

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 5th 2011

There was nothing unusual about Jesus going to preach in the Synagogue on the Sabbath. Maybe some of the people went hoping that he would be there, either because they genuinely wanted to hear him preach, or out of curiosity, or to try to find something to hold against him. The scribes and Pharisees were in this latter category and they were becoming increasingly aggressive towards Jesus because they felt his teaching and his actions were posing a threat to their authority. We are not told why the man with the withered hand was there; perhaps just to pray, or to hear Jesus, perhaps secretly hoping that Jesus might see his deformity and take pity on him, but certainly he didn't put himself into the limelight.

Jesus did notice him and, knowing what controversy it would cause, nonetheless put compassion for the man first and called him out into the middle.

Then Jesus challenges the scribes and Pharisees openly, but also gives them the opportunity to learn that love and compassion are far more important than laws, and they were experts at promulgating more and more laws, often with benefits for only themselves! Is it also a chance for them to save face, if only they can make the just and compassionate choice, but have any of them either the courage or inclination?

The man with the withered hand must have felt embarrassed by all this and possibly fearful of reprisals afterwards, but he obviously trusted Jesus and his trust was rewarded.

What about the choices I have to make? Do I put compassion before rules and regulations, even if it might bring criticism or misunderstanding?

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