

Reflection/Prayertime

April 20, 2020

As we join together today, I want to acknowledge that we may come from many different religious or faith traditions or perhaps none at all, but we are joining together in a time of collective Reflection and/or Prayer. I want to wish any of you that observe Ramadan as it approaches a very Holy Ramadan and I know I will miss being at the Iftar meals with the American Turkish Friendship Association this year. I just want to acknowledge that just as Passover and Easter were very different this year, we note that your holiday observances are different and I know it can be unsettling to adjust our traditions for greater safety and health, but we will all make it through this together.

I don't know about you but in the last month or so I've been so much more aware of my hands. I had no clue that people touch their face an average of 20 times per hour. I've started using my key to punch in my debit card numbers at the gas station and stopped using handrails and recently told someone that in the space of a month I've gotten old lady hands from so much washing. I'm sure it has nothing to do with being age 57. It actually has made me think, when I look at them, dried out and rough despite multiple applications of lotion each day, about the elderly folks in our communities that we are trying to hard to keep healthy as well as ourselves. So when I feel aggravated with the roughness, I just refocus my thinking on why keeping them clean is so important for me and for others, especially the most vulnerable and especially now.

In The Carpenter's Hands: The Touch of Jesus, Dr. David Jeremiah wrote:

They must have been rough, the hands of the village carpenter. In an age without gloves or skin creams, He shoved stones into place, absorbed splinters, hewed timber, and gripped lumber with bare-fisted fingers. In a day without sunscreen lotions, He labored under the blistering Middle Eastern sun. In an era without modern machinery, He raised houses, erected buildings, fashioned furniture, and repaired children's toys. His hands must have developed a thick layer of protective hide that was obvious to those who shook His hand or felt His touch. But, oh!—what gentle hands. Never squeezing too hard, touching too roughly, or overzealously slapping another's back.

And what powerful hands! The trace of a single finger could restore sight to the blind, bring life to the dead, heal a leper's skin, or lift a suffering soul from life's dust.

And what wounded hands! They bore the scars that no lotion could heal and no oil could help. They were the hands of Jesus.

The Gospels use the words "hands," "fingers," and "touch" nearly two hundred times, and the words often refer to Jesus: *"Jesus put out His hand and touched him . . . So He touched her hand . . . He went in and took her by the hand . . . Then He touched their eyes . . . Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand . . . Jesus came and touched them . . . Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray . . ."*

Our hands should convey love. In His parable of the prodigal son, Jesus described the reaction of the father to the homecoming of his wayward boy: *"Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him"* (Luke 15:20, NLT). Many parents truly love their children, but don't always convey this love in a way that makes their kids feel secure. Hugs, hair-tussling, pats on the back, even horseplay and rough-housing—all are ways we can communicate affection to our youngsters.

Jesus wasn't afraid to touch others. Leprous skin didn't repulse Him, nor did He hesitate to handle the filthy feet of His disciples in the Upper Room. Now He wants to use our hands to

send the same message of love, humility, and acceptance.

Psalm 104:28 says that when God opens His hand, we're filled with goodness; and Psalm 145:16 echoes the thought: *"You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."*

Are your hands open? Generous toward a needy person whom God brings across your path? Toward His work that needs support? Toward those depending on your provision?

We must use our hands to help others. At the beginning of Christ's ministry, we read in Luke 4:40: *"When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them."*

How can our hands become a blessing to others? Perhaps wiping the brow of a fevered child?

Cooking a meal for a lonely single? Typing a note to one needing encouragement? Cutting flowers for a neighbor? Your hands can do positive change every day!

I can visualize our Lord's rough-hewn hands resting in a posture of prayer, palms together, fingers pointed upward as the Carpenter of Nazareth took time to beseech God's blessings on the work of His hands.

Oh, to be like Jesus. To have the same touch, the same grip on life, the same openhanded generosity, the same beautiful, beckoning hands as our Lord. Look down at your hands right now. May God take them and use them for His glory!

In Jesus' Hands

by [Rob Dilworth](#) © 2016

In Jesus' hands, two fish and loaves
Became enough to feed the droves.
He welcomed need and always will,
For by his hands we have our fill.

In Jesus' hands, the simple folk
Became the ones through which he spoke;
Mere fishermen then preached the word,
When Holy Spirit fire stirred.

