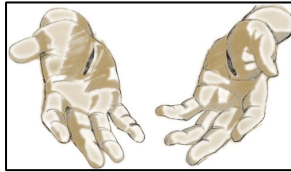


## **HANDS WITH NAILS IN THEM**



*Scripture:*

**Psalm 77**

### *I cried out for help*

1. I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me.
2. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.
3. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. Selah
4. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.
- ...
12. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.
13. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?
14. You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.
15. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
16. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed.
17. The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth.
18. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.
19. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.
20. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

**Mark 15**

### *They crucified him*

22. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).
23. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.
24. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.
25. It was the third hour when they crucified him.
26. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.
27. They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.
29. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,
30. come down from the cross and save yourself!"
31. In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself!"



### **SERIES**

“HANDS WITH NAILS IN THEM” is the next in our series based upon the events associated with Jesus at the cross, near the cross, and on the cross. In the past two weeks, Peter and I have spoken about the symbolism of the robe and the crown of

thorns. They are symbols of the Lordship of Jesus, and the vulnerability of leaders who can be wounded in offering compassion to others.

Today, “HANDS WITH NAILS IN THEM.”

## MY SORE HANDS

My hands have felt like they had pins and needles in them all week, if not nails. My hands have been sore this week. I had some sun damage removed by the dermatologist last week, and I have a dozen big red circles and blisters on the backs of my hands that have appeared where the dermatologist froze the skin with liquid nitrogen. Many of you know this process quite well. It has made me think about hands all week in a very personal way. I use my hands for so many things. But my hands hurt and typing is uncomfortable and playing the banjo has been clumsy and awkward for me. When I grip the steering wheel of my car, it stretches the skin which is sensitive, and the red circles call attention to themselves, and they are not pretty to look at.

### EXPRESSIONS DERIVED FROM "HANDS"

There are lots of common expressions that use the words "hand" or "fingers" as metaphors for contact or usefulness or productivity. Here are some examples:

- Handy – that means a person who can do a lot of things; skillful, or something that is useful.
- Deckhand – that would be a sailor who might do any number of important labor jobs on a ship or boat.
- A handout – might be something you give to someone as a courtesy, a charitable gift.

Please give me an expression using the word hand, and tell me what the expression means.

- Hand-me-downs
- Handing in a test paper
- A friendly handshake
- A handful
- Handsome

**We've used that word well in our society to talk about our hands as an extension of our spirit or mind. Our hands do what our head tells them to do.**

I have some notes that I want to talk to you about on that this morning. We have the scripture of hands.

## HAND MADE

Hand made means something special in our family. It might be something made by Pa for one of the kids or grandchildren. It might be something Cheryl cooked for dinner, or a tableau of flowers and artwork. It might mean a card drawn by one of the grandchildren, and dropped off at the post office.

### DR. BAUER'S HANDS

I like Ken Bauer's hands. He is patient and very gentle with his hands, and as a dentist, his hands are the way he makes his living. He has to be careful with them when he is not working with them, and he has to have fine motor control so that what his eyes see, and his brain can conceive, his hands can reproduce. I've teased him about the sharp prick of a needle filled with anesthetic, and he smiles as he administers a little shot to a nerve of someone's tooth, but he is probably thinking that dentistry was accomplished without anesthetic for hundreds of years, and before that, dentistry wasn't even practiced. When a person lost his teeth, he could no longer eat.

### AN ARTIST'S HANDS

I like Wayne Shrubbsall's hands. I used to watch his long fingers select just the right banjo string at just the right time, at just the right pitch to create music that I enjoy. And so Wayne would take out his black fountain pen and create pages of tablature for me, so that I could see the notes he was playing in an orderly way. However, the problem was still the task of changing what you read into playing the notes with your hands.

I like Althea's hands, and I know lots of you do, too. How hard she presses a note, how quickly she presses the next key, and how she combines them with her feet just adds to our amazement.

We have something handmade by Anita in a special spot in our home, and a hand painted water color in the hallway made by the hands of Dan O'Brien.

- Whose hands do you enjoy?
- Do you like the touch of some special friend?
- Do you like the softness of the skin of one of your children or grandchildren?
- Do you put special cream on your hands to keep the skin soft and supple?

