



HANDS OF TIME



***“Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands upon us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands!”***

(Psalm 90:17)

Dear Opal,

In this letter, I wanted to begin by asking you to recall an instance prior to your husband's passing when you were feeling poorly and requested prayer just before I left your presence.

Since you were reclining in bed, I positioned myself beside you in a way that I could place my hand on your forehead as your concerns were laid at the feet of the Father. Thus, after requesting that his power sweep through your being in a way that would flood your soul with peace and energy to finish the earthly journey set before you, we both felt his Spirit move through our bodies and center itself deeply into your core.

In fact, when his mighty power entered your being, you cried out, "Oh, my!!!!" In addition, thinking your husband, Charles, was deeply sleeping, we both were astonished to find his eyes wide open due to having felt the Spirit in the room all around his bed.

In short, God touched you by using my hand as his instrument. Our prayer was answered in short order all because he loves you so dearly. Although you did not realize it at the time, he was preparing you for the departure of your beloved husband that occurred shortly after. Also, the request to outlive your husband that you had made earlier on had been answered by your precious Lord. He not only granted that but has allowed those of us that love you dearly to continue to enjoy your wisdom and energy.

As I contemplated this happening in your life, it was amazing to realize the Master's hands that so sweetly touched us were the very ones that also had healed the sick and downtrodden as he walked the highways and byways during the three years of his ministry on earth.

Then, in further examination of this miraculous occurrence, I visualized the example of what is expected of us that he demonstrated as he walked the dusty roads in his well-worn sandals day in and day out; actions that clearly set him apart from those claiming to be the messiah! Our Lord went against the teachings of the Law by associating with people labeled by the religious leaders as being untouchables and unclean. The act of connecting with them in any manner made the one doing the touching, unclean, as well. In Biblical times, it was believed

those classified as downtrodden in society were in this compromised position because of being punished for a committed sin. Everything from being poor to suffering from physical illness was viewed as a condition brought on by sinful behavior; thus, punishment straight from God. Consequently, when the compassion flowed from the heart of Christ like a crystal-clear stream from the desert, great multitudes followed him and he healed them all! The heat of fever, the lethargy of palsy, ramifications from leprosy, or the rage of madness were no match for the Jewish Messiah's power that came from the mighty hand of God! Down every path, throughout the villages and in every corner of the fields, the divine power of the Lord triumphed over evil. Pause and think for a moment how the people who suffered from years of disease and starvation reacted to the healing touch of his hands.

In the painting by James Tissot titled, "The Sick Awaiting the Passage of Jesus", the viewer is drawn along the dusty road lined with suffering people with such poignancy that it is even possible to hear the cries of those that are desperate for the touch of the Lord's hands. Knowing this, Jesus compassionately ministers to each one, never flinching, thus, providing a direct example for what is expected of his disciples, meaning us, as well.



Given the masses that sought the touch of his hands, it is no wonder he had to escape to quiet places during the night or in boats floating on the water with the purpose of communing with his Father in a time of restoration. Yet, since this interval alone in the presence of God was so critical to his existence, it was always a top priority; thus, never missed or ignored.

Opal, it is no surprise that Scripture is filled with the many junctures when Jesus used the Garden of Gethsemane as his favorite spot for periods of restoration and communing with God the Father; a location of extreme importance even though it was simply an olive grove.



Although in Matthew, Mark and Luke we can read about this garden as a very special place that Jesus went to find solace, there is a debate as to the exact location.

However, we do know that the word Gethsemane literally means “olive press” and that many oil presses were in caves because the temperature there allowed for better olive oil production and protection from the elements.

Also, it is well known that the cave of Gethsemane was large and found in excavations conducted in 1956-1957 as revealing a mouth to be that of 16 feet

wide. Further evidence was uncovered, as well, that showed as many as three olive presses had operated inside.

Thus, given this limited bit of information, is it any wonder that Jesus found it to be a place where he could simply get away from the masses of downtrodden for a time of rehabilitation?

