



### Lenten Reflection for Friday, March 3, 2023

For the podcast click [here](#) to listen.

Matthew 12:9-14

Jesus left that place and entered their synagogue; a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked Jesus, 'Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?' so that they might accuse him. Jesus said to them, 'Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.'<sup>13</sup> Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

---

Today's reflection is by Tom Rigney

The reading started out quite simply, and then I began to appreciate some of its complexity. The Pharisees are attempting to set Jesus up for accusation with a seemingly straightforward query. Jesus responds directly to them with an explanation of how and why, then concludes his dialogue with them and moves on to heal the invalid man. He uses an uncomplicated rationale for his decision, employing the supremely common sense argument. And he phrases it in a virtuous and pragmatic conclusion: doing good is lawful. Jesus delivers the lesson without hesitation, then concludes with a brief action of healing and moves on. He takes no prisoners, massages no egos. His message is unambiguous.

I witness some of myself in similar behavior. (Though my powers to heal hardly qualify as miracles in the literal sense.) I know there is a vein of arrogance running through my responses to people whom I feel challenge me. (And that could, based on the day, be almost anyone.) I don't feel the need to offer explanations, soothe wounds, make others feel better or more appreciated. For years I mistakenly thought this behavioral characteristic defined me positively. Now I make efforts to act without arrogance, to treat others more fairly and lovingly in our dealings, to show others flashes of light rather than darkness.

(Though I can without warning revert to disparaging others if the storm is perfect.) This change is one of those examples of progress, not perfection, in self healing, and it's not a short journey. It may just be the perfect opportunity to exclaim, God is in the Details!

---

Tom Rigney is a former New York City educator. He is a poet and memoirist whose work has appeared in *Leisure – Dinner with the Muse*, Vol. III, and in *Brevitas Anthology of the Short Poem*. He walked through the doors of Holy Apostles for a Maundy Thursday service four years ago and hasn't left. He lives in Kensington with his wife the storyteller Robin Bady.

