is holy. So in Chapter 3 they try to trick him as they knew Jesus had the power to heal. Jesus did not have to heal the man with the shrivelled hand on the Sabbath; it was not life-threatening so could have waited. However Jesus does not resist the opportunity to bring the issue to a head – he has come to stir things up. The issue he confronted was whether it was lawful to save a life on the Sabbath? He saw the need, the man with the shrivelled hand, he had the power to heal so why wait, and the challenge we receive from this is whether we are focussed on processes and procedures rather than on people and their needs? However we need to be careful of compassion overload.

The evil is to fail to do the good that you can actually do; failure adds to the injustice. Martin Luther-King said to remain silent in the presence of injustice is to add to the injustice.

So what does this mean for us? The only way we authenticate our life in Jesus Christ is the way we feel and respond to the world. People in the end do not care about how much you know, what they want is to know that you care. How reckless have we been in the love of the needy poor?

Jesus is angry with the Pharisees as they have completely missed the point; the religiosity has resulted in them losing the real purpose.

Finally we need to learn to make ourselves vulnerable in order to receive the touch of Jesus; as did the man with the shrivelled hand.