

Daily Bible Study

“The Peculiar Taste of New Wine”

Mark 2:18-22

October 11-17, 2009

THE LORD’S DAY – This week we continue in our study of the Gospel of Mark and take as our text **Mark 2:18-22**. To begin this passage we see Jesus is approached and ask a question concerning fasting. Jesus addresses the matter by not placing the focus merely on the actual observance of the act of fasting but rather to the reason behind doing it and the time’s that call for it. He goes on to use to illustrations which contrasts His *new* message of faith, repentance, and forgiveness of sin, a message which brings true and genuine joy, against the *old* ritualistic, legalistic, ceremonial mode of religion of His day which was by many often practiced without any heart understanding. As Christ’s parable shows, it is not possible for an *old* empty, mere ritualistic, works orientated form of religion to contain or confine the *new* vitality, joy, and life brought about by one’s relationship to God by faith in Christ. Jesus was not saying that fasting or other practices such as tithing were wrong when done with a true and proper heart motive (**Luke 11:42b**) but rather that His New Covenant gospel truth in all its fullness couldn’t be patched onto mere empty ceremonial forms. Empty ritual has no part with His true gospel. Read **Mark 2:18-22**.

The Word Applied: What is one specific thing that stands out to you in reading this text?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me this week as I study and feed upon Your Word.

MONDAY – As our text begins in **verse 18** we read “*the disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting*”. Before we begin to explain and go through this passage lets look at this matter of fasting. Holy Scripture contained one command concerning fasting. The Mosaic Law required that annually, on “The Day of Atonement” a fast be observed (**Leviticus 16:29-31**, see also, **Acts 27:9**). Although this is the one instance where we find God commanding His people to observe a fast, we do find fasting practiced throughout the Scripture often as a sign of contrition for sin and a demonstration of penitence (**Judges 20:26**, **1 Kings 21:27**). We find that God through the prophet Isaiah speaks of a sham, empty, ritualistic fasting which is futile and characterized by selfishness. That is contrasted to true fasting of which the Lord approves which results in obedience to God and visibly and tangibly expresses the heart attitude in selfless concern and service toward others (**Isaiah 58:1-14**). Various fasts seen in Scripture lasted various lengths of time: We see fasts of 7 days (**1 Samuel 31:13**), 3 weeks (**Daniel 10:3**), 40 days (**1 Kings 19:8**), with a pinnacle or climaxing if you will in the apparent “two times a week fast” of which the Pharisees boasted (**Luke 18:12**). We must remember that Jesus Himself fasted (**Matthew 4:2**) as well as provided instruction for fasting (**Matthew 6:16-18**) so as we continue in the text be mindful that it is not true fasting that is under scrutiny by our Lord but rather the self righteous mindset of the Pharisees. Tragically, they saw themselves gaining favor with God through their tedious ritual of fasting.

The Word Applied: Look at Jesus instructions for true fasting in **Matthew 6:16-18** and ask The Lord if you should consider fasting before Him. True fasting, coupled with prayer and study of The Word shows a strong desire to go without in order to seek God’s wisdom and direction.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me understand that You, Your Word and Your wisdom are more important for me to seek and crave than even my physical food. Help me hunger for You.

TUESDAY – When Jesus is approached with the question of **verse 18** we find that there were two groups of people who *were fasting*. Some commentators suggest the construction of the language, the verb tense and voice in the Greek indicate that these two groups were at that very time *fasting*. Perhaps that very day they *were fasting*, and so were all the more displeased at what had just taken place with the feast in Matthews house where Jesus and His disciples were eating with tax collectors and sinners (**Mark 2:15-17**). As a footnote here, all three synoptic gospels have this event occurring right after the call of Matthew which adds weight to the suggestion that this event probably occurred “on the heels” of the feast in Matthews home. Some questions arise when we look at the two groups speaking to Jesus (the