In Jesus' hands, the lost find hope
And find in Him the strength to cope.
His hands will reach what we can't touch
And in our hearts will do so much.

In Jesus' hands, I find my rest
Where I can see his wisdom best;
Surrendered to his will and plans,
I place my all in Jesus' hands.

I want to be clear here that the narrative has changed somewhat in the situation of a pandemic and social distancing and we are not as free in this particularly season of history to touch so freely. I remember the first few times in early March when someone offered a hand to shake and I did not

reciprocate. Already I was training myself to increase safety and reduce risk and it felt so very awkward and uncomfortable. I told them my new greeting was waving jazz hands. Often we long to connect with one another through touch, if even just a handshake greeting. And now we are working with a new narrative that says touch can be harmful and we are doing the best for others when we reduce the risk through eliminating touch as best we can.

Some of us are still handling and tending to others because there is no way around it and in those instances, I want you to know that it is noted that your touch and tending to is essential because people would be in dire straights and at greater health risk without it. Your hands are incredible tools and their essential work in creating positive change has never been more evident than during this time. For you who are not using your hands as much or at least not in the same way (and for many of you that has caused distress) I want to assure you that like the poem says, “His hands will reach what we cannot touch.” I want to affirm for you that in this time of emphasis on washing hands for safety, on noting that hands can bring disease into your life or the life of others, that your hands remain instruments for good and for blessing others. They are still so very good. You must trust the good they are bringing into this world, but protect them now for continuing good works. You must be patient and strong and committed to the protocols for safety, but don't lose sight of the incredible good produced in this world with your own two hands.

In John 20:24-27 it reads

Jesus Appears to Thomas

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Russell Siler Jones says that some are coping with this restriction on hands with people putting their hands in the dirt (from whence we came, says the book of Genesis) and investing in life. The temporary nature of our existence is on unprecedented display, and there is a need to connect with something enduring. The seasons. The cycle of life that was here before us and will be here after us. The way a seed gets buried, finds the soil around it warming, cracks open, and, if it is spared the contingencies of drought, frost, wind, hail, and disregard, sends forth roots, [stalk](#), leaves, and fruit a hundred times larger than it ever was before its descent into darkness.

For some people, I think, gardening might be a way of praying. Perhaps it's a way of asking the earth, which is older and wiser than we, and Whatever It Is That sustains the earth, Which is also older and wiser than we: Will you teach us to pray? And can we pray with you?

I want to invite you today to pause for a moment and look at your hands and find ways to tend to them, whether it's sticking them into the dirt to garden or something else that nurtures them. Rub them together and feel their goodness and strength, their magic, if you will. If you have lotion or oil or something to rub on them now, please do so. Feel as you rub them together the strength in those hands

to fight for a better life for your clients and feel the compassionate tenderness in each individual finger. Kentucky has a wonderful songwriter Ben Sollee who in his song "Built for This" says "Place a wish on my calloused fingertip. Rub your hands with your faith and trust their path. And trace the morning light." We are in a time that we are having to rub our hands with our faith and trust their path as we head toward the morning light.

And now a blessing of your hands:

As we love in community with God and one another, may our hands be instruments of peace and love. For those who are in need of warmth and food, may our hands prepare quilts and a banquet.

When a stranger is in our midst, may our hands extend a welcome (using safe protocols of course).

When injustice is in the world and in our communities, may our hands write letters and peacefully join others.

In times of sorrow, sickness and great suffering, may our hands embrace the broken and offer prayers.

For those who are in need of physical structures, may our hands build homes, schools and wells.

God, may we be reminded whatever the need, large or small, you are at work in our hands. May we serve generously, lovingly and faithfully. Amen.

And now we will enter into a time of sharing prayer requests. I will mention a few and then pause and you may say with me if you'd like or just listen as I say, O God, hear our prayers.

First I want to pray and light a candle for the family of Shreeta Waldon in our Addiction Recovery Services here in Louisville as two cousins of hers that were sisters have passed away from Covid-19.

I'd also like for us to continue to pray for all health care professionals and essential workers who are on the front lines of tending to peoples' needs.

Who now has a request that you would like to share?

And now let's lay it all to rest with our Creator and remember to rub our hands with our faith. Until the morning light.

For all these requests and needs, we lift them into the tender care of our loving Creator. Amen.