

When Jesus Breaks the Rules

(Mark 2:18-22)

(preached 9/21/14 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Recently, Tonya and I were thinking about buying a new TV until we walked into Best Buy and saw the prices...

Then we decided that the one we have is just fine.

But what stunned me is that we actually weren't in the section of the store where the new TVs are.

IF you didn't know, the absolutely brand new TVs are actually curved and incredibly big.

You are really buying a movie screen when you purchase one...

One of the most expensive is a 78" LED Ultra HD Smart 3D HDTV model by Samsung that sells for \$7,998.

Now, imagine purchasing this TV, which you would need to finance for 30 years and bringing it home.

You carefully carry it in the house, unpack it, set it up in the living room.

And then attach it some rabbit ears and watch channels 10, 19,25, 57 and PBS.

You pay 8,000 for a TV that will only broadcast 5-6 channels.

That would be silly.

IF you could afford the TV, you would have cable or satellite to pick up as many channels as possible.

Putting rabbit ears on the newest TV is a ridiculous idea.

It would be like building a new house and putting in rotary phone with a long cord.

(For the younger generation, there were corded phones.)

The general principle is that new goes with new.

Now, I do understand that the new trend is to put old worn out furniture in new homes.

But the general practice is to combine new with new.

That's why rabbit ears on huge curved screen TVs makes little sense.

However, there is always a problem associated with this...

As a fallen people, we don't respond well to technology.

We try to hold on to our traditions.

We resist change.

Often, we take change personally.

And here is how that sounds, "Well, that may be fine for you, but I'll do it my way."

Or, "This has worked for hundreds of years. There is no sense in changing now."

And for most issues, it is a big deal at all.

If you want to be traditional, that's fine.

If you want to change, that's fine as well.

And to be totally honest, I am a little of both.

There are some things where I love change.

And there are some things where I love tradition.

And I can usually get along with people of both preferences.

However, this issue can cause great division among people at times.

And that is never more evident when we look at the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament.

On one side, you have the traditionalists of the Pharisees.

And on the other side, you find the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man.

And these two will clash throughout the rest of Mark's gospel.

And before you think I am picking on those who value tradition...

And before those of you who love change think that Jesus is on your side...

Let me say this...

Tradition is only bad when the tradition becomes more important than the God of the Scriptures.

And change is only good when the change results in a return to the God of the Scriptures.

And that is the central issue when we see change clash with tradition in the gospels.

The Pharisees had made tradition and outward obedience more important than heart-centered worship.

God has always been a God who is more pleased with inward obedience than outward displays of worship.

Hosea 6:6...

*⁶ For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offering*

God has no use for external religion if your heart is not in it.

Why come to church if you would rather be somewhere else?

Your church attendance is worthless in God's eyes if your heart is far away.

Why avoid the sins of the world if you do it with a frown?

And that was the practice of the Pharisees and the Jews of Jesus day.

It was all outward religion with no inward change.

Truthfully, not much has changed even to this day.

Churches are filled with people even today who want to be seen as holy, but no interest in actually being holy.

2 Tim 3:1-5

3 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, ^[a] haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of ^[b] godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

A form of godliness is a reference to an outward display of religion without any inward change.

That will mark the last days, and it is very true of the day in which we live.

We are a society that is obsessed with outward everything.

We want that look in everything.

Our homes, our cars, our clothes.

The sad thing that is that this look has invaded the church.

There are plenty of young couples who go to church because it is fashionable.

There are plenty of old couples who go because that's what they have always done.

There are plenty of people who go because they want a good reputation in the community.

There are plenty who go because it is good for business.

And in the text we are going to look at this morning, we are going to see these people up close.

Because the truth of the world is that there have always been people who want to look religious.

But have no interest in God at all.

And when Jesus comes on the scene and begins to tell that their human traditions are worthless...

He enrages these people.

And they won't be satisfied until he is dead.

Look with me at Mark 2:18 – 22.

