

**Title: “With These Hands”**

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**Matthew 27:35-42**

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**Service Readings:** Isaiah 52:7-10; Matthew 27:35-42

**Exegetical:** In this narrative, Matthew records the actions at the cross during the crucifixion of Jesus. The soldiers cast lots for his garments, two others being crucified conversed with him, and the audience mocked him.

**Focus:** With His hands, Jesus sacrificed himself for us and did the ultimate good.

## **Message:**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Our message today is taken from the gospel passage we just read

### *Me*

A Sunday school teacher once asked her 4-year-old student, "How much do you love your mommy?" And the little girl responded with a big smile and her little arms outstretched and her fingers bent, as if to illustrate the measure of her love. "I love mommy this much," She claimed. The teacher then asked, "How much does mommy love you?" and the response was exactly the same. "This much!" The teacher smiled. It was the answer she expected. Year after year when she taught this lesson the answer was always the same. Those little innocent hands, stretching as far away from each other as their little arms would allow. And even then, trying to stretch just a little bit more. The next question that the teacher would open a pathway to a conversation about the love that Jesus has for them, but the teacher paused for just a moment because the little girl was staring at her hands, pondering *something*. What could the child be thinking? What could have been going through her little mind? And In that very moment the teacher began to think about her own hands and how they had been used for so many years to teach God's little children right there in that church basement. The wonderful stories that her hands could tell. All of the love that those hands gave year after year.

<Pause>

These hands, my hands. They have stories, too. They have held the miracles of God, from the very moment that each of my children were brought into my life. These hands have comforted each one of them, picked them when they fell, and wiped tears from their eyes. Through the years, these hands have held the hands of my wife as we spoke words of love and encouragement and prayer. These hands have served others in God's name - here at church and out there, in the community. These hands have been pleasing to God. They've also been pleasing to Satan. You see, these hands have been used to sin. They have been used to disobey. They've been used to ignore the homeless when it wasn't convenient, and they've been hidden so as not to serve others when I was too focused on my own work.

### *We*

Those are my hands, and they are only one pair. But the church has many hands and all too often they work so well together. Here at St. Mark, we see hands that every month create and then serve meals to the community. We see hands that every week prepare this sanctuary for service. We see hands that create beautiful music, prepare the Lord's Table, clean the dirt from these floors. Our hands work together for the glory of God. But these hands, even in our church, are sometimes used to bring about division over things like masks or worship times. Don't get me wrong. St. Mark is healthy. Our congregation is healthy, and we work so well together to accomplish so many wonderful, Godly things, but we are all sinners and so sin creeps in. It creeps into all that we do. It's impossible for it not to.

### *God/Jesus*

But it wasn't impossible for Jesus. It wasn't impossible for him to do God's work with sinless hands.

When some people brought a deaf man to Jesus, those hands touched that man's ears, and he was healed.

When five thousand men, besides women and children gathered to hear him teach, his hands multiplied bread and fish - more than enough to feed the entire crowd.

When a synagogue leader told Jesus about the death of his daughter, his hands held the hands of that girl and brought life back into her body.

Those were the hands that brought life to the lifeless, that fed the hungry, and healed the sick. They were the hands that healed the ear of a soldier who had come to arrest him.

On the night when he was betrayed, those hands took bread, and they broke it and gave it to his disciples. "Take and eat. This is my body," Jesus said. And those hands then passed the cup, a new covenant of his blood. And after, those hands were held together in prayer before he was arrested. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Those hands had done God's work here on earth, perfectly but their work was not yet complete. **The dirt from our hands were to become dirt on his.** And those hands, now made dirty by the sins of the world were to be pierced as they lay stretched out on the cross.

This is something we hear every week and so it is so easy to gloss over it. Our God, the one who created everything, the one who formed you in the womb, the one who molded your hands and body, the one who breathed life into you, is the one that we rebelled against. He is the one that we raised *our* hands against. And his answer to us was not to raise his hand against us. Instead, it was to send down his only son who would offer his own hands, his own body, as a perfect sacrifice. And that sacrifice would wash our hands clean with his blood. And he did that perfectly, obediently, willingly.

And that lifeless body would be wrapped and laid in a tomb. But after three days he would rise again. And he would hold out those hands, now marked with the nails of the crucifixion, to Thomas "Put your finger here and see my hands;" He would say.

You see, those were the hands that changed everything - for me and for you.

### *You*

Look at your hands. What stories do they tell? Those are the hands that, because of sin, held the hammer at the crucifixion. Those are the hands that drove the nails into his Christ. Those are the hands that are covered in the blood of our suffering Lord.

<PAUSE>

But those are also the hands that the *Lord* covers in his blood, for the forgiveness of your sins. Yours are the hands that willingly died and rose again, for. There is nothing that your hands have ever

done, or ever will do that will make him regret his suffering for you. Nothing. His arms were outstretched on the cross to receive your sins but they are now outstretched to receive you. He meets you at his table, and he takes your hands in his, and he removes that hammer of sin that you grip so tightly, and he places into your hands his body and his blood and he whispers words of unmeasurable love: "My blood that covered me because of your sins now covers you for your forgiveness."

<PAUSE>

*We*

The teacher asked the child a third question: "How much does Jesus love you?" The little girl kept her smile and her arms outstretched as if the answer to all three of these questions were identical. "Jesus loves me this much, too," she said! But the teacher, moving towards the point of her lesson, gently flattened the child's fingers so they pointed out from the body. No longer did they look like they were holding a ruler but simply stretched out as far as possible. And with gentle voice the teacher corrected her: "Jesus actually loves you more than that. He loves you *this* much. There is no beginning and there is no ending to the love that he has for you."

How will you use your hands this week?

Please pray with me.

Lord we open our hands to your will. We ask that you use us this week to serve others in your name. We pray that we would bring glory and honor to you and would be the hands that you use to bring your lost back into your fold. In your name we pray. Amen.