

The Servant's New Direction (TIJ Mark 2:18-3:6) Pleasant Plains 3-15-2020PM *Nick Angel*

- ***READ Mark 2:15-17*** It is becoming increasingly obvious as we have worked our way through the Gospel of Mark that opposition and resistance to Jesus has been growing. This is especially true for those who belonged to the established religious leadership of the time. This text we just read together is the second of many instances within this section of Mark's Gospel where the Scribes and Pharisees simply aren't ok with how Jesus is going about His business. Nearly every single thing Jesus did was met with some sort of retort or accusation.
- This was true of Jesus telling the lame man that his sins were forgiven. **(2:1-12)** It was true when Jesus took the time to eat with tax-collectors and sinners. **(2:13-17)** And it is going to be true in our text this evening as we look at questions concerning fasting and what can be done on the Sabbath. I am convinced that all of these instances being made into big deals had to do with the fact that Jesus had arrived on the scene and had shaken things up. The leadership sees this young new rabbi speaking with different authority, and all they can think of is that they're at risk of losing their influence.
- The reality is that Jesus had brought a new direction to the people of God. He was prepared to take out the old and bring in the new through His kingdom being established. Let's use our time this evening looking at these three different occasions where Jesus and/or His disciples are challenged so that we can come to understand on a deeper level the Servant's New Direction for God's people.

I. Jesus Challenged Concerning Fasting (Mark 2:18-22)

A. The Situation & Conflict: The disciples of Jesus are questioned by people as they observed that they were not fasting like the disciples of John or the Pharisees. **(2:18)**

1. Under the Law of Moses, there was only one absolute command for fasting, and it can be found in **Leviticus 16:29** concerning the Day of Atonement. On the tenth day of the seventh month, all of Israel was to practice self-denial in association with their atonement. Yet, this was not the practice that was being questioned by the people observing Jesus's disciples.
2. More than likely, these people were questioning why it was that Jesus's disciples didn't follow the traditions of the Pharisees for they had established their own traditions that included regular weekly fasting. Jewish history tells us that they had established the tradition of fasting on Mondays and Tuesdays of every week. These people see those seemingly pious disciples practicing fasting on the regular, but Jesus's disciples were not. What gives? Could it be that Jesus's disciples simply weren't as religiously minded as these others?

B. Jesus's Response: Jesus uses three examples to show that things were changing in the world around them. He first explains through example of the wedding that it was a time for rejoicing. Part of that rejoicing stemmed from a new age that He was bringing about through the establishment of His kingdom. He helps to illustrate this with the examples of the new/old cloth & new wine with old wineskins. **(2:19-22)**

1. In order to show that there was no need for such fasting at the present time, Jesus uses the example of a wedding feast. While we might think that our wedding celebrations can be quite a party...they are nothing compared to what a first century wedding was like. Whereas our weddings are usually single day events, Jewish weddings were town or village wide events that could last for a week or even longer! It was a real party that was overflowing with joy and celebration. This is how Jesus wanted them to see His being with them at this time. He was the Bridegroom and right now was a great time of rejoicing and not mourning or sorrow!
2. Now contrast that with the disciples of John. They were in a time of mourning and sorrow because their teacher had been taken away from them. Their fasting was appropriate, but this wasn't the case of the disciples of Jesus. Jesus seems to allude to a time when He would be taken away and fasting would be appropriate, but this simply wasn't that time.

3. When we add in His mentioning of the cloths and wineskins, we are left realizing that Jesus seems to be emphasizing the joy of His arrival is because of the newness of what He is bringing to God's people. He speaks of the cloths and wineskins to show that what He was bringing was entirely new and not just a patch for something that needed fixing. He was bringing an entirely new salvation through His name and blood, and it would replace the current system they were under which would explain by the current religious leadership had such a problem with what was being done by Jesus. The entire book of Hebrews does an excellent job in showing the newness to what He was bringing. His ways were not a patch for the cloths of the old ways, and His new wine couldn't be contained in old wineskins. His new ways were truly new ways and a new direction to lead people to God which He desired for them to understand was a cause for rejoicing and celebration...not sadness and fasting.