*¹⁸ John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they *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, “While the bridegroom is with them, ^[U]the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

²¹ “No one sews ^[m]a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise ^[n]the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

The point of these 5 verses is that Jesus changes everything.

And we will see two ways in which Jesus changes the worthless religion of the Pharisees.

First, Jesus Brings a New Celebration

Second, Jesus Brings a New Covenant

First, let’s look at the New Celebration in verses 18-20...

I. Jesus Brings a New Celebration (v 18-20)

Verse 18...

18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they *came and *said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

For those of you who haven't been here, we have been moving through the gospel of Mark verse by verse for the last two months...

The gospel of Mark along with the Matthew, Luke and John are simply the accounts of Jesus life through different writers inspired by God.

Mark is the shortest of all the gospels and he was writing to Gentiles like us.

We have already seen the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

He has been baptized and tempted in the wilderness.

And then we have watched him preach and teach, but mainly we have watched him be distracted...

As the crowds come seeking Him to heal their disease and cast out demons.

For the past two weeks, we have watched him do two things that have broke with all tradition...

Jesus' first outrageous act was to forgive the sins of a paralyzed man.

Which enraged the Pharisees who thought that forgiveness of sin only came through good works.

Then we watched him call a crooked tax collector to follow him.

Which in a religion of good works is crazy.

A tax collector not only has an absence of good works, he is full of bad works.

And to top it off, Jesus goes and celebrates with Levi in a house full of tax collectors.

So, in this context of celebration and feasting, Jesus is asked a question about fasting.

John's disciples would be a reference to followers of John the Baptist.

Who was a forerunner to Jesus.

He had preached a message of repentance in preparation for Jesus' arrival...

And many had come to the wilderness to be baptized by John.

He had developed a following, yet they still practiced the religion that they had always known.

Which was the religion of the Pharisees.

A religion of outward devotion and following the law.

And part of this tradition was that it required its followers to fast twice a week.

Now, what is interesting to note is that if you search the Old Testament, you will find no such requirement.

The only required fast was once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Jews were not to eat on that day as an outward sign of their grief over their sin....

And to look forward to a Messiah who would one day remove their sin completely.

That was the only requirement of the OT.

However, the Pharisees in an effort to look more devout and holier required fasting twice a week.

This is the foundation of legalism.

Take a commandment and move it way beyond what was intended.

I could preach a whole sermon on this, but the ugliness of legalistic religion is that it takes a joy and makes it a burden.

For instance, are there obscene books and forms of entertainment?

Yes.

The principle is to be wise in your choices in these areas.

The legalist says burn all the books and throw out your TV....

And adds this...

“If you don’t do what I do, you aren’t as holy as me.”

The principle of the Scriptures is modest dress for Christian women.

That means be wise is what you choose to wear ladies, looking out for your brothers in Christ.

The legalist gives you a list of approved attire...

And adds this...

If you don’t wear what I wear, you aren’t as holy as me.

Well, that is what had happened here.

The requirement was to fast once a year, and the legalistic Pharisees had turned that into two fasts a week....

And added....

If you don't fast twice a week , you aren't as holy as me.

And the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting every Monday and every Thursday.

And so the question is asked to Jesus, why don't your disciples fast?

And though I am speculating here, I bet this party with the tax collectors was happening on a Monday or Thursday.

Here are the Pharisees and John's disciples outside and hungry having gone all day without food..

And there is Jesus and his disciples feasting with tax collectors rather than fasting.

Why are they fasting?

Don't they want to be considered holy?

Don't they want to fast to show grief over sin?

Don't they want to fast as a way to look forward to Messiah?

And so we see Jesus answer in verse 19...

19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, ^Uthe attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

Jesus uses an illustration that they would all be familiar with.

Though Judaism required two fasts a week, there were exemptions.

For instance, if you were attending a wedding feast on a Monday or Thursday, you could eat.

And Jewish weddings were week long events of feasting and celebrating.

And Jesus says, "IF you were a groomsman for the groom, you wouldn't fast at any of those meals."

You would eat and celebrate the occasion.

Weddings are not somber and sad occasions, they are opportunities to eat and celebrate with friends.

