

Sermon for Sunday, May 7, 1978, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri

"THE HAND OF JESUS NO. 5 - THE 'GOOD HANDS' SHEPHERD"  
St. John 10:22-30

Text: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them  
eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them  
out of my hand." St. John 10: 27,28

Today is the fifth and final sermon in our series on the hand of Jesus. For the past four Sundays we have taken incidents from the life of Jesus when the Bible speaks to us of his hands. In our first sermon, we talked of Jesus and healing when the Bible tells us that Jesus stretched out his hand to touch someone and heal them. In the second sermon we talked about how Jesus helps us in times of trouble. We used the scripture that tells us of Peter attempting to walk on the water to Jesus, but when the wind and the waves surrounded him, he lost his courage and began to sink. In his desperation, he cried out to Jesus and the Bible says that Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him. So, in that sermon we talked about the "Hand for the Man Overboard." In our third sermon we recounted the incident when the mother and brothers of Jesus came seeking him. When it was reported to Jesus that they were outside to see him, Jesus stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said that whoever did God's will was his mother and his brother. In that sermon we spoke of the "Hand with the Multicolored Fingers." Then, in our fourth sermon, last Sunday, we talked about the Risen Jesus and how his hands still bore the print of the nails, the wounds of Calvary, even after his resurrection. We spoke of how much God loves us and how on the cross he bore the cost of our sin as we talked about the "Hand with the Hole in It."

In our scripture for today the Bible tells us that Jesus said that he gives those who believe in him eternal life, that they shall never perish, and that no one shall snatch them out of his hand. So today we are going to talk about "The 'Good Hands' Shepherd."

Some years ago I saw something on television that made me laugh and for some reason it has stuck in my mind ever since. Some program--and I don't remember now which one--was doing a spoof on commercials. Now, there is a certain insurance company that calls itself the good hands people. Their advertising logo shows two cupped hands holding our worldly possessions--a house, a car, and other important items that we ordinarily insure. The theme of the advertising is that if you put your important things in his hands, saying that he is the good hands man, when suddenly everything falls out of his hands and crashes on the floor. "Oops" is his final comment!

Now, actually, that is a parable on life. Nothing in this world can give us absolute protection and complete assurance. The good hands of this world will always fail us. There is nothing--no earthly hands--that can give us total protection. No, there is only one pair of truly good hands that will never fail us. They are the hands of Jesus. When you are in his hands, nothing or no one can snatch you out of them. Jesus says, "...and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." Yes, when you put yourself in the hands of Jesus, nothing is able to pluck you out of the hands of God.

Have you put your life in the hands of Jesus? If you do, the Bible tells us something wonderful. Jesus says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." So, when you put yourself, your life, all of who and what you are in the hands of Jesus, the Bible says that nothing can snatch you out of those hands. Jesus is the good hands shepherd, and his hands will never fail you.

Notice that the hands of Jesus will not fail you in life. Sometimes life brings us a lot of disappointment or sorrow or trouble. So often things do not work out as we had hoped or dreamed. Dr. J. H. Jowett, the famous preacher of another generation, tells us that on one occasion he was faced with a desperate problem. He went to his close friend, Dr. Berry, and asked him what he would do if he were in his place. "I don't know, Jowett," he replied, "I am not where you are and you are not there yet. When do you have to decide?" When Dr. Jowett told him he had to decide by Friday, Dr. Berry replied, "You will find your way perfectly clear on Friday. The Lord will not fail you." Dr. Jowett said that when Friday came the answer was plain. He knew what God's will was for him. That's the wonderful thing about being in the hands of Jesus. You can face up to whatever life brings because you know his love surrounds you.

Just recently I sat in the hospital room with a dear friend who had just gotten the terrible news that he had cancer. I don't know what the outcome will be for him, but I do know this. I know he put his life in the hands of Jesus and however things turn out, he will be secure. He will be able to face whatever life brings him because he is in the hands of Jesus. As some poet has put it,

When you've met some disappointment,  
And you're tempted to feel blue,  
When your plans have all been sidetracked,  
Or some friend has proved untrue.  
When you're toiling and your're struggling,  
at the bottom of the stairs,  
It will seem a bit like Heaven,  
Just to know that Jesus cares!

