

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

“Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Come forward ... Stretch out your hand.’”

—The Gospel of Mark

By Ken Woodley

I was hopeful.

So very optimistic.

Perhaps, just maybe, I would get there before the store closed. Green light. Green light. Wonderful. I was making good time.

Green light.

Red light.

Now, I wasn't so sure.

The store closed at 6 p.m. and the clock in my car showed 5:59 as I pulled into a parking space right out front and hurriedly got out.

Whew! The store's lights were still on and I could see people inside. Employees were still there. I gave the door a push.

Drat! (Or worse). Locked.

I knocked, nearly pressing my face against the glass like a kid at Christmas. Good, someone saw me. Here he comes.

But instead of opening the door, the young man points to the store's hours, clearly shown on the door. “We're closed,” I hear him say through the glass. And then he turns around and walks away.

“But,” I begin to say, and then realize I have about as much chance of getting in that store as an armadillo looking for a reserved front-row seat at the Oscar awards.

They could have let me in so easily, but the hours of this store's operation were set in stone. They would not be bent for me, even for just one minute.

That is precisely the attitude Jesus confronts when challenged by the Pharisees for preparing to heal a man on the Sabbath. As far as those letter-of-the-law religious authorities are concerned the healing shop was and

should be closed. The hours of compassion were clearly displayed and there must be no deviation.

But Jesus isn't about rules, unless it's about breaking those that seek to assert human control over God's love and healing grace.

Jesus knew that the doors of love are always open, 24-7, every day of the week, each hour of the month, with no second of the year displaying a "closed" sign.

God's love isn't measured out in teaspoons and tablespoons. There is no minimum or maximum daily dose. What we truly need is what God truly gives.

God's Holy Spirit is always telling us to "Come forward" with whatever feels withered in our lives.

If we seek, we shall find, and if we knock the door shall be opened, just as Jesus said.

The answer will come. It may not always be in the exact way, shape or form that we expect. (It's best not to try to answer our own prayers by putting words in God's mouth, which I freely admit to having done more than once in my life.) But we can trust that an answer will come and that God will be with us as that answer unfolds in our lives.

So, let us confidently follow Jesus' advice and "stretch out" to God, confident that God is already stretching out to us.