

April 8, 2017 – Elmont Baptist Church

Message Series: The Gospel of Mark

Week 12: “...And Jesus Said...”

Text: Mark 2:18-22

We have launched into unpacking and understanding the Book of Mark. By the time we are done, we will have read every verse and unpacked every passage. Here’s a little background – the author is Mark, or John Mark. Mark served as Peter’s interpreter, and is giving us Peter’s account of the life and ministry of Jesus. This book was written about AD 53-57, making it the first of the four Gospels to be written and the fifth earliest book in the New Testament to be written.

Mark’s audience is Romans believers, and as theologian Danny Akin says, “he is telling them that Jesus is the Messiah King and suffering servant who actively ministers on our behalf and gives his life as a ransom for many.”

We’ve said over the past few weeks that Mark records more miracles and actions of Jesus than direct teachings and parables, but, as we’ve see the last two weeks, whenever Jesus is doing anything, He is teaching us something. Today Jesus teaches directly as He is answering a question. He is most likely still at Levi’s (Matthew) house at the party that he threw after Jesus called him to “Follow Me”.

Q & A with Jesus:

✓ **A Religious Question – v. 18**

- **About fasting in ritual**
- **To earn favor or escape trial**

Fasting as ritual – Old garment/old wineskins – Commanded once a year in OT Law. Pharisees raised the bar to twice a week.

To earn or escape – OT Law was meant to show our complete hopelessness without a Savior, but they saw it as a mission to accomplish outwardly with no change inwardly. Fasting became a way to try to earn God’s approval or leverage God to work on their behalf to keep bad things from happening. Jesus’ response communicates that a radical shift in their thinking needs to take place.

✓ **A Relational Response – v. 19-22**

- **About rejoicing in Christ**
- **By grace even through trial**

The religious leaders didn’t rejoice in the healing of the paralytic or the salvation of the lost. Instead of rejoicing in Jesus’ miracles they rebuked Jesus because of their misery. They were doing way more than all the right things outwardly, but were inwardly miserable.

Rejoicing in Christ – Jesus is not anti-fasting. He fasted for 40 days, but His focus in His response is a relationship, not a ritual. Like the people of that day, we are very prone to worship our rituals/preferences, rather than the God they are to point us to. That is why we cannot measure our maturity by our habits/religious practices, but rather by the fruit of the Spirit. Here, in particular, Jesus is feasting rather than fasting. Rejoicing is as much a discipline as fasting is. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, not a response to circumstances. And rejoicing is a command. In 2 Cor 6:10, Paul described his life “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”. This is delighting in your connection to Jesus and all He is for you, rather than living at the mercy of your situation. So, if you fast, it is no longer a tool to leverage God in your favor, but it is a worshipful response to Him being more satisfying than the appetite of your flesh that you are denying. So this means you can be joyful, or rejoice...

By grace even through trial – Prob for us – as John Piper says, “You can’t enjoy a God that you are not sure is for you.” Until we are convinced that God is really for us – not constantly frustrated with us, disappointed with us, angry with us, unfair to us – we will not be able to enjoy and rejoice in Him through the deepest valleys and biggest hurts. If we don’t delight and rejoice in Him, then we end up doing religious things outwardly, but inwardly we’re miserable, and become much more likely to give into temptation, because many things look more satisfying than Jesus.

Bottom line:

Rejoicing should be the norm of our lives. Not a superficial happiness that avoids reality, but a deep hope that God through Jesus will make good on every promise He has made in love to you. If you are a Christ-follower, you are a daughter or son of the most joyful being in existence. Our God is a joyful God! And He is for you! Learning and training to enjoy this God and the gifts He has given and help others to enjoy Him is the mission of your life. That’s discipleship – enjoying God and teaching others to do the same.

Thinking it Through...

- ✓ **Is there something you are doing to serve God outwardly, but inwardly you are miserable?**
- ✓ **What are doing on a regular basis to grow your enjoyment of God through Christ?**
- ✓ **How are you helping others learn to enjoy God through Christ?**

Storying Mark 2:18-22

This passage is the first teaching/parable content from Jesus in Mark's account. Before this we are told that Jesus preached or taught, but we don't have extended content. Thinking about this being Peter's account, it is interesting that this is the first teaching/parables that he includes.

- **Questions**

- **Observation:** (emphasize that these are rather obvious answers)
 - What two groups are fasting or fast regularly?
 - Who is asking Jesus the question?
 - Can we tell anything about the tone of the question? (just asking vs accusatory as in 2:7 & 2:16)
 - What 3 illustrations does Jesus use to answer this question?
- **Interpretation:**
 - Why might John's disciples be fasting? (Luke 3:20)
 - Why/When did the Pharisees fast? (Matt 6:16-18; Luke 18:12)
 - What would be sole responsibility of the guests at wedding celebration during that time?
 - What were to motivations of the religious crowd in their fasting? (to earn approval or receive blessing)
 - What does Jesus point to in His response as the focus of our fasting (or other disciplines)? (enjoying our relationship with Him)
- **Application:** Use the "Thinking it Through" questions as needed
 - When you think about spiritual disciplines, what comes to mind?
 - How does the thought that spiritual disciplines are meant to increase your joy in Jesus change the way you see them?
 - Do you think of God as the most joyful being that will ever be?