Remember the required fast on the day of atonement is for grief over sin and to long for the coming Messiah.

Well, I am here.

Forgiveness of sin is available.

Didn't you see me forgive the sins of the paralytic?

Messiah has come.

No more sadness.

No need to fast.

I am here among you.

I am the groom celebrating with my groomsman.

Why would you fast looking for Messiah?

I am here.

And this is the sadness of ritualistic, legalistic religion.

IT misses the forest for the tress.

It loves rules.

It follows rules at all cost.

It is blinded by rules.

It fact, the religion of the Pharisees was so blinded by rules that it couldn't see God standing right before them.

I worked in a restaurant for 5 years.

A family owned business.

And we had rules that we were to follow as employees.

One rule that the owner was strict to enforce was 25 cents for all refills.

HE had eyes like a hawk and he could spot someone doing it.

I got in trouble numerous times for not catching someone doing it.

Well, one day, the owner was running a register and one of his friends came to give him a quarter for the refill.

He told him to just keep it.

I was outraged.

We have rules.

You broke the rules.

The truth is that the soft drink was his to give away if he pleased.

HE owned it, but I didn't.

That's the outrage here.

Jesus, you and the disciples aren't following the rules.

But Jesus is saying that the fast pointed to me.

And now you have me, so don't fast, but rejoice!!

Then he adds in verse 20....

²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

This is the first preview of Jesus' death in the gospel of Mark.

The groom will leave through a violent death, and then you will fast in your grief.

But even that fasting will be cut short when Jesus is resurrected.

After Jesus rises from the dead and appears to the disciples, in Luke 24, we see Jesus eat a piece of broiled fish.

The disciples were so grief stricken at his death that they had most likely remembered his words here and fasted.

But now that Jesus is resurrected, he eats before them to say, the grief is over.

I am risen.

Which leads to another question for us today?

Should we fast?

Since this isn't the point of this passage, I only want to say this.

There is no instruction to fast in the NT.

If you fast as a way to show your dependence on God, that is great.

If you choose not to fast, that is also great.

Fasting is one of those areas of Christian that needs to remain between you and the Lord.

IF you fast, don't announce it to the world.

You have seen this before I'm sure.

“Would you like something to eat?”

“No, I’m fasting. Trying to be more like Jesus. He fasted 40 days. So I’m doing it too.”

If you choose to fast and it helps you in your walk with the Lord, fast by all means.

If you choose to fast as a way to display your spirituality, you are no different than the Pharisees in this passage.

Verses 18-20 teach us that fasting is silly when you have the Lord of the fast with you.

Why fast to point to the Lord when you can feast with Him in his presence.

So, Jesus changes everything because he brings a New Celebration....

Then in verses 21-22, Jesus changes everything because He brings a New Covenant...

II. Jesus Brings a New Covenant (v 21-22)

Verse 21 – 22...

²¹ “No one sews ^[m]a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise ^[n]the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

What we have here is simply a short parable...

An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Just like the rabbit ears on a brand new curved TV, Jesus is simply saying that the old just doesn't fit with the new.

The first example is putting a new cloth patch on an old garment.

Let's say you have an old beige suit.

You have worn a hole in the knee of the suit.

So, you go to the store and find the exact suit.

Come home, cut a hole in the knee of the new suit and sew it on the old suit.

Well, you were dumb in two ways.

First, you had a brand new suit that you just ruined.

You should have just worn it.

But two, you haven't fixed the old suit.

Not only does it have a visible patch, but when you wash it, the patch will shrink and...

Make a bigger whole in the knee.

The second illustration is also a double dumb move as well.

To make wine, Jews would skin a goat, tie in the ends of the skin and pour new wine into the skins to ferment/.

Well, fermentation took its toll on the skins.

The skins would crack and get brittle and usually only be good for one time.

However, in an effort to save time and money, people would take new wine and try to reuse old skins.

And the new wine would take those cracks and make them into holes...

And not only would you lose the skins, but you would lose the wine.

