

April 9, 2025 – Psalm 95:1-7a & John 3:11-18, 22-36

He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got the wind and the rain. He's got the little tiny baby. He's got you and me brother, you and me sister. He's got everybody here in His hands.

About a hundred years ago, hymnal publishers first heard this African American spiritual and decided it was a children song. Something you sing at VBS and Sunday School and around the camp fire. It makes sense. The words are simple. The tune is easy to learn. It's certainly works well enough as a children's song.

But, in truth, it's more than that. It's a confession. A confession of faith in the God who made heaven and earth. A confession of trust in the Lord who rules all things by His Word. A confession of hope in the One who holds not only the mountains and seas, but also our very lives—every moment, every breath—in His mighty and merciful hands.

Psalm 95 puts it plainly. *“In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land.”* The Creator holds His creation. From the deepest valley to the highest peak, from ocean floors to mountaintops, from past to present to future—everything is in His hands.

And so are you. Your whole life is in His hands. Not just your soul. Not just your Sunday mornings. Not just that little sliver of your life where spiritual things go. Your body, your time, your work, your family, your worries, your needs—your entire life is held by God.

And You are never outside His reach. You are never forgotten or forsaken. He holds you in love, even when you don't feel it. He holds you in wisdom, even when you don't understand it. He holds you in mercy, even when you don't deserve it.

But we struggle to believe that, don't we? We want to be in control. We are told that we should be in control. That if we just work hard enough, or think clearly enough, or plan far enough ahead, we can take charge of our lives. The illusion of control runs deep. It whispers that we are responsible for holding everything together. It says that we must be strong enough, smart enough, fast enough, to keep our world from falling apart.

And when things do fall apart—when plans fail, when health declines, when relationships are broken—we panic. We blame ourselves. We blame others. We blame God. Why didn't He fix it? Why didn't He stop it? Where is the God who holds the world?

That's when the words of John's Gospel become vital for us. *“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”* The Father has not surrendered the world to chaos. He has not given up on His creation. He has handed it over to His Son. All things are now in the hands of Jesus.

So what kind of hands are they? Well, they're certainly not the clenched fists of a tyrant or the scheming hands of a manipulator. They are hands that serve, hands that heal, hands that bless. They are hands that reach out to the unclean and the outcast. Hands that break bread and wash feet. Most of all, hands that bear the marks of nails.

At the cross, those hands seem weak. Empty. Jesus doesn't fight back. He doesn't grab power. He doesn't even try to save himself. He lets it all go—His dignity, His safety, His life.

But the cross isn't failure. It the fulfillment of everything Jesus intended to do Which means it is the opposite defeat. It's victory. It doesn't look like that to the world. From the outside, it doesn't look like God has the whole world in His hands.

But with the eyes of faith, we see something deeper, more important. We see the Lamb of God, lifted up for the life of the world. We see the Son of God, bearing the world's sin in His own flesh. We see the hands that hold the world stretched out in suffering—for us.

John the Baptist knew this. He didn't try to make himself the center. He didn't demand attention. He simply pointed. "*He must increase, but I must decrease,*" he says to us today. John's role was not to gather people around himself, but to direct them to Jesus. And when he saw Jesus baptizing, giving life through water and the Word, John rejoiced. "*A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.*" Everything is a gift. Everything good thing comes down from the Father through the Son.

So John speaks of the One who comes from above. The One who speaks the very words of God. The One to whom the Father has entrusted all things. And he draws the line clearly: "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*"

These are not abstract ideas. These are matters of life and death. Christ holds the world in His hands, and that means there is no neutral ground. Either you trust Him or you reject Him. Either you receive what He gives or you close your hands and say, "I'll do it myself." But to reject the Son is to reject life itself.

And yet, the Son has not come to condemn the world, but to save it. That's the heart of the Gospel. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" He didn't give Him reluctantly. He didn't give Him to judge. He gave Him to die. To rescue. To redeem. God sent His Son, not to crush the world under judgment, but to lift it up in grace. The hands that hold the world are not harsh. They are pierced. They are gentle. They are giving.

And they are still at work today. Jesus did not stop working after His resurrection. He didn't ascend into heaven to leave us alone. His hand is still at work in the Church. Still giving. Still baptizing. Still speaking. Still feeding. Through pastors He calls, through water He blesses, through bread and wine He nourishes, through the preaching of His Word He gives life and peace and forgiveness. The living Christ still holds His people.

And if Christ holds you, then you are safe. Your sins cannot pull you from His grip. Your doubts cannot break His promise. Your death cannot end His love. You are baptized into His name. You are marked by His cross. You are sustained by His gifts. And because He holds you, your hands are now freed. Freed from fear. Freed from guilt. Freed from the need to control. Freed to serve.

This is the beauty of the Christian life: your hands don't need to bear the weight of the world, because His hands already do. You don't need to prove your worth. You don't need to save yourself. You don't need to climb your way to God. He has already come down to you. He has given you a new identity, a new name, a new purpose.

Now, in Christ, your hands are free to serve your neighbor. Free to work faithfully in your calling. Free to care for your children, your spouse, your coworkers, your friends—not to earn God's favor, but because you already have it. Your vocation is not a burden to carry alone. It is a place where Christ works through you. And when you grow weary, when your hands fail, you return again to the hands that never fail—to Christ's hands, to His cross, to His Word, to His table.

He's got the whole world in His hands. That's not just something we sing. It's something we believe. It's something we rest in. It's something that shapes how we live, how we work, how we serve, and how we die. Because even in death, we are still in His hands.

So when you doubt, return to that promise. When you suffer, cling to that promise. When you fail, rest in that promise. And when you rejoice, give thanks to the One whose hands still hold you.

He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got your life in His hands. And in the end, He will raise you with His nail-scarred hands and bring you into the life that never ends. Amen.