

“Old and New”  
Mark 2:18-22  
(Preached at Trinity, October 21, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out before, this section of Mark contains five narratives that are probably not in chronological order or even the same period of Christ’s ministry but Mark probably places them together because of their common theme – conflict with the scribes and Pharisees.
  - A. In the first section the scribes accused Jesus of blaspheme because He forgave the sins of the paralytic.  
**Mark 2:7** – “Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?”
  - B. After Jesus called Matthew the scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for consorting with sinners.  
**Mark 2:16** – “And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”
2. As we come to **Verse 18** it would seem that the Pharisees along with the disciples of John the Baptist were taking offense with Jesus and His disciples because they weren’t fasting.  
**Mark 2:18** – “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”
3. While Mark’s account here lacks any reference to time or chronological order it could be that that this passage before us follows the previous chronologically. If so, the disciples of John came to Jesus with the question of fasting at the very time Jesus and His disciples are feasting at Matthew’s house.
4. The confusion of John’s disciples is not completely surprising. Even John the Baptist was confused as to the identity of Jesus.  
**Matthew 11:2** – “Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”
5. They were puzzled with the actions of Christ. John and his disciples fasted often. While they were fasting Jesus and His disciples were feasting.
6. The Pharisees and the disciples of John would have been well acquainted with fasting.
  1. In the OT the law of God required the entire nation to fast on the Day of Atonement.  
In the course of time several other fasts were added, many by man-made tradition.
  2. Jesus makes it clear in this passage that fasting would be a part of the life of a Christian  
**Mark 2:20** – “But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”
7. But Jesus also makes it clear here that this was not the time for fasting. In **verses 21-22** Jesus gives two reasons why His disciples did not fast –

- I. First, Jesus compares His presence on earth with a wedding feast – the union of love between the Bridegroom and His bride; the relationship of Christ to His church.
- A.. In **verse 19** He speaks of “the children of the chamber.” - “literally the sons of the bride chamber.” Although a literal translation it doesn’t convey the meaning. These were those who would care for whatever pertained to the bridal chamber.
1. The ESV & NIV translates it “guests of the bridegroom” which doesn’t convey who these people are. They aren’t just guests, they are the groom’s closest friends.
  2. The NKJV translates it “friends of the bridegroom” carries the general idea.
  3. The NAS translates it: “attendants of the bridegroom” – a better job of conveying the meaning
  4. In an ancient Jewish wedding the couple did not go on a honeymoon as we do today. Instead they stayed at home for a week of open house where there was continual feasting and celebration. During this time the bride and groom were treated like royalty. Their every need was attended to by chosen friends known as “the attendants of the bridegroom.”
- B. The picture Jesus is painting is that of the attendants of the Bridegroom joyously celebrating His wedding. It was not a time for fasting and mourning and sacrifice but a time for celebration.
1. He phrases His answer as to neither condemn His disciples or John’s
  2. He also is using the very language that John had used to his disciples  
**John 3:29** – “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”
- C. Jesus then adds, “But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast.”
1. Jesus is predicting His own death on the cross. This mourning would not be of long duration. The resurrection would bring a return of the joy.  
**John 16:20-22** – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. <sup>21</sup> A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. <sup>22</sup> And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”
  2. Notice the joy of the women as they ran to tell of the resurrection of Christ.  
**Matthew 28:7-8** – “And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. <sup>8</sup> And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.”

- II. The Second reason they didn't fast was something completely new had arrived
- A. Again, in the OT there was actually only one legal fast – once a year on the day of atonement.
1. This fast was a fast of mourning for sin  
Soon, however, they had added a great number of fasts, all by the tradition of men.
  2. By the time of Christ it had evolved into weekly fasts  
Some even fasted twice a week  
**Luke 18:11-12** – “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
  3. The focus was upon sadness and mourning. It was connected with the sorrow of repentance
    - a. On the Day of Atonement they fasted as a sign of mourning over sin.  
**Leviticus 16:31** – “It *shall be* a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.”
    - b. This was also the basis of the fasting of John the Baptist
  4. The Pharisees were fond of making sure everyone saw their affliction  
**Matthew 6:16** – “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”
  5. Jesus has come to fulfill the Old Testament sacrifices with the sacrifice of Himself. Our sorrow has been turned to joy
- B. The emphasis in the New Covenant is not on mourning but on rejoicing.
1. For those who follow Christ today their life is not one of sadness but gladness.  
**Isaiah 61:1-3** - “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; <sup>2</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; <sup>3</sup> To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”
  2. Fasting today is different from OT fasting.
    - a. Today we fast not as a sign of mourning but as a sign of self-denial as we seek God in prayer. Fasting today is always connected with prayer.
    - b. Jesus fasted 40 days as He entered the wilderness to pray.

- c. The early church often fasted, particularly before making major decisions such as the ordination of elders.  
**Acts 14:23** – “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”
  - d. David Brainerd - "I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work I have in view, the preaching of the Gospel"  
Erroll Hulse - "Fasting reinforces our earnestness in seeking God"  
Calvin - "Whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer."
  - e. The old cannot be applied to the new. We cannot fast today from mourning for our mourning has been turned to joy
3. The Christian is filled with joy unspeakable – a perpetual wedding ceremony with Christ.  
**1 Peter 1:8** – “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”
  4. We are given a new life entirely different from the old
- B. Jesus uses two examples
1. New cloth on an old garment – the new will shrink and destroy the garment
  2. New wine into an old wineskin – The new will ferment and the resulting gas will burst the old wineskin resulting in both the loss of the wineskin and the wine.

### III. Some points to note

- A. Outward signs of religion are not necessarily signs of inward love for Christ  
Sometimes false professors will excel above others in the outward work of Mortification – Note: “We and the Pharisees fast **often**”
- B. Man will naturally focus on particular acts of goodness as making them worthy –  
They believed their much fasting would grant them higher favor with God.
  1. They often become quite critical of others  
**Matthew 7:5** – “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.”  
**Romans 2:1** – “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”
  2. At the same time we tend to wear blinders to avoid exposing our sin  
(This is why people can attend church and leave thinking this single act makes them approved before God.)
- C. We are joyful or mournful in direct relationship to whether we have more or less of the Bridegroom’s presence.  
“Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them?”

- D. Joy is of the essence of New Covenant Christianity
1. Christian joy is commanded of God  
“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice”
  2. It is an essential part of our Christian faith  
**1 Peter 1:8** – “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”  
**Galatians 5:22-23** – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
  3. I once read a tract that taught it was sinful to be in laughter. He pointed out that there isn’t a single passage where we find Jesus laughing. Perhaps not. He was a man of sorrow acquainted with sin. But the resurrection is a place of unspeakable joy. God’s people should be filled with rejoicing.
- E. There are some things which *should* cause us to mourn
1. We should weep over our own sinfulness  
**James 4:8-9** - “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and **weep**: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.
  2. Sin creates a breach in our fellowship and turns our joy to sadness  
**1 John 1:6** – “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”  
**Hebrews 12:11** – “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”
  3. We should weep over the sins of others – this world’s blindness
  4. A pastor should grieve over the hardness of members of his flock  
**Hebrews 13:17** – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with **grief**: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”
  5. We should weep when our brothers and sisters in Christ are hurting  
**Romans 12:15** – “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and **weep** with them that **weep**.”
  6. Even in the midst of our mourning we are filled with joy in Christ.