

Title: Surrender or Struggle: Winning the Tug of War With God

Sermon Summary: Drawing from the Gospel of Mark chapters 3 and 4, this sermon explores the central tension in the Christian life: the ongoing tug of war between human will and surrender to God. The pastor examines how Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand, confronted religious leaders who opposed him, and calmed a furious storm on the sea, using each account to challenge believers to stop resisting what God is calling them to do. The sermon addresses the danger of spiritual emptiness after cleansing, the reality of demonic forces, and the profound peace that comes when a believer genuinely releases control to God. The overarching call is not merely to intellectual belief but to full surrender of the will, which the pastor argues is the only path to authentic peace, joy, and fruitfulness in the Christian life.

Key Points:

- Jesus speaks and things happen, yet believers who need him most are often the ones most willing to say no to his direction, even while demons had no choice but to submit to his authority
- The man with the shriveled hand represents believers who hide their wounds and weaknesses rather than presenting them to Christ for restoration, and his healing only came when he obeyed and acted despite fear and embarrassment
- Religious pride and a critical spirit, illustrated by the Pharisees plotting against Jesus, blind people to the miraculous work of God happening right in front of them
- A house divided cannot stand, and the Christian who remains double-minded and refuses to settle the tug of war between self-will and God's will is spiritually unstable and vulnerable
- Spiritual emptiness after cleansing is dangerous; being swept clean and put in order is not enough if a person remains unoccupied by the Holy Spirit, which can leave them worse off than before
- Demonic forces are real and active, and the church does a disservice by replacing biblical categories of spiritual warfare with purely psychological or

cultural explanations

- The peace of God is not a feeling of comfort or control but a supernatural anchor that guards the heart and mind when believers genuinely release their burdens to God and leave them there
- The absence of joy and peace in many professing Christians points to a faith that has not yet moved from intellectual agreement to genuine surrender
- Faith means trusting God's word and character without requiring full understanding or visible evidence, and this kind of trust is what produces lasting peace

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 3:1-6, the healing of the man with the shriveled hand and the Pharisees' opposition on the Sabbath
- Mark 3:11, evil spirits recognizing and declaring Jesus as the Son of God
- Mark 3:20-30, the accusation that Jesus casts out demons by the power of Beelzebub and Jesus' response about a divided kingdom
- Matthew 12:43-45, the account of an unclean spirit returning to a swept and empty house with seven spirits more wicked than itself
- Mark 4:35-41, Jesus calming the furious storm while asleep in the stern of the boat
- Philippians 4, referenced in connection with presenting petitions to God and receiving the peace that transcends understanding

Stories:

- A farmer the pastor knew from home who injured his hand and arm in a grain elevator accident, refused to follow through with rehabilitation, and as a result the hand atrophied and became shriveled, used to illustrate how unhealed wounds left unaddressed lead to permanent limitation
- The healing of the man with the shriveled hand in the synagogue, where Jesus called him to stand up publicly and stretch out the very hand he had likely spent his life hiding, and it was restored in the act of obedience
- The account of Jesus sleeping peacefully on a cushion in the stern of the boat during a furious storm while his disciples panicked, used to illustrate the peace of God that transcends circumstances
- A personal story the pastor shared about God teaching him to write down

his prayers and then throw the paper away as an act of release, only to find himself mentally retrieving the worry and being prompted to physically get the paper back out of the trash as an object lesson in how believers take back what they have given to God