

Mark 2:13-28

“Rocking The Religious Boat”

As you may've discovered by now in our journey throughout the gospel of Mark, though we've only made it ½ way through the 2nd Ch it's already apparent that the ministry of Jesus is all about *change*. Things have always been a certain way in your life, but when Jesus enters the equation things change, when you have a personal encounter with Christ something in you is going to change, He never leaves you the same but He's always challenging you in new and fresh ways. He exhorts us to change our life styles through the message of repentance, He delivers us out of death and into life through the forgiveness of our sin. He sets us free from the bondage of the enemy, He cleanses us, restores us, does a brand new work *in* us. The bible says, “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 and He has a plan and a purpose for us, He has an agenda that He desires you and I accomplish. Again the bible says, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 He is at work in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure. That's what Christ is all about, vibrancy, vivacity...life.

Religious establishment however is the polar opposite of Christ. All about rules, regulations, traditions, doing things “just so,” we work with in *these parameters* and if you go beyond them or do something other *than* them you're out of line and in sin. Now I want to be careful to ensure you that God has established parameters for us in His word, He's defined for us what sin is, and what sin isn't. But religion isn't based upon NT Christianity as found in the word of God, religion comes into play when man adds something to the word of God and then subjects both themselves and others to that standard as though it's equal *to* the word of God. **(Now obviously I'm not referencing various eastern religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam etc. that aren't even predicated on the word of God, however they're rules and regulations nonetheless).** Understand; Jesus was *never* about violating the pre-ordained standard of the word of God, but He was all about, seemingly at times *intentionally* about breaking man's traditions and religious regulations that they had *added* to the word of God. Jesus “rocked the *religious* boat.” He was bringing something new, something fresh, a change, an altogether new covenant no longer revolving around law, but around grace, for the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

and I don't know if you've ever been in an environment (though I would assume you have) whereby someone's traditions are being challenged. It becomes confrontational real quick, perhaps you've been in a church, and that church has always done things a certain way, but now there's a new guy/gal around, has fresh vision, believes God to be leading them a certain way, but “we've never done it that way” and man feathers begin to ruffle, and fangs begin to show. Those things divide churches. It was the same way in Jesus' day only what He was doing didn't divide a church it divided the nation. The religious establishment, the Pharisees considered the way Jesus moved and ministered confrontational at best and as you

know when they couldn't figure out a way to discredit Him they ultimately resolved to murder Him. But no one took His life from Him, He laid it down willingly for the sin of the world.

Well if you're able to remember a couple weeks ago when we were last together in the gospel of Mark you'll recall the healing of a paralytic whereby Jesus demonstrated both the power and the authority to forgive sins; something only God can do. He was revealing Himself to them, taking them deeper in their understanding of who it was who was before them, ministering to them. Even referring to Himself for the 1st time as the "Son of Man" a title ascribed to the Messiah in Daniel Ch 7.

But you recall that when Jesus healed the man as would naturally be expected everyone was overwhelmed and amazed and they said, "We've never seen anything like this!" But the key that I want you to note in Vs 12 of Ch 2 is that they *glorified God*. They didn't go, "Wow Jesus you're really incredible!" Though that response would've obviously been acceptable in His case, but He did His works in such a way so as to not draw attention to Himself but to glorify His Father in heaven. and There's a lesson there for us, an application to us because how often we can do our good works in such a way as to get a little bit of notoriety, making sure people see how spiritual we are personally and it ought not be. Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" **Matt 5:16** It's not about drawing attention to ourselves, that's called pride, and that's called sin, it's about glorifying our Father in heaven who's worthy to be praised.

and So leaving His skeptics stunned and in a state of shock we read beginning in Vs 13
Vs13-14