Yes, "and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

Notice in the second place that the hands of Jesus will not fail you when it comes to sin. Sin can destroy you. Some years ago a man in Memphis, Tennessee, made a pet out of a baby rattle snake. As the snake grew large it became very tame. It would come when the man called it, it would eat out of his hand, it would wrap itself gently around his arm. One day the snake became angry and in a flash buried its fangs in the man's arm. In a matter of hours, the man was dead. A lot of us make a pet out of some sin. For many of us there are things going on in our lives that are deadly. We fool ourselves into believing that sin will never harm us. Then, the time comes when that sin has sunk its deadly fangs in our souls and we are spiritually dead. Is that true in your life? Are there some sins in your life that you have made a sort of pet of? Are there some things you are doing that you know in your heart are wrong? Eventually those sins will destroy you.

St. Paul once said, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." That's my experience--is it yours? St. Paul cried out, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" And then he answered his own question. He said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Yes, the hands of Jesus are the only place for the sinner. Those wounded hands are our sanctuary from the consequence of sin.

Then, notice in the third place, that the hands of Jesus will not fail you when it comes to physical death. I dare say there is not a person here this morning who has not thought about what it would be like to die. Most of us don't like to think about it. We are like the man who said, "Heaven is my home, but I'm not a bit homesick."

But how will you face up to death if you are not in the hands of Jesus? Let me share with you what some famous men--men who did not know Jesus--said as they prepared to die. Voltaire, who spent most of his life fighting Christianity, cried out with his dying breath, "I am abandoned by God and man, I shall go to hell!" Charles IX, King of France, "What blood, what murders, what evil councils I have followed. I am lost! I see it well!" Mazarin, French Cardinal and Statesman, "O my poor soul! What will become of thee? Whither wilt thou go?" Hobbes, the famous atheist, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark!"

But see the difference it makes when a man is safe in the hands of Jesus! What a difference it makes in facing up to death if you know that not even death can pluck you from the hands of Jesus. At the moment of death, Abbott cried out, "Glory to God! I see heaven sweetly opened before me!" Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist, "This is glorious! Earth receding, heaven opening. God calling me!" Martha McCrackin, "How bright the room! How full of angels!" Sir David Brewster, "O, how bright it is! I feel so safe and satisfied!" Yes, what a far cry from those cries of dark despair wrenched from the lips of those going out into death without Jesus. Yes, it makes a difference in not only how we live, but how we die when we are safe in the hands of Jesus. There is a hymn we used to sing when I was a child that expresses it so well, "Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on his gentle breast. There by his love o'er shaded, sweetly my soul shall rest."

Have you put yourself in the hands of Jesus? You know, it is not impossible for a man to be saved at the last moment--to make a deathbed confession and be saved. The Bible gives us an illustration of that. It is the story of the thief on the cross. There, in the very act of dying, he cried out to Jesus and Jesus said to him, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Yes, the Bible gives us an illustration of a deathbed confession that we might not despair. But let me remind you that it gives us only one. Of all the conversions reported in the New Testament, that is the only one.

Yes, when you are in the hands of Jesus, nothing can snatch you from them. He is, indeed, the good hands shepherd. You can face up to life, face up to sin, and face up to death for his love will never let you go.

Back about the middle of the last century, a young man named George Matheson was studying for the ministry when he realized something was wrong with his eyes. He went to the doctor to be told that he was going blind. When his fiance found out, she broke their engagement. Yet, in the midst of his sorrow over the loss of his sight and the loss of his loved one, he discovered that he was safe in the hands of Jesus and His love would never let him go. He went on to become a famous preacher and then one day he sat down and composed a poem that gave expression to the love of Jesus he discovered when everything else failed him. That poem begins like this, "O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be." Yes, Jesus is the good hands shepherd.. Put yourself in his hands. You see, he will never let you go.