When one allows the Spirit to center the human mind on possible conversations Jesus had with his loving Father during the wee hours of the morning, are you able as I to visualize the different positions he might have taken when crying out to the Lord because of what he was having to endure, as well as knowing in advance the torment he would face on the cross?

Opal, since our hands are often used to stress ideas we are trying to describe to others, how often do we use them in conjunction with the words that flow from our mouths? It is thought that when we determine that our spoken words are found lacking, we use our hands as a way of supporting our communication. The more insecure we are about our grasp of the human language, the stronger our desire to use the hands as a way of adding emphasis.

Since we know that Jesus was human as well as divine, he was no different than either of us when it came to using his hands. Whether he was frustrated, joyfully praising his Father, or receiving blessings and instructions from him, his hands had to be a central aspect of the communication process.

Given this, let us take a look at some beautiful paintings of Jesus as he was in the Garden of Gethsemane in conversation with God the Father. Since you will need assistance with your vision, Tim, your reader, will add emphasis as we view each.

As we focus on the following magnificent painting by James Tissot, we will note how the artist portrayed our Lord desperately reaching toward the Father, so much that he was on tiptoe with his arms extended as far above his head as possible and hands wide open. How marvelous to be that eager and dependent on our Creator for guidance.



"Christ Retreats to the Mountain" by James Tissot

Then, at other times, bearing the weight of delivering the message of the kingdom to his own people who had rejected him, the burden was so immense that he would drop to the feet of the Father in utter frustration and exhaustion.



“Midnight in the Garden” painting by James Tissot

Opal, when concentrating on Tissot’s painting titled, “Midnight in the Garden”, Jesus’ exhausted state is so obvious that those soaking in this horrible moment in which he finds himself internalize the hardships faced vividly transparent simply by viewing his hands. Leaning against a hard-stone wall, his right hand is behind his head as if placed with the purpose of preventing it from falling off, while the left hand is below his heart as if to keep it from breaking in half.

Certainly, as one soaks in the physical and mental anguish Jesus has endured at this point, even though we know from Scripture that he completed the journey, onlookers still find themselves wanting to offer a prayer for him.

Next, we view a painting of Jesus in the same garden that touches the heart of onlookers to the point of weeping right along with our Savior. Knowing the morrow would bring his crucifixion on the cross, suffering that he had witnessed throughout his time on earth that was so cruel that it eventually was outlawed, it is obvious that the painter, Vasily Perov, has personally internalized the dark night of the soul Jesus is enduring.

Alone in his agony, Jesus is prostrate on the ground with his arms outstretched and hands facing down in a totally dejected appearance. The darkest valleys faced during our time on earth cannot come close to this moment. Yet, he resolutely went to the cross as a sacrifice for our sin.



Vasily Perov, "Jesus In Gethsemane" 1878

John 14:12 lets us know in no uncertain terms what the disciples of Christ are to do for others using the words Jesus spoke: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."**

Opal, as I thought about the meaning of this Scripture, it brought to mind all the beautiful old hands I have beheld as a volunteer at the nursing home. Instead of viewing them as something to hide, in my eyes they are lovely, indeed. Hands of the old folks that are wrinkled and lined serve as a map of their

journey on this earth and signal to the onlooker that, although fragile at this juncture, they serve as a reminder of the contributions to others these sweet people have made along the way. Even though now calloused and twisted from arthritis, they are worn by precious individuals that have stories to tell about their journey. They belong to a generation of folks that understand it is more blessed to give than receive and now only ask for respect. Truly they are the beautiful “*Hands of Time*” that are representative of having finished the task set before them.

Thus, in this noisy world filled with chaos where many individuals focus on the seen rather than the unseen world, it is easy to overlook the fact that there are still committed Believers determined to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

In order to demonstrate this fact, please allow the hands of the following compassionate soldiers of Christ to be symbolic of loving their neighbors as themselves by delivering acts of kindness. As you view each hand, you will note the maps of their earthly journey are readily visible. It will be obvious that because they have taken up the cross of Jesus, not only do they have stories to tell, but are still ministering to others as they travel down the “*Road Home*”.