Few things here before we move on #1 as we've already mentioned in a previous gathering even though Jesus' ministry was relatively new and still in it's launching phase (so to speak) He was already attracting massive amounts of people and huge crowds wherever He went. and So as He left the house and headed toward the sea we read that all the multitude came to Him. and Where we read that they "came" to Him it means in reality that they *kept coming* to Him, accumulating, mounting up, a massive crowd that just kept streaming toward Him. and Once again when the crowd gathered around Jesus we don't find Him immediately beginning to move in the miraculous, healing people and all of that, we see Him seizing the opportunity to *teach them* the word of God. "He taught them."

and There's a reason for that, and that is that as moving as the miraculous is *emotionally*, it doesn't create faith in a person *specifically*. Oh it awes us, absolutely, but it doesn't root us and ground us *inwardly*. Strength for the inward man, assurance of who God is and His place and work in our lives comes through God's word. Paul writes in Romans and tells us, "*...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" **Rom 10:17** and So when Jesus had the multitudes around Him He didn't just begin to move in the miraculous, wow the crowds, show them what He could do, He began to teach them God's word, a miracle might minister to you immediately, but God's word ministers to you eternally, on a much deeper level (obviously).

and As He was walking along, sharing God's word with the people He passes by a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting right there at His desk at the tax office. He looks *at* him and says *to* him, "Follow Me" and with out delay he arose and followed Him.

Now all that seems pretty simple and straight forward, and it is, but when you understand the cultural relevance it adds a whole new dimension to what just happened. Because 1st of all

we read that Levi was a tax collector. and What you need to know about tax collectors in the days of Jesus is that they were considered traitors to Israel and extortioners. Because when Jesus walked the earth Israel was not a free nation, they were under the iron fist of Roman oppression. and It costs money to occupy a territory, keep your soldiers paid and taken care of, not to mention any work you might want to do while you're there, building roads, trade routes, monuments to yourself and all the rest. So how do you pay for all that? By taxing the people you're oppressing; and Rome was pretty loose in their taxation standards, they auctioned the office of the tax man off to the highest bidder. Then they required a certain amount of tax to be turned in to the Roman officials and beyond that whatever you could squeeze out of people you could keep for yourself.

Which doesn't act as an incentive to give anyone a break, people pull fish out of the sea of Galilee and as they're there reporting their catch if you feel like taxing them twice the required amount there's nothing they can do about it. and If they take issue you just glance at the Roman soldier standing behind you and the issue is settled. An awesome career from the "Ez money" point of view, but not much in the line of winning friends and influencing people. Jewish tax collectors were seen as working for the enemy, being traitors to their country, ripping off their brethren and all the rest. They couldn't testify in a Jewish court of law, (considered untrustworthy) they couldn't enter the temple grounds being considered unclean (mixing and mingling with Gentiles all day), they were just generally perceived as the offscouring and outcasts of Israel along with prostitutes and the like. They probably called him "Low life Levi," he was a candidate for "scum bucket" of the year! My point being that he's not an optimal candidate for Rabbinical selection to become a disciple, and yet Jesus passes *by* him and sees something *in* him. Not so much "Low life Levi" as he is "Lonely Levi," isolated, well hated, and alone. and He says to him, "Follow Me." and Levi leaves all...and does just that.

Couple things I want you to see. Obviously we see once again the Divine initiative and the human responsibility. Jesus initiates, Levi responds; it's always that way. and Notice the seeming happenstance of the event, when Levi went to work that day I doubt that he was thinking he would have an encounter that day that would change his life forever, but Jesus *happened to pass by* when he sitting at his desk. So often it happens just like that with you and me, I don't remember making any plans to meet Jesus, but we just happened to be in the same area one day when He extended an invitation to me, then I had a choice. and That's the next thing I want you to see, Jesus gave Levi the opportunity that day to "leave his old life behind" and begin following after Him. Then he had a choice to make; listen, not only is Jesus about change, He's about *choice*. You don't have to follow Him, that choice is up to you, you can sit right there in the life you've carved out for yourself in this world with all your inward loneliness and isolation, or you can leave that all behind and follow Jesus.