II. Jesus Challenged Concerning Picking & Eating Grain On The Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28)

A. The Situation & Conflict: The disciples of Jesus are picking grain and eating them as they passed through the grainfields. The Pharisees accuse them of breaking the laws of the Sabbath Day. **(2:23,24)**

1. The next two situations focus on events that took place on the Jewish holy day of the Sabbath. Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grainfield, and as they are doing so...some of His disciples were picking heads of grain. They would put the heads in their hands, rub them together as a hand sifter, and then pick out the grain to eat as a snack.
2. The Pharisees took quick notice of this and brought it to Jesus's attention. They were certain that Jesus's disciples had broken the laws of the Sabbath day, and they needed an explanation for why a rabbi such as Himself would allow such a thing.

B. Jesus's Response: Jesus responds reminding the Pharisees that their hero David had broken divine laws concerning eating the bread of Presence. Yet, they recognized David's anointed position and excused him for this. How much more did they fail to recognize Jesus's anointed position as the "Son of Man?" He was the very Lord of the Sabbath! **(2:25-28)**

1. Depending on the Gospel account we are reading, we might take different a different emphasis away. The accounts of Matthew and Luke seem to put the emphasis on the burden that the Pharisees had turned the Sabbath into. By that, I mean that within their Mishnah there were 39 specific acts that Jewish tradition forbade on the Sabbath day. This was all built upon the command of **Exodus 34:21** that simply states, "*You are to labor six days but you must rest on the seventh day, you must even rest during plowing and harvesting times.*" They had taken a simple command and turned into some complex thing that God never intended.
2. We might draw that conclusion that the disciples simply were not doing anything wrong, but I believe that Jesus is doing something different here by simply addressing what David had done that is recorded in **I Samuel 21:1-6** as David had taken the bread of Presence that was reserved only for the priest, gave it to the soldiers with him, and ate it all on the Sabbath. Jesus admits that David had done something unlawful...and yet we find the Jewish leaders revering David and probably even rationalizing what he had done since he was the anointed king of Israel. In this seems to be Jesus's point.
3. We need to keep in mind that Mark's mission in this Gospel is to simply show that Jesus Christ surely is the Son of God for the benefit of people acknowledging Him as such. This is the problem Jesus identified within the hearts of the Pharisees. They elevated David to the place where he could be excused, but they failed to see the position that Jesus occupied as the Son of God. This is the reason why Jesus flat out states, "*So then, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*" Jesus truly had all authority, but the Jewish leaders refused to acknowledge it. The new anointed King of God's kingdom had arrived, and He had all power over the Sabbath.

III. Jesus Challenged Concerning Miraculous Healings On The Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)

A. The Situation & Conflict: The Pharisees follow Jesus into the temple to see whether or not he would heal on the Sabbath day. They were hoping for another opportunity to accuse Him of “breaking” the Sabbath. **(3:1,2)**

1. Just as we see Jesus doing time and time again, He enters the temple and comes into contact with a man who has a withered hand. Instead of everyone waiting in great anticipation for an incredible miracle to take place, there are some of the Pharisees who were there simply hoping that Jesus would heal on the Sabbath in order to accuse Him.
2. It seems as if their following of Jesus has shifted since we first seem them on the scene in chapter 2. Whereas they had probably initially come to Jesus to simply investigate Him, they now seem to be following Him to find something on which they can accuse Him of wrongdoing in order to disparage His name and influence over the Jewish people. They want for Jesus to “mess up”, and Jesus is fully aware of their hearts’ intent.