Activity Director Tim ministering to Opal

When Tim has finished his journey, having witnessed him in action for many years, this writer can tell you that the stories written on his hands will be accompanied with the faces of the old folks he comforted. Regardless of the condition of their aging bodies, his actions will have served as a soothing balm for their souls. When they were frightened, he massaged their foreheads. No matter their physical limitations due to disease or aging, he engaged them. Not a stone was left unturned when it came to the needs of the old folks he so dearly loved.



Music Director, Cheryll

This humble servant of the Lord has used her gift of music in a way that brings out the best in everyone with whom she works. Having no desire to be in the limelight, she allows the talented musicians she is directing to make a joyful noise to the glory of God. As she faces the choir members, it is a common practice for them to witness tears of joy flowing down her cheeks as the notes rise toward the heavens. The faces written on the map of her hand are truly a choir of angels that continue to deeply touch all those who worship the Lord in spirit and truth.



Ellie, A Student Serving The Lord

*Ellie is a young student that is a member of a Christian family dedicated to following in the footsteps of Jesus. Proverbs 22:6 that reads, **“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,”** best describes the values established by her loving parents.*

The picture above shows Ellie busily sewing masks to give to people to protect them from the virus. Her sweet hands, although still young, are already replete with stories of love and service to others. What a thing of beauty they will become when her journey on earth has been completed. And...this is just the beginning of her story.



Bradley, Organist

Having been blessed as a young child with the gift of music, Bradley humbly lifts praise to the Lord every Sunday that flows directly from the Holy Spirit. As his nimble fingers and feet move in a synchronized rhythm, onlookers observe him become one with the instrument. There is no need for written musical arrangements when the Spirit moves through his fingers. These hands were preordained to accompany God's people as they lift praises to the throne of all that is good.

Psalms 150:1-5

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

NIV: New International Version



Pastor Jim's Comforting Hands



*It is the hands of this man that people witness when facing a time of trial. In a soothing voice, he offers comfort through a humble prayer that is so intimate that each soul feels the soothing warmth straight from the throne of God. Understanding the plight that accompanies hardship, he sends the message that he is walking hand in hand with them down the pathway of pain and suffering. **Matthew 12: 20** best describes the verse that is found on the hand of this servant of Jesus that states, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory."*

***Mark 10: 45** also reads, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many," a verse that is the motto by which Pastor Jim lives as he ministers to all those in need.*



Prayer Warrior, Jeannie

The picture of Jeannie's hands above tells the entire story that is written in bold print on her palms. She is known throughout the community for her faith in the Lord and the tender manner with which she daily speaks to the Father. Matthew 5:16 is eternally stamped on the hands of this faithful follower of Christ stating, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

(This morning's prayer spoken to the Lord from Jeannie)

Dear Lord,

As I bow in your presence this morning and call you Master and Lord, I lift up your perfect name and thank you for everything I am, knowing everything I have is a blessing from you.

I ask for wisdom and strength to walk according to your perfect plan for my life today.

Thanking you and praising you for who you are and not what you can do for me.

Thank you for promising to be with me today.

In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen!



Let us complete our time together today by reading the words from the old hymn, “The Nail Scarred Hand”, composed by Benjamin McKinney that is a solution for all God’s children.

**1 Have you failed in your plan of your storm-tossed life?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand;
Are you weary and worn from its toil and strife?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand.**

**Chorus:
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand,
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand;
He will keep to the end, He’s your dearest friend,
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand.**

**2 Are you walking alone through the shadows dim?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand;
Christ will comfort your heart, put your trust in Him,
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand. [Chorus]**

**3 Would you follow the will of the risen Lord?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand;
Would you live in the light of His blessed Word?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand. [Chorus]**

**4 Is your soul burdened down with its load of sin?
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand;
Throw your heart open wide, let the Savior in,
Place your hand in the nail-scarred hand. [Chorus]**

Source: Baptist Hymnal 2008 #513



Love,

Colene