

THE HANDS OF THE CARPENTER
Second in a Series on “The Incarnation and the Body of Christ”
July 15, 2012 –Matthew 8: 1-17
The Church of the Covenant

This is the second in a series on the nature of the Incarnation of Jesus and us being the Body of Christ, His Church. In a way, we are the incarnation, the flesh and blood representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ; we are His flesh; we are His body. The hands of the Carpenter from Galilee are our hands. I remember the moment as if it were yesterday. My one cousin is a carpenter and I shook his hand and I was shocked. His hands were rough hewn, like the wood he worked with; they were calloused and tough; strong and powerful; they were not the glove-soft hands of a preacher who spends time reading books in his study. No, these were the hands of someone who actually WORKS for a living! And I remember thinking in that moment –the hands of my cousin must be like the hands of my Savior, Jesus. For the first 30 years of His life Jesus was a carpenter. It was only from year 30 to three years later when He died on a cross of wood that Jesus was Messiah, itinerant preacher, prophet and King. He worked with people for 3 years; He worked with wood for 30. We may not know exactly what Jesus looked like but I think it is not too far a stretch to consider that we know what His hands felt like.

A Carpenter is someone who can look at a piece of wood and see something of intrinsic beauty held within it. They make something from almost nothing. They create from the work of their hands. Jesus spent the first 30 years of His life looking at pieces of wood and seeing all the possibilities held there; He spent the next 3 years looking at humanity and likewise seeing all the possibilities held there. When Jesus looks at us He sees not just a block of wood; He sees us as we are and as we can become, as the possibility and hope held within every human being. That’s how Jesus looks at you and me.

A Carpenter is someone who takes broken pieces of wood and knits them back together again. He is in the restoration business. He takes furniture that is broken and restores it to its former function and beauty. He knows exactly how to patch lives together, as well. There is nothing broken that the Carpenter from Galilee cannot fix. By His stripes we are made whole, says the scripture. The hands of the carpenter can do that if we submit our lives fully to Him. We are His wood; we are His workmanship. We are His creations and the fruit of His own hand. When we let Jesus into our life, that is. Have you done that? A Church is His woodworking workshop. This is the place where the Carpenter still mends broken lives. That’s what Jesus can do for you and for me.

There was something about the hands of the Master. Something unique, something powerful. When He laid His hands on someone, you were never the same again. Once the hands of the Carpenter touch you He has claimed you as His own. And in His hands is the power to SAVE. In His hands is the power to BLESS. In His hands is the power to HEAL. First, Spiritual power is conveyed by touch. When Jesus touched you all the power of God was at your fingertips; all the love and mercy and forgiveness came from His heart and entered our heart when the hands of the Carpenter touched you. Salvation entered your soul because Jesus entered your heart when He came, and he approached, and He touched you with the power of God. Second, Blessing (like salvation) is conveyed by touch. Jesus would lay His hands on little children to bless them and they would be filled with the blessing of God. For the rest of their lives they were never the same. Jesus would raise His arms and bless the crowds and spiritually speaking they were touched by the presence and the power of the hands of the Carpenter. He would convey blessing and power and glory through His uplifted hands, blessing the people. Third, Healing (like salvation and blessing) is conveyed by touch. In the story we just read from Matthew a leper approaches Jesus and says, *“Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And (Jesus) stretched out His hand*

and touched him, saying, 'I will. Be clean.' (Matthew 8: 2-3) The touch of the Master's hand makes the leper clean. The next story is of a centurion who comes to Jesus asking that Jesus heal his servant. But Jesus does not need to be physically present for the man to be healed. He stretches out His hand and from afar the servant is healed by the hands of the Carpenter. The third story is of the healing of the Apostle Peter's Mother-in-law – *"(Jesus) touched her hand and the fever left her..."* (v. 15)

He touched them physically. He touched them spiritually. He touched them personally. He touched them through His love. People were saved and forgiven, blessed and became a blessing, healed and restored. Everything broken was made whole. This was the power in the hands of the Carpenter. In those rough hewn, strong and tough hands is the power to make a broken world whole again.

All the power of God became incarnate in those hands of flesh in Jesus Christ. All the saving power, all the blessing power, and all the healing power of God entered into our world through the Hands of the Carpenter from Galilee. The power to restore a broken world entered our world in the incarnate power held in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And now I must tell you something. Our hands are His hands. Our hands, as the Body of Christ, as His Church, are the hands of Jesus. Our hands, incarnate within them, are the power to bring salvation, blessing and healing to a broken and hurting world. As Jesus Christ lives in us, as His Holy Spirit comes and abides in us, as the Savior takes up residency within our soul, our hands have the power to make the world a better, different, more blessed place. "It is not I who live, but Jesus Christ who lives in me." It is still Jesus who saves and Jesus who blesses and Jesus who heals...but He chooses us, He chooses our weak flesh and human spirit to be at work in His world. That which was incarnate in the Son of God now becomes enfleshed in our flesh through His presence and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

I conclude by asking you to take the hand of the person sitting next to you. There is something inherently healing in touch. I know, I know, Presbyterians don't like to touch one another. We like to sit at an optimum distance away from the person sitting next to us. So we don't even accidentally touch one another! You might even have to move from your seat to one closer to the person next to you (Shocking!). You know, many people in today's world go for days and weeks and months without ever being touched by another human being. And sadder still, there are many people who go through their entire life never having been touched by the Master's hand...We conclude with a word of prayer...

Lord Jesus, come. Lord Jesus, come and take my hand today. As this person who sits beside me takes my hand may I feel You taking my hand into Yours. Save me and forgive me, through the touch of the Master's hand. Bless me and make me a blessing to others, through the touch of the Spirit in my heart and soul. Heal me and restore me where I am broken and hurting, through the hands of the Carpenter today. Lord Jesus, stretch out Your hand and touch me, and I know I will never be the same again. In Jesus; name. Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*