

JOY & REST
Mark 2:18-28

INTRODUCTION

Relaxation

- What do you do to relax?
- List off some hobbies.
- I'll never understand golf as relaxing.

Context

- Last week, Jesus called sinners.
 - Levi – tax collector
- Now, we focus on Pharisees.
- The hyper-religious crowd. They were always confused, and scandalized by Jesus.
- Why? They wanted to earn their own place before God. They wanted to achieve their identity—work for it. But being a follower of Jesus isn't an identity that's achieved—it's received.

Three headings:

1. WHO JESUS IS
2. WHAT HE CAME TO DO
3. WHAT HE HAS TO OFFER

1. WHO HE IS

Explanation – Pharisees

- *v. 18 – 18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting*

- Generally, a good practice.
- Deprivation of food for the purpose of prayerful dependence upon God.
- Removing something our physical life depends on in order to weaken our attachment to the stuff of earth, that we might take more pleasure in God alone.
- Pharisees had taken a practice that was used for dependence upon God and had mutilated it into a practice for pious showboating and divine manipulation.
 - Mandated 2x a week – created law where there was no law.
 - Taken a private devotional act and turned it into a public exhibition.
 - Powder faces white and ashes on their head.
 - Worst of all—they weren't doing any of it in order to wean themselves from the stuff of earth—they did it to receive the admiration and respect of others.

Two Applications

- Older Christians, a good reminder that you should never make your unique practice of devotional habits the standard for everyone else around you.
- New Christian, or struggling Christian, don't over task yourself, thinking that loads of extra Christian busy work get you out of a spiritual rut. Jesus said that walking with him—wearing his yoke ought to be easy and sweet—don't make it overly burdensome.

Explanation – The Bridegroom

Second half of 18:

And people came and said to him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 19 And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

Notice who asks the question: the people. They’re watching the religious leaders fast. They’re watching the followers of the new prophet, John—they’re fasting too.

“Why don’t you and your disciples fast?”

Don’t you love how Jesus answers their question with a question?

“Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

He wants to get them thinking. He’s saying, “You haven’t thought deeply enough about who I am.”

What does it mean that Jesus is the bridegroom?

- For the people who asked the question, Jesus’ response was freighted with meaning—listen, both **cultural** meaning and **theological** meaning.
- After an ancient Jewish wedding, the couple did not honeymoon, but stayed at home for a week of open house in which there was continual feasting and celebration.
- For the working class, this would have been the only occasion in the entire year when they put down their work. No vacations to the OBX.
- For the hardworking, this was traditionally considered to be the happiest week in their lives.

Now, they would have understood all of that about a wedding—when there’s a wedding, you stop everything and you feast.

But where was the wedding? Jesus calls himself the bridegroom—but where is he bride?

And here’s the theological significance: **Throughout the OT prophets God constantly promised that he would be a husband to his people, and they he would prepare for them a feast.**

Hosea 2:

““Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’

“And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord. “And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’ ”

Or consider Isaiah 25:

“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”” (Isaiah 25:6–9, ESV)

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He's saying, "I am the one. I'm the bridegroom. In my coming to earth, I'm casting out demons, I'm healing the sick. I'm inviting sinners to come and be clean."

Now friends—imagine see all that Jesus did. All the healing, all the grace, all of the mercy towards sinners... •

Imagine seeing the transforming power of a kingdom which makes lame men walk and blind men see and thinking it's not an occasion for joy. That's one of the chief sins of the Pharisees. Instead of rejoicing in Christ, they traded beauty for ashes, laughter for tears, & grace for law.

Application: Joy Unspeakable

Elaborate.

We need to experience and express the deep abiding joy of being seated at the table.

There is still time for fasting... but not without the hope of that future table.

2. WHAT HE CAME TO DO

²¹ No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

Strange, enigmatic illustration. How does it all fit together? What's he saying?

Explain the bare image:

- Cloth, torn, patch. Contraction
- Wine, fermentation, bottles, expansion.

Because Jesus has come—the covenant God made with Israel through Moses has reached termination—it's culmination. It's fulfillment. Jesus represents everything the Old Covenant pointed towards.

- Temple – place where God would dwell with man.
- Prophet – the one who speaks the truth to God's people and prepares the way for the Messiah.
- Priest – the one who stands between God and man represents the people before the Lord.
- Sacrifice – the atoning sacrifice that stayed God's hand from destroying sinners.
- King – the ruler who would lead God's people.

All of those Old Covenant forms culminate in Christ. And therefore, Jesus is setting aside the Old Covenant and making a New Covenant.

Listen to the words of Jeremiah 31:31 and following:

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will

be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

So, what do these two analogies mean? The torn cloth and the wine?

Jesus is saying to the people who came asking the question: here's what I came to do—I came to make a New Covenant.

And if you try to walk with me, you must walk with me according to this New Covenant, not the Old. And if you try to walk with me yet live according to the Old Covenant your life will be like filling an old, crusty wine bottle with the headiest, new wine and you'll burst. You won't be able to contain the wine, and your own life will be undone.

Application:

3. WHAT HE HAS TO OFFER

²³ One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: ²⁶ how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" ²⁷ And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Explanation: Sabbath

- Jewish Sabbath – 7th day of the week (Saturday) cessation from work and dedicated to worship.
- Rooted in Gen. 3 – God worked 6 days to create and he rested on day 7.
- Yet again, the Pharisees had created rules where there were no rules.
- You couldn't harvest a field on Sabbath but grabbing a handful of corn cobs could hardly be described as harvesting a field.

Jesus 3 explanations:

- David - authority
- Man was not made for the Sabbath.
- Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath.

Application:

This passage is where Jesus began to take the OT Sabbath and transform it for the Christian church—God's people in the New Covenant.

A few changes:

- First, the Sabbath changes from being just a day—to becoming a person. Jesus Christ.
- Day of the Week – Saturday to Sunday
- Old Covenant – work to rest. New Covenant – Rest to Work
- We still keep the Sabbath. – Sunday is a reminder that we aren't home yet.