One of the beautiful things about Levi is that he shows us it doesn't matter how low you think you've sank into the "dregs" of society, he represents the bottom of the barrel culturally and yet Jesus said, "I want *you* on My team." Jesus specializes in calling the despised, the rejected, the least expected. Leave the gospel of Mark and turn quickly to *1st Corinthians 1* (Vs26-31)

Levi left his old life behind (the question is what are you going to do) and Jesus changed him, did a brand new work *in* him, no longer would he be known as Levi, (or joined, shackled,

having been shackled to the things of this world), but now he would be called Matthew (or gift of God) and he would go on to be one of the Lord's apostles and give us the gospel of Matthew. He became a new creation, and all his sin, all his shame was washed away and didn't in *any way* make of a lesser calling or gifting of the Spirit in his life. In Christ God doesn't hold your past against you, He forgives you, and gives a new beginning *to* you. (Although it may've made for some awkward introductions, hey guys here's the guy that's been ripping you off all these yrs, he's with us now!)

Vs15-16

Here lies the scandal right? Jesus, "The friend of sinners." and We're continuing to see Pharisaic frame of mind as it bubbles right up to the surface, "This guy presents Himself as a holy Man, yet look at the company He keeps!" 3 Things I would draw your attention to here. #1 Don't miss the significance of what Levi is doing here, he's just met the Lord and he's already opening his home to be used *by* the Lord. He throws this big banquet and invites all his friends (more of the off-scouring of Israel) to meet Jesus, the One who's changed his life.

Hospitality is a wonderful way to reach the lost, maybe they won't come to church initially, but they'll join you for a BBQ, open your home, share Jesus with them, show Jesus *to* them. #2 We notice Jesus was right in the middle *of* them, simply revealing Himself *to* them. and I think that this is where we have to be careful as believers today, because if we're not we can begin to build a bubble around ourselves and effectively isolate ourselves from the world in need of Christ. We hang with our Christian friends, deal exclusively with Christian business men, join Christian groups and clubs, and virtually cut off all communication with the dying world around us. I read somewhere that of the **132** contacts of Jesus with people in the gospels, **6** were in the Temple, **4** were in the synagogues, and **122** were in the world where people lived. We read in Matt's gospel where Jesus went about ministering to people, preaching the gospel, healing every sickness and disease among them, and as He looked upon the multitudes He was moved with compassion because He saw them as wearied and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. and He said, "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*" Matt 9:37-38 Jesus labored in the field, meeting people where they were. and Here He is in Matthew's home, and the place is packed with more tax collectors and sinners. and Notice (3^{rdly}) *they* followed Him. Jesus gives hope to the otherwise hopeless.

But as we might expect, the religious, those who didn't like their boat to be rocked took issue, were more concerned for the way things looked than the desperation of the situation, they weren't concerned for these people's salvation, only the fact that this didn't look good. But listen, sinners aren't going to get saved without someone making contact, giving them the good news, reflecting Christ in a right on way. Remember what Paul told the Romans? "*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'*" Rom 10:14-15

Now Jesus didn't adopt a sinful lifestyle to identify with sinners, He simply loved them, spoke the truth *to* them, and led them to repentance. Sometimes you might see a group of people leading sinful lifestyles in a protest somewhere, and occasionally you'll see a sign being

held up that says, “Jesus loves me just the way I am.” and Theologically that’s correct, however you’ll find biblically that Jesus was never content to leave a sinner in their sinful lifestyle. We’ve said it before, it’s true that He loves us the way we are, but equally true is that He loves us too much to *leave us* the way we are. Remember Jesus is about *change*, repentance, a holy and godly life, placing us into a proper relationship with God through His redeeming work in our lives. But the Pharisees were short sighted, couldn’t get passed the way this looked.