- How about the feel of getting your hands on the steering wheel of your automobile, so that you can see new places?
- Do you like to shuffle the cards, line up the dominoes, place a piece in a jigsaw puzzle?

### **OPPOSABLE THUMBS**

Your hands have an opposable thumb. That is one of the most unique aspects of your body and one of the things that separates you from all the other animals and fish whose hands are set up so differently than your own.

- Hand made.
- Things your hands can do.
- Hands that bring the sensations of touch and textures into your life. The soft feel of silk, the abrasive feel of sandpaper, the cool of ice, the heat of fire, the burn of liquid nitrogen.

### **NAILS AT EASTER**

I doubt that anyone has missed the connection of hands to Easter, to Holy Week, and to Jesus Christ. I have a farrier's nail to give you. I want you just to hold it in your hands.

This nail you hold in your hands means something. After all the good and useful things that our hands can do, holding a nail like this, and knowing the intended use of the nails that the soldiers brought to the cross, these nails bring us a chill. What does the nail in the hands of Jesus Christ mean? (Think "wrist" not "hand." It would be a more secure fetter.)

It is too awful for me to describe.

### **A FASCINATION WITH TORTURE**

Thomas wanted to see the results of the holes made by the nails in Jesus' hands.

Why the fascination with this torture?

The holes provided Thomas with the testimony that Jesus' life and death were real. But Jesus rebuked Thomas and said, blessed are those who live by faith, not suffering.

So what is the fascination with torture in the past, and now in the present?

It is a by-product of war; it has seeped into movies, television, news, and fashions that people wear. Gangs use torture, cultures use physical and psychological torture, and brutal sports like variations of boxing and Karate are routinely

televised on the sports channels. There are entire programs that just show accidents. What is the most common theme in "America's Funniest Home Videos"?

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON TORTURE, 2006**

Our denomination condemned torture at the General Assembly that I attended in Birmingham in 2006. One of my friends helped create the resolution.

**This is the resolution approved by the General Assembly in 2006: We affirm that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) opposes the use of torture and all forms of "cruel, inhuman, or degrading" interrogation by all agencies, employees, or agents of the United States government, and all foreign governments and/or combatants, and supports the application of the Geneva Conventions to all enemy forces anywhere in the world, and supports the provisions of the Bill of Rights and the principles of judicial review and congressional oversight over Executive branch operations, now including counterterrorism, Homeland Security, and domestic surveillance programs, both classified and publicly acknowledged.**

**We endorse congressional and judicial remedies for the use of torture and illegal detention by agencies of the U.S. government, such as the appointment of a special counsel, open hearings, appropriate investigations, and legislation outlawing the use of "extraordinary rendition" and extraterritorial prison facilities.**

**We direct the Stated Clerk and Moderator to share these concerns with public officials, and ecumenical partners.**

**We encourage members, sessions, presbyteries, and synods to pray for all victims of human rights abuse and those who persecute them, and to observe Human Rights day each December 10<sup>th</sup>.**

**We authorize the Office of the Stated Clerk to express support for the principled refusal on grounds of Christian Conscience by Presbyterian military, intelligence and other personnel who are asked to participate in coercive and/or covert detention of prisoners.**

## EXAMPLES CITED

- In Africa and Darfur
- Terrorism in the Middle East
- Latin America war with Columbia and drug cartels
- In Asia, Afghanistan is part of the war zone, and women's rights in particular are limited.
- Terrorism has struck Bali.
- Terrorism in Europe and NATO countries.
- Debate in our own country concerning the torture and interrogations of terror suspects, and physical and psychological pressures that go far beyond Geneva accords.

This measure was passed overwhelmingly and nearly without opposition.

***What our hands do is a product of  
the will of our minds.***



## NO MORE NAILS

Let there be no more nails driven into the hands of anyone, anywhere, ever more.

Let our species evolve into those that affirm human dignity where ever there is life, and not become voyeurs and sadists. No more nails.

Aren't you annoyed to hear your minister preaching on this topic in 2008? You should be! We should have resolved this in the middle ages.

Let the work of our hands be healing, the making of music, the creation of thoughtful writing, making scarves, gloves and warm clothing.

It just seems so basic.

No more nails. Let this be our goal; let this be our reality.

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February 24, 2008**