

Lenten Midweek 2  
Feb. 29, 2012  
His Holy Hands  
Matthew 27:35-42

It's an amazing sight to watch a baby learn how the world works. Sometimes a baby can spend a long time just looking at that strange thing at the end of his own arm, watching it move back and forth, up and down. Soon enough those hands are grabbing things left and right. Then the real fun begins. Those little hands start reaching for things and exploring the world. Plastic baby-proof plugs appear in the outlets to avoid a fork being stuck into an electrical outlet. Those plugs keep the baby safe from what those little hands may try to do.

Soon enough, those little hands get bigger and find bigger and more dangerous things to play with, such as pots and pans and glass plates. I took Neal to Nordstrom's when he was about 10 months old to buy Dänya some china to match our set. I was into the china department with the stroller by about 2 feet when Neal suddenly had two plates in his hands – Royal Dalton - \$125 a plate. I got the plates back unbroken. I really think I should have been a hostage negotiator. Later on, those hands put a rock through a window and holes through doors. Hands can get us into trouble.

Most of us have developed enough sense not to stick forks and knives into an outlet. And we know that touching a hot stove is a bad idea. There's another Neal story about that one that I will save for another sermon. In general, as adults, we take fairly good care of our hands. But it seems

sometimes that the only lesson we learned from the outlet and hot stove is not to hurt our own hands; but, using our hands to hurt another? That seems to be a different story altogether.

We find ourselves wrapping our hands around things that do not belong to us—maybe it was a cheat sheet for a class or a candy bar for which we did not pay. And our hands seem to feel so free to write a scathing e-mail or a tweet to put someone in his place, or at least where we think his place should be. If written words could physically kill, imagine how many people we would have murdered. Our fingers wrap themselves around a phone to call someone so we can talk behind someone else's back. By not stopping your hand, you may be destroying someone else's reputation. Our hands wrap around remote controls and find shows we are better off not watching because they fill our minds with either filth or drivel. Hands have been at the center of some of the darkest moments of our lives

A man covered with leprosy ran up to Jesus and said, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean" (Mt 8:2). In those holy hands of Jesus was the purity for which this man was looking. Jesus reached out and touched the man with his own hand and said, "I will; be clean" (v 3).

Men wrapped their hands around thorns and twisted them into the shape of a crown. With those hands, they shoved that crown down on Jesus' head and then hit him with a rod. With their hands, the soldiers put a cross on Jesus' back, and those holy hands of Jesus carried that cross all the way

to the spot where he would die. The soldiers grabbed hammers with their hands and put nails through his holy hands. And there he hung from his hands until he died. We use our hands to sin, and we wield the hammer as well. Our hands are leprous with sin and Christ reaches out to us as well and heals us.

Hands are an amazing gift from God. The opposable thumb may be one of his finest inventions. Whenever you are tempted to use the precious gift of these hands for sin, remember Jesus' hands. Remember the nail marks Thomas saw, the marks of the punishment that we deserve. With the weight of all our sins bearing down on him, Jesus hung on that cross.

But remember this. You and I did not put Jesus on the cross. The Romans did not put Jesus on that cross. Jesus put Jesus on that cross. He came to give his own flesh and blood to save us from all that we do with these hands. But wait, there is still more, because remember that Jesus' hands were raised from the dead. Jesus hands still live and since Jesus dwells in us through Baptism and the Lord's Supper, these sinful hands of ours are redeemed. These now are Jesus' hands; when we help someone who needs help, when we place money in the offering plate, when we lead a little child to the altar, when we play an instrument to praise God, when we fold them to pray. Jesus has forgiven us for our sin and redeemed our wicked hands for service to him. We are able to use these hands for good

because Jesus dwells within us and our hands become his hands – working to show love and forgiveness throughout our world.