Vs 17

Man, the Lord was so cool wasn’t He? He says, “Hey guys, I got a news flash for you, who is it that needs forgiveness, who is it that needs to repent, who is it that needs to be made whole, made right in the sight of God? The righteous? No, the sinners. and You’re not going to make any difference *in* them unless you’re spending time *with them*.” It’s not the well who are in need of a physician, but the sick. What would we think of a doctor who wouldn’t take you in unless you were healthy? You’re all infected with some virus, coughing and hacking all over the place, sneezing relentlessly, you walk into the doctors office and with a sense of panic he says to you, “Get away from me you’re sick! What are you doing here, come back when you’re healthy!” I mean that would be kinda awkward wouldn’t it? Doctors spend their time with sick people, they need a physician. Jesus spent His time with sinners, they need a Savior.

Now understand when He says, “I didn’t come to call the righteous” He wasn’t insinuating that there were any who were righteous apart from Him, but that those who don’t recognize their need can’t be helped. If you don’t know you’re sick, you sense no need for the doctor you won’t look one up. If you think you’re just fine on your own you won’t come to Christ. There are none that are righteous, but there are those who don’t recognize their wretchedness. But to all who will the Great Physician extends the call, “*Come now, and let us reason together, Says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*” Isa 1:18 Jesus made house calls... “*...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” Luke 19:10

Vs 18-20

Again we note a focus on the outward ritual as opposed to the inward reality of the heart. But the question here is one of fasting, which is to reflect an afflicting of the soul, a denial of the flesh and a seeking of the things of the Spirit. If you can discipline yourself through the power of the Spirit to say “No” to your stomach then the odds of being able to say “No” to just about any other appetite of the flesh are pretty good.

However you should know that nowhere in the OT was a fast commanded outside of 1 day a yr on the Day of Atonement. The Pharisees had for the sake of piety added to that 2 more days a week, Mondays and Thursdays. Presumably this occurred on one of those 2 days. and We don’t find where Jesus is against fasting, we know He wasn’t, but He’s speaking here about an appropriate time and an inappropriate time. and The bottom line is that when He was in their midst it wasn’t time to be mourning or afflicting their souls, it was time for celebration, and feasting, not fasting. Understand that in the days of Jesus there was no greater occasion for celebration and a party like atmosphere then at a wedding feast, and it went on for days. The Rabbis even suspended any commandments that might interfere with happiness during such an occasion. The party is going on, but it’s the Sabbath and you’re running out of supplies. The Rabbis would say, “Don’t worry about those regulations, you need supplies, go get them.” It

was time to celebrate, you definitely wouldn't fast during the feast days. and So Jesus is saying right now I'm with them, it's not time for fasting, but feasting.

and The point here is that Christ in our lives doesn't bring us down, it builds us up. These guys were upset, seemed like they were having too good of a time. I don't know how many people I run into that have the mentality that if you're having fun, it must not be real/true ministry. True ministry has to be somber, burdensome, and perhaps painful or it's not legit. Jesus so wasn't like that. and Again it's not that fasting makes you any more or less spiritual (Jesus makes that clear here), but the idea is that when Christ is in your life, it's not like an affliction, it's an affection, it's not like fasting, it's like feasting.

and There in Vs 20 we see His 1st reference to the cross thus far. When He says the bridegroom will be "taken away" it describes a sudden departure by a 3rd party, someone else will lead Him away from them. and Then they'll fast, then they'll afflict their souls, they'll mourn and all that, but not now.

Vs21-22

Remember our intro? Jesus is about change, doing a *new* work, bringing about a *new* covenant, it's not going to be set in the old forms of law, it's structured on grace. He's saying things aren't going to be like they've always been, "You guys have things just so and you don't want that to be rocked, you're all about keeping things cohesive they way they've always been, but the Old Covenant and the New Covenant can't mix, law and grace can't mingle."

