

**GOOD FRIDAY**  
**“THE HAND OF THE LORD**  
**WHO WAS PIERCED FOR US”**  
**Text: Isaiah 52:13–53:12**

Think back with me to the sermons we've heard these past several Wednesday evenings from the various circuit pastors who have visited us this Lent. We've seen how the Lord's hands have been constantly at work in our lives. Like a skilled doctor, His hands hold our broken hearts, bringing healing and new life where there was only pain. His hand is strong enough to pull us out of the deepest despair, to save us when we feel lost. We've seen how He, by His divine power, overcame the strong grip of evil. He reached out and touched those with diseases that made them outcasts, bringing them healing and acceptance. His compassionate hand even stopped death in its tracks, giving life where there was none. We know that all things are in His hands, and even today, we can trust that He holds the entire world, including each one of our lives, securely. And knowing all things were in His power, He humbly served His closest friends, feeding them a special meal. And He continues to serve and feed us even now through that gift of His Holy Supper which we celebrated last evening. But all of that has been leading us to this very moment. Because on Good Friday, He was handed over – not just to the hands of strangers, but even, in a way, to our own hands.

What did the hands of this world do to Jesus? His own betrayer led a group of soldiers to arrest Him, taking Him away to Annas. When Jesus spoke the truth, one of the high priest's officers struck Him with his hand. He was then passed on to Caiaphas. All the while, Peter, one of His own followers, stood by a fire, warming his hands and denying that he even knew Jesus. Then, Jesus was handed over to Pilate, who desperately wanted to wash his hands of the whole situation. Soldiers used their hands to cruelly twist thorns into a crown, pressing it onto His head. They dressed Him in a purple robe and struck Him with harsh blows. But the shouts of “**Crucify Him!**” grew louder and louder as Pilate tried to wash his own hands of the matter, pretending he wasn't responsible.

And just like that, the glorious Lord – the one through whom all the wonders of God were made, the one into whose hands everything had been given – was nailed to a cross. Nails were driven into the very hands of the Lord. This is what the world's hands did. This is what the world offered to its King. This is what we, in our sin, have offered to Him. The world rejected Him, refusing to see the work of His hands as the work of their King. And so, those hands, hands that healed and served, were pierced and held fast to a wooden cross.

We often put so much faith in what we can do with our own hands. And even more than that, we often feel like we deserve praise and honor for our efforts, no matter how big or small. Our constant striving for power, our desire to be first in everything, even our tendency to put ourselves before God – these actions say that we believe we deserve to be in charge, that we deserve to be king. But there can only be one true King. Our desire to elevate ourselves means that anyone else who claims that title must be pushed aside, even eliminated. And that is exactly what we, in our sin, have done to the King of kings and Lord of lords. The sinful work of our hands lifted Him up on a cross and drove nails into His hands.

So, what could Christ possibly do with hands nailed to a cross? It might seem like such hands are powerless, unable to do anything at all. To those who witnessed these terrible events, it probably looked like only the hands of sinful people were in control. What good can come from hands pinned to wood?

But long before this day, the prophet Isaiah spoke of this very thing. He wrote of a Suffering Servant who ***“shall act wisely; He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.”*** But this exaltation wouldn't look like the world expected. Instead, He would be ***“marred, beyond human semblance.”*** People would be shocked and ask the profound question, ***“To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”*** Throughout the Old Testament, the ***“arm of the Lord”*** often means the same thing as the ***“hand of the Lord.”*** It represents His strength, His glory, His care, His judgment, and His salvation. So, looking at this broken, suffering man, how could this possibly be the powerful arm of the Lord?

Isaiah continues to describe Him: ***“He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.” “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”*** Isaiah wasn't just talking about himself or the people of his time, or even just the people who were there when Jesus was crucified. This speaks to all of us, even today. This is our sin. This is what we, in our human nature, offer to the Lord's Servant. Our sin was the hammer that drove those nails into the hands of the Lord. To those who saw it happen, it looked like only the work of cruel human hands.

But Isaiah helps us understand that Christ's suffering and death wasn't just the result of our sinful actions. He tells us that this One whom we ***“esteemed...stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted,”*** accomplished something that we could never do ourselves. ***“He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.”*** The sin of this world, our sin, ***“the LORD has laid on Him.”*** It was the Lord's plan all along! ***“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief.”***

This suffering Servant, with His pierced hands, was the very arm of the Lord at work! Yes, this sinful world did these terrible things to Christ. However, it was also the will of the Lord that this is how salvation would come. He ***“makes intercession for the transgressors.”*** Christ has paid the price for all our sins. In fact, He's atoned for the sins of the entire world. Every wrong word, every hateful action, every sinful thought – He has taken the punishment that we truly deserve for the work of our own hands. He willingly took our place so that forgiveness, life, and salvation could be ours. Like a silent lamb led to slaughter, He willingly carried all our sins upon Himself. He took it all to the cross and received in His own body the full punishment we deserved. The anger of God and the condemnation that this world had earned poured out upon Him. It was all nailed to that cross.

So, what can those hands do while nailed to the cross? These aren't just any hands. These are Jesus' hands. And when it is Jesus' hands on the cross, they are the hands of the Lord. They are life-giving hands, the hands of the Lord who is mighty to save. Even though it looked like weakness, ***“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** The cross, seemingly a symbol of defeat, is actually the powerful hand of the Lord at work.

For ***“the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.”*** The Lord's plan succeeds through the hands of Christ, the very hands that were nailed to the cross. Because through Christ's sacrifice, we have the forgiveness of our sins! And with His pierced hands, His pierced feet, and His pierced side, in this very act of suffering, He is able to do more than the most powerful person could ever imagine. He's able to do what no one else can! And He has done it. Because He cried out, ***“It is finished!”*** His entire work of paying for our sins was completed

on that cross nearly two thousand years ago. What can Jesus do with His hands nailed to the cross? He atoned for the sin of the whole world.

Isaiah also says that the Suffering Servant ***“shall see His offspring”*** – all those who now belong to the family of God through faith in Christ. That’s you, brothers and sisters in Christ! This is why it was the Lord’s will for Christ to suffer and die. It was so that the Lord could gather His people under His merciful hand to forgive their sins. Jesus went through all of this pain and suffering so that you could be with Him forever. And He continues to reach out His hand to you today through the preaching of His Word, through the forgiveness of your sins spoken in His name, through the washing of water and the power of His Word in Holy Baptism, and through feeding you with His very body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.

What can Christ do with hands nailed to the cross? He does what only He can do. This is the will of the Lord succeeding through His hand. This is the powerful arm of God bringing salvation. It might not be what we would have expected, but it is exactly what we need. The One with the pierced hands is drawing you close to Himself, to be with Him forever. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Hand of the Lord Who Was Pierced for Us