

“THE WORD BECAME HANDS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Luke 4:40; 24:50-51; John 10:27-29; 20:27-29

Introduction.

Did you hear the news this week of a law suit filed with the New York Supreme Court on behalf of four chimpanzees claiming they should have legal status and rights as persons?

The group said it plans to file more lawsuits across the country on behalf of captive animals “who are scientifically proven to be self-aware and autonomous,” such as elephants, dolphins and whales. Their definition of person is “cognitively complex, self-aware, and autonomous.”

Should certain animals have legal rights as persons? Is the human animal really that different from any of the other animals? What’s the difference?

Man alone bears the unique image of God. We are profoundly and fundamentally different from animals. Being a person is infinitely more significant than being an animal.

Psalm 8:4 What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Genesis 1:27-28 God created man in his own image, ... 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Do you see the confusion and lie of post-modernism? We protect animals and we kill our babies. When there is no God, everything is permissible.

It’s a profound and wonderful mystery that God would create us in His image. But it’s an even more profound and staggeringly wonderful mystery that God would become made in our image and become flesh and dwell among us. Jesus didn’t become an animal, He became human.

As we are made in His image so Jesus took on our image. Jesus has hands and feet, fingers and toes, eyes and ears, a body and a soul. On earth He thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, loved with a human heart and He worked with human hands. This morning we reflect on one aspect of the incarnation miracle, The Word became Hands.

Jesus’ hands were human hands, hardworking hands.

Bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh His hands are just like ours, 27 bones, 46 muscles, four fingers and a thumb. His hands started out barely big enough to grasp His mother’s finger; they grew until He could grasp His father’s hammer.

He had the hands of a first century carpenter, before the invention of machines and gloves and hand lotion. His hands were rough, scarred, calloused, splintered, with dirt under the fingernails.

There was nothing weak or effeminate or sissified about Jesus. His hands were strong, even as His touch was gentle, strength under control. John the Baptist said of His hands:

Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

But their appearance wasn't what mattered most, it's what He did with them that mattered most.

Jesus' hands were compassionate hands, powerful, miracle working hands.

With His hands He touched and healed countless thousands of people. He touched the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. He touched the skin of the untouchable. With His hands He broke bread that fed thousands. They changed everything they touched. People clamored for the touch of Jesus. The touch of Jesus was a matter of life and death.

Matthew 8:2-3 A leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” 3 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Mark 5:22-24, 41-41 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet 23 and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” 24 And he went with him.

41 Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” 42 And immediately the girl got up and began walking

Mark 7:32-35 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.

Mark 8:22-25 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and **begged him to touch him**. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.” 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

With His hands Jesus saved people.

Matthew 14:30-31 But when [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him.

To all who believe in Him He does the same:

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand*. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

With His hands Jesus blessed people.

Mark 8:13-16 And they were bringing children to him *that he might touch them*, and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." 16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, *laying his hands on them*.

John 20:27-29 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Luke 24:50-51 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

The last visual physical image the disciples have of Jesus was of Him raising His hands in blessing and ascending into heaven. Perhaps that last thing they saw was the scars in His hands and feet as He ascended with outstretched hands.

Jesus' hands were sinless hands.

While He was sinned against, while hands were raised against Him, while He was betrayed by human hands, He knew no sin and committed no sin, and used His hands for no evil.

Judas betrayed Him, Pilate washed his hands of Jesus, the soldiers struck Jesus, but Jesus' hands remained innocent and pure.

Jesus' hands were crucified hands, wounded for our transgressions hands.

He was betrayed by human hands into the hands of sinful men. With wicked hands wicked men crucified the Lord of glory, the Son of God. And when they had done their worst:

Luke 23:46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Jesus' hands were nailed scarred, showing His great love for us in what He was willing to suffer and endure for our sakes.

I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Thomas saw His hands and believed, so should we.

Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side -
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.

Someone has said that the only man-made thing in heaven is the scars in Jesus' hands and feet. When Jesus came to visit earth, the only souvenir He took back to heaven was His scars.

Jesus' hands are the hands of God, filled with good things.

Psalm 104:28 ... when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

Psalm 145:16 You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Jesus' hands are hands you can trust. You can trust Him to give you only good things from His hands. You can trust Him to lead you by the hand through wherever life's journey takes you.

You can trust His hands to protect you and save you. Do you know how you can know that you can trust your life and everything you have in the hands of Jesus?

Because God the Father has entrusted everything into the hands of Jesus.

John 3:35-36 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Never again will Jesus suffer shame and suffering at the hands of wicked men. After three days He was raised from the dead by the hand of His Father, forty days later He was received into heaven by the hand of the Father and now He eternally sits at the right hand of the Father, having been given all power and authority until all His enemies are made His footstool.

Application and Conclusion.

As Christ became like us, let us labor to become like Christ. Let us use our hands to bless and not to curse; to help and heal, not to hit and hurt; let us use our hands for good and not for evil.

Be careful little hands what you do, there's a Father up above and He's looking down with love.

What can we do with our hands that is Christ like? How can we use our hands for the glory of God? How can you use your hands to bless someone else? The ways are countless. You can cook a meal for someone who is sick or alone. You can type a note, send a text or write a card to someone who needs encouragement. You can wipe a tear of one grieving or wipe a nose of an infant in the nursery. You can shake hands and greet or hand out bulletins on Sunday morning. You can lend a hand to someone who needs help at work, on the farm, in the home, after school. You can serve the children in an orphanage in Mexico over spring break. You can do something for someone who will never know. You can do something no one else wants to do.

If you love Jesus, if you are becoming a new creation in His hands, then your hands will show it.

After all His hands have done for us, why would anyone resist surrendering their life into His hands? Let go of whatever temporal thing you are grasping and put your hand in His hand.

Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water, who calmed the sea, who healed the leper, who touched the blind eye, how raise one from the dead. Don't wash your hands of Jesus.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” Jesus comes to us to invite us to Himself, He extends His hands in invitation. Jesus' hands are still outstretched to us today to receive us, touch us, heal us, and bless us.

I lift up Jesus before you that seeing Him you might see His glory, the glory of the only Son of God from the Father full of grace and truth. No one has seen God, but the Son of God has made Him known, and if you have seen Jesus then you have seen the Father and know Him (John 1:14-18).

Blessed are you who have seen Jesus with the eyes of faith. Look at His hands, look at His scars and believe, and by believing have eternal life.