B. Jesus’s Response: Jesus is grieved over the hardness of the hearts of the Pharisees because they could not even answer whether it was lawful to do good and save a life on the Sabbath Day. Again, the Pharisees were missing the point of the Sabbath. **(3:3-6)**

1. With everyone gathered together around Him, Jesus asks a question. *“Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” (3:4)* We would all probably see this as a no-brainer question, but somehow no one around was able to give the easy answers to these questions, and it causes Jesus to be very upset. *“After looking around at them with anger, He was grieved at the hardness of their hearts...” (3:5)*
2. What was the hardness of their hearts preventing them from seeing? Surely it was the fact that the Sabbath day was originally given as a blessing to the people of God. It was a day when they were able to take time away from the business of life, spend time in worship, spent time with family, and think together upon all of the good that God had done for them. They could think about the fact that they were no long slaves in Egypt. They could think about God’s incredible miracles over Egypt. They could think upon the deliverance through Red Sea. All of this and so much more was provided through the ideal of the Sabbath, but the people had corrupted it by turning it into a burden.
3. Jesus was providing a perfect opportunity of them to think upon God’s goodness, grace, and mercy through the healing of this man’s hand and they couldn’t even bring themselves to admit this was a good thing! How hard their hearts must have been, and how sad it is to see clear cut good works by the hands of God being rejected because they had lost sight of the blessing that the Sabbath was supposed to be for mankind. **(2:27)** Even worse is the fact that the Pharisees took this opportunity to run and begin to make plans with usual enemies in the Herodians as to how they could stop Jesus and put him to death.

IV. Application Questions

A. Do we rejoice because of the new salvation that Jesus has made possible through the giving of His life?

1. To me, it seems abundantly clear that Jesus expects for His people to see His kingdom as a place in which they ought to rejoice because of the love of God that experience in Him. Paul says in **Philippians 4:4,5**, *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”* Would we consider ourselves as joyful people, or are we always looking for something to complain or be upset about?
2. If we continually find ourselves complaining or being upset then can we say that we are living with the joy that Paul says we ought to live with? I would suggest that our lack of joy might be a sign that we don’t truly value our salvation or hope as we ought to. How can anyone who

has received the forgiveness of sins and hope of eternal glory live with anything other than a joyful disposition? That doesn't mean that there won't be times when we are sad or upset, but those times shouldn't be our norm! We certainly shouldn't be looking for reason to be upset like the Pharisees were! We need to embrace what Jesus has done for us and allow the joy it produces to be evident to everyone who we are around on a daily basis.

B. Are we willing to embrace the full Sabbath rest that Jesus has established as the Lord of the Sabbath?

1. The Pharisees and other religious leaders had corrupted the Sabbath by turning it into a burden instead of seeing it as the blessing that it was. Could it be that we are guilty of the same by not embracing the grace of Jesus that provides us a great Sabbath rest from the dominion of sin in this life and eternal glory in the next life?
2. Could it be that we have not embraced a life of righteousness even though Jesus has been crowned as King of our lives through obedience to the Gospel? If we haven't put forth great effort to live with that rest from sin then we haven't embraced Jesus's true Sabbath rest. And of course, this is all done so that we can enter into that final rest reserved in eternity.

"Therefore, since the promise to enter His rest remains, let us beware that one of you be found to have fallen short." (Hebrews 4:1) May God help us to realize the rest His Son provides and seek to fully embrace it within our lives now so we can enjoy it eternally in the next life to come.

One might think that the Son of God would come to earth and be fully supported and accepted by those whom He created, but we have seen this simply isn't the case, and much of this can be attributed to Jesus implementing a new direction for the people of God. He desired to bring joy and celebration, but people only wanted to mourn. He came as a King, but many denied His authority. He came to do good, but people were so backwards that they refused to approve of those good things. May we be a people who learn from their mistakes and embrace Jesus for who He is as described by Mark, **"The Lord even of the Sabbath"** and more importantly the Lord of our lives.

"Then He told them, 'The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. So then, the Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath.'" (Mark 2:27,28)