



READ MARK 2:18-3:6

Pursue

In the text this week, we look at three controversial moments in Jesus' ministry. In each of these controversies, because the true identity of Jesus is missed, the deeper truth of these traditions is missed. May we love and worship the true Jesus, the Son of God!

- In the first controversy in our text this week, the crowds notice that while the Pharisees and John's disciples are fasting, Jesus' are not. Jesus uses three pictures to explain his identity and work and answer their concern. Marriage, patching a garment, and putting wine in a wineskin. The final two pictures (a patch & wine) depict the new work Jesus is doing and how it can not be contained or restricted to old and worn-out traditions. He is here to break the people out of rote tradition and into life with Him. The marriage picture, however, sheds even greater light. They are concerned with how Jesus is relating to the tradition of fasting but are missing how fasting relates to Jesus. He states that He is the very purpose of fasting.
 - How does knowing that Christ considers His church His bride encourage you? What does this reveal about the nature of His care for us? Are you challenged by this picture? If so, how so?
 - Can you think of any spiritual traditions or practices that you have that might be disconnected from Christ?
- In the second controversy in our text this week, the Pharisees discover Jesus' disciples plucking heads of grain from a field on the Sabbath. Something they believed to be unlawful. Jesus points to a story of David and how his authority enabled his companions to enjoy "the bread of presence." He then declares that He is "lord even of the Sabbath" asserting his authority over the Sabbath. A gift given by God, not to crush man, like it is doing in the hands of the Pharisees, but to give rest to man, ultimately in Jesus. Like the previous story, the Pharisees miss the point as well. They are concerned with how Jesus is relating to the Sabbath but are missing how the Sabbath relates to Jesus. The Sabbath is the shadow that points to a greater rest found in Jesus. Jesus is the very purpose of the Sabbath.
 - Like the Pharisees, can you think of ways we add to the gifts of God to be "extra careful" that ultimately keep us from trusting and enjoying Jesus?
 - In what ways are you experiencing unrest in your life? What do you think it means to rest in Jesus in this area of life?
- In the last controversy in our text this week, the Pharisees again hope to catch him in scandal as He comes in contact with a man with a withered hand. Will He "work" to heal this man on the Sabbath and break the Law? He calls the man to himself and asks the Pharisees, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" The Pharisees are silent and their silence reveals the hardness of their heart. They have missed the heart of the law, to do good and condemn evil. They don't have hearts set on doing good or saving life but on proving themselves as most holy and it angers Jesus. Rikk Watts says this,

"The Torah, which offered life and good, is perverted to keep a man crippled, to turn the synagogue into a house of bondage, and so it makes them mortal foes of the one who himself gives the life and does the good that the Torah promised."

While they are concerned with Jesus healing, doing good, on the Sabbath, they in fact, are working on the Sabbath to "do harm" and "to kill" as they speak with the Herodians.

- Can you think of ways we might miss the heart of God in our work "for" God?
- In this story, again, we see a picture of Jesus' better, new, and authoritative work bursting the seams and wineskins of the Pharisees. Are there any areas in your life that you have looked to your own hands to fix but are longing for and needing the better, new, and authoritative ministry of Jesus? How does seeing the compassionate healing work of Jesus give you hope in this area?

Practice

LEADERS, YOU WILL LIKELY ONLY HAVE TIME FOR ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES.

- **OPTION 1 | Song & Response.** Have a member of the group read the lyrics of the old hymn, “Stretch Forth Thy Hand.” Have group members make note of what stands out to them about this song.

*"Stretch forth thy hand," thy palsied hand,
Fear not, it is thy Lord's command;
Seek not from Him to hid thy sin,
Confess, and ask to be made clean.*

*"Stretch forth thy hand," thy empty hand,
No gift of thine will God commend;
The empty hand that shows thy need,
Of this alone will He take heed.*

*"Stretch forth thy hand," thy helpless hand,
Upheld by God, thy soul shall stand;
Fight not in thine own strength the foe,
But trusting Jesus, onward go.*

*"Stretch forth thy hand," on Christ believe,
"Stretch forth thy hand," the pow'r receive;
He offers grace so full and free,
"Stretch forth thy hand," He speaks to thee.*

- **OPTION 2 | Followers & Enemies Chart.** Throughout Mark, we will see two main types of people: followers of Jesus and enemies of Jesus. While the narrator will not often explicitly label someone as a follower or enemy, the reader can use the actions or responses described in the text to determine if someone is a follower or enemy. Continue to add to this chart things you noticed this week about the followers of Jesus and things you noticed about the enemies of Jesus.

Proclaim

- We had each group member choose one person in their life to intentionally pursue gospel conversations with. Follow up on these evangelism relationships.
 - Were they able to share the gospel with them, encourage them, or pray with them this week?
 - How can the group pray?
 - What is one next step they can take with this person? Can they ask them to church? To come to community group? Read the Bible together? Etc.