

The Hand of the Lord Who Holds All Things

April 11, 2025

Pastor Matthew Ude

John 3:11-18,22-26 ¹¹ "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

²² After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. ²⁴ For John had not yet been thrown into prison. ²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified-- behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

Reports suggest that in NYC only 1 out of every 10 pedestrian crosswalk buttons actually work. The city has little incentive to fix them either. They do a good job of giving people the illusion of control even if they don't work. What about that close door button in an elevator? Does that actually do anything? Or is it again simply a good illusion.

Our lives are filled with the illusion of control. Some of it is our own doing. We wear our lucky jersey and convince ourselves that this will help our team to victory. Much of it is just the way it is. Like the elevator button. We go to great lengths at times to give ourselves a sense of control, insurance, savings, etc but the truth is that we are not in control. Things can happen in a moment in the blink of an eye that change our lives forever. Thankfully for us however, even though we are not in control we know who is.

Our text reminds us: **John 3:35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.**

It is the same hands which were stretched out on the cross for us which also hold the whole world.

So tonight, we consider **THE HAND OF THE LORD WHO HOLDS ALL THINGS**

In verse fourteen of our text Jesus reminds us about the bronze serpent in the wilderness. In that account the fiery serpents entered the camp of the people. Many were bitten and died. Things seemed out of control but the Lord was in control. They called to the Lord and the Lord had Moses make a bronze serpent. Whoever was bitten could look at the bronze serpent and they would be healed. The temptation of course

would be to run to the hospital or sit down and start sucking out the poison. But God was in control whoever trusted God's word and looked to the serpent would be saved.

Jesus also would be lifted up on the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus does not look to us like Jesus is in control. The Hebrews shouted at him, "If you are the Christ come down from the cross." But as Jesus reminded Nicodemus in our text: you speak of things you don't know, I know what I am talking about. God was in control when Jesus was crucified. This was God's plan from the foundation of the earth. This was his plan to bring salvation to us.

In our lives when things seem to be out of control and we wonder, "Where are you God?" Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent so also, we look on Jesus who was lifted up. There we see that God is in control even in suffering.

John the Baptist is almost always pictured pointing to Christ. This pointing to Christ is a reminder that Jesus is in control not us.

In our text John is a perfect example of what our attitude ought to be. More and more of his disciples were slipping away to follow Jesus. The crowds were dwindling. Yet, John didn't begrudge them following Jesus, he rejoiced. He confessed that he was not the Messiah. His purpose was to point people to Christ. He confessed that Christ was the one in control not himself. That pointing finger of John is a reminder to us also that our lives ought to always be pointed at Christ.

We often desire that our lives and everything in them point at ourselves. I want to maintain control. Instead, we ought to learn like John to always point to Jesus in all things. His hands are capable, ours are not.

Jesus is the one worthy to be in control of all things because he gave his life for us.

The text reminds us that the "**Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hands.**" At his baptism the Father declared that this is "**my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.**" Paul reminds us that because he willingly gave himself into death therefore "**God has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every other name.**"

Jesus is worthy to be the one who holds all things in his hands because he willingly died for our sins. He does not use his control or his power for himself but he "works all things for the good of those who love him."

We desire control of our lives for selfish reasons. We want to be in control so that we can get our way. We want our lucky jersey to help our team win. Jesus to whom all power was given uses that control for our sakes. We a good thing we are not in control and that Jesus is. **His hands are worthy to hold all things.**

Jesus holds all things in his hands especially our salvation.

When we talk about Jesus ruling over all things for good, we usually are thinking about earthly things: health, politics, disasters, food and clothing. But our text reminds us that Jesus holds all things in his hands, especially eternal life. Jesus holds our salvation in his hands and he gives it to us freely. He died and rose again, life and death are in his hands. They are his to give and to take. He chooses to give us life by his grace.

Stop lights and when the elevators close are not in your control. As much as we would like to believe otherwise our lives are not in our control. We do our best to plan for the future but who knows what tomorrow will bring. We are not in control, but we know him who is. The same hands that were stretched out on the cross hold your life and salvation. There is no need to worry or be anxious or spend our lives attempting to force control over our lives. Jesus holds us in his hands.

Isaiah 46:3-4 3 "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, Who have been upheld by Me from birth, Who have been carried from the womb: 4 Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you.