Jesus didn't come to "patch up" the old covenant which was worn out, torn and tattered, He came to introduce something new. A new covenant in His blood, salvation by grace through faith in Him. and New life in Christ doesn't fit in those old forms of the law any more than an un-shrunk cloth sewed into an old garment, or new wine in old brittle wineskins. As the wine begins to ferment, as the patch begins to shrink, there's a tearing, a bursting that renders things completely useless. It's the guy with fresh vision coming into a stale traditional environment, it's going tear things in ½. Jesus isn't about that, He's about a fresh new work altogether.

and He's not here to patch up your old life either, He wants to do a new work altogether. "I'm trying to quit drinking, so I'm wearing my Jesus patch." Jesus isn't here to patch you up, but to give you new life altogether.

Now He didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. You plant a seed and in a sense it's done away with, it's no longer enforce, but in another sense it becomes the fullness of all that it was intended to be in what buds forth. Same thing in Christ, He's the fulfillment of the law on our behalf and we're accredited His righteousness in the sight of God through faith. He gives us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; Isa 61:3 He changes us, does something altogether new in us.

Vs23-24

The issue wasn't what they were doing, the law made provision for gleaning from a person's field (Duet 23:25). The issue was the day they were doing it on...the *Sabbath!* and This takes us again into the realm of rocking the boat of the religious because the scriptures don't forbid what they're doing at all. But through their traditions they had added all these extra regulations to what it meant to "keep" the Sabbath. Because when they plucked a head of grain, rubbed it in their hands to remove the kernel from the chaff, then blew the chaff off their hand

and popped the grain in their mouth the Pharisees had come to define that as reaping, threshing, winnowing and preparation of a meal, 4 Sabbath violations in every bite!

Vs25-28

Vs 27 is the key, the Sabbath was made for man, man wasn't made for the Sabbath. God's desire was that the Sabbath be a blessing not a burden. and Jesus quotes from a passage whereby David did something that was forbidden by the letter of the law in eating the showbread of the tabernacle yet God didn't count it against him because of the legitimacy of human need. What Jesus' disciples did wasn't even against the letter, only traditions added by man *to* the letter. and This is what it all boils down to here in these Vs, legitimate human need supersedes ritual observance. Any application of the Sabbath that operates to the detriment of man is out of harmony with the heart of God toward man. So human need always takes priority over ritual observances.

On top of that Jesus claims that He's the Lord of the Sabbath, (Another way of saying who He is among them) and if He's not offended by their actions, they *definitely* shouldn't have a problem with them.

Jesus rocked their world, was bringing something new, and wants to do something new and fresh in us as well. It's true *He* never changes, always remains, He's perfect, doesn't need to. We on the other hand are in constant need of change, of being challenged in our traditions, of being stretched and expanded to greater and greater capacity. We can resist those changes, becoming rigid old wineskins, or receive them as Christ pours into us, shapes us and molds us that people might see Him *in* us and be drawn to Him *through* us.

Prayer Points:

Father may we maintain that sense of elasticity spiritually, able to flex and move, go with the flow of Your Spirit moving in our midst and in our lives. That we not become old wineskins unable to break free from the rigid reality of tradition, and habit for the sake of habit. Thank You Jesus for taking the initiative to pass by us, and call out to us, that we might leave our old lives behind and receive new life in You. and Then that You would use us beyond that just blows us away, may we lead lives in harmony with you that are well pleasing *to* you.

and Perhaps Jesus is passing by you today, and you know in your heart that He's calling out to you saying, "Follow Me" He's extending the invitation, the choice of consecration is up to you. You don't have to follow Him, you don't have to be changed by Him. But if you're tired of the isolation, and you're ready for the free gift of salvation, ready to repent of your sin and follow after Christ, then leave your old life behind and receive new life in Him today. He's not here to patch you up, try to put a patch on your old worn/torn and tattered garment that you know as life. He wants to give you a brand new robe of His righteousness, if you're ready for that then receive Him today.