For you wives of cheap men (which we all are), this is like your husband going to buy a new car....

Then asking the salesman if he can save a few bucks by putting his own tires on the brand new car.

The salesman says that it could save him a few hundred bucks...

So he asks the dealership to remove the new tires, he brings them a set of old tires..

Then they leave the dealership and crash..

And now you have no tires and no car.

Jesus is clearly saying that he is bringing in a new day.

Here is where you don't need to get confused.

Jesus is not teaching a new way of salvation.

He is simply saying that the only way of salvation has arrived.

The Law was given to the Jewish nation for one purpose.

All the fasting, the sacrificing, the 10 commandments had one purpose....

To demonstrate that it is impossible to keep the Law in order to please God.

People were not saved in the OT because they kept the Law of God.

No one but Jesus Christ has ever kept the law.

The law was given to point to the need for a Savior.

The gospel says you can't please God, only Jesus did.

However, the Pharisee and religious leaders thought you could please God by keeping the Law.

And that is why they are expecting Jesus and his disciples to fast.

However, Jesus is saying that fasting is not a way to God.

He is the way to God.

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.

The point is stop fasting to get to God.

Follow me to get to God.

A new day has come.

The Law points to your need for me.

Trying to fit Jesus into the Old Covenant is dumb.

But this idea still exists today in the church.

Listen to me carefully.

The Christian gospel is not telling people to follow the rules.

Ok, if you want to be a Christian, you need to stop doing this and this and this.

Christianity is not conforming to some outward standard of man made rules.

Christianity is a change from the inside out.

Legalism is trying to change the inside by changing the outside first.

That will drive a person insane.

Ever try to drive a car without gas.

You can make it go but it is painful and requires constant effort.

The reason that some of you can't put off sin is that your heart has never been changed.

You try and try to follow the rules but there's no gas in the car.

If you try to stop sinning without the Spirit, you can be successful for a time...

But it won't last because you are relying on your own will power, which at best is very weak.

You are falling victim to a legalistic religion.

Jesus is saying that man-made religion is done.

You can't follow the rules and get to God.

You simply follow me to get to God.

Here's a question....

Remember Levi?

Did he stop tax collecting and then follow Jesus?

No, he was in the tax booth when Jesus called him.

And he stopped tax collecting because he loved the Savior more.

So may pastors say to people...

Leave your sin behind and come to Jesus.

The Scriptures say come to Christ and you will leave your sin behind.

The Pharisees are trying to conform Jesus and his disciples into their view of how God operates.

And that is like putting new wine into old wineskins.

And Jesus is going break their legalistic works based religion into a million parts.

And they will hate him for it.

Conclusion..

Couple thoughts I want to leave you with...

1) God is not pleased with outward displays of religion when then heart is far from Him.

If you obey because you have to, that is a horrible way of life.

If you obey because you want to, that is a blessed way of life.

We don't have to come to come to church.

We get to come to church.

We don't have to stop cussing.

We want to stop cussing.

We don't have to love our brother.

We want to love our brother.

That is the beauty of the true gospel.

Our hearts are changed first and then the works of our hands is changed.

And God is pleased when the inside matches the outside.

The Pharisees obeyed to be seen by men.

True believers are only concerned with what God sees in the heart.

2) Jesus is not a new patch sewn into your old life.

The Pharisees were trying to find a place to put Jesus in their dead religion.

Maybe he fits here or there in our tradition.

And when people try to find a place for Jesus in their life, they miss the high demand of the gospel.

So many folks think that getting saved means adding Jesus to your old way of life.

I will add him here.

I will add him there.

We will go to church on Sunday, and I will give him that day.

But that could not be farther from the truth of what the Bible teaches.

Jesus doesn't ask for a part of your life, he calls for a hostile takeoff of everything in your life.

The Pharisees tried to force him into the old wineskins of their religious system,....

But when Jesus said that HE was Lord of it all, they couldn't handle it.

The Christian life is not finding a place for Jesus in your life.

It a finding how many ways to give Jesus your life everyday.

Let's pray.