disciples of John and Pharisees). To their credit these questioners don't bypass Jesus but instead come right to Him for an answer. In this question we would hope that there was sincere and honest inquiry but it is also quite possible there was veiled criticism and even accusation as well. God knows what their hearts motive was and we must take what we read of Jesus' reply and move on. It is safe and necessary to say that following John the Baptist or Moses does not guarantee salvation to anyone. It was John the Baptist who pointed out the only Savior of mankind when he cried out, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*". We know that there was a friendship and cooperation between the followers of Jesus and those of John the Baptist (**Matthew 11:2-15, 14:12**) who may very well at this time have been imprisoned or as some suggest even already martyred which could be another possible reason for the *fasting* (mourning) of his disciples. Whatever the case was concerning either the timing in relation to John the Baptist or the motive of the question both groups should have known that the only required fast according to Scripture was the fast on The Day of Atonement. Furthermore, as students of Scripture they also should have known according to **Isaiah 58:6-7** and **Zechariah 7:1-10** that the Lord demanded not a literal fast but rather love for Him and others.

The Word Applied: What is your motivation in doing "religious" things? Read and meditate on Isaiah 58:6-7 and Zechariah 7:1-10 asking God reveal any sinful motives in your life.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me do everything out of obedience to You & love for You.

WEDNESDAY – The question has come to Jesus as to why His *disciples do not fast*. It is not hard to imagine that in the mind of the questioners there was an obvious and stark contrast between the feasting type atmosphere at Matthews's house (**15-16**) which was probably seen by them as a spontaneous party of sorts versus their seeming pious and reverent action and habitual practice of fasting. Jesus moves to answer them in **verse 19**. Christ poses a question of His own by asking "*Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while bridegroom is with them?*" and only here in Mark does He follow up by answering it Himself with what could be called an explicit and emphatic "no": "*As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast*". Jesus is comparing His presence on earth to a wedding feast and is confirming that the reality of the presence of the kingdom (**Mark 1:15, Luke 17:20-21**) is a time for celebration and joy. Sacred Scripture again and again compares the relationship between God and His people, or since the coming of the Messiah, spoken of as Christ and His church with the love bond between a bridegroom and bride (**Isaiah 54:5, 62:5, Jeremiah 31:32, John 3:29, Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 19:7, 21:9**). Jesus Himself used the illustration of a wedding and the waiting for the bridegroom that would have taken place as an illustration for His return to this earth at the second coming (**Matthew 25:1-13**). The "*friends of the bridegroom*" literally in the Greek "*sons of the bridal chamber*" were the groom's friends that had been first of all invited to the wedding, stood close to him, made arrangements, and were involved in making sure things went well. These *friends* were enjoying the wedding and along with the groom were filled with joy and gladness. It would be absurd that they fast and or mourn at this time. Jesus was here and with Him came joy and salvation and He brings it to the sinners as He eats and drinks with them. Read **Matthew 22:1-14** and see the tragedy of arriving at the wedding for the Kings Son without the wedding garment supplied by the King Himself.

The Word Applied: Are you dressed in the garment of righteousness offered by Christ (Isaiah 61:10) or are you trying to establish a righteousness of your own (Philippians 3:9)?

Suggestion for Prayer: Lord, clothe me in Your righteousness, hide filthy rags of sin, dress me with Your perfect garb both outside and within.

THURSDAY – After Jesus speaks to the incompatibility of His disciples *fasting* at this time while He, the bridegroom was with them, He adds in **verse 20**: "*But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days*". This is an early prediction by Christ of His death on the cross. Jesus explains that the present joy of the long waited Messiah being here will end for His followers; and although it will be a temporary sadness, their present joy will still end quickly. Often in Jesus' discourses found throughout the gospels we find Him quoting from or at the very least alluding to the prophet Isaiah. This is no exception were Jesus tells these listening to Him that the time will come when He, the bridegroom "*will be taken away*". This phrase, translated from a single

word in Greek meaning, “to lift off, to carry away, or be taken away from anyone” is used only here in the synoptic gospels and all 3 times it is used by Christ during this very conversation. It sounds quite a bit like the great prophecy of the Suffering Servant from **Isaiah 53:8** where we read, “*He was taken from prison (confinement) and from judgment...*” We know this great chapter of Sacred Scripture describes the person and work of Jesus as it describes for us not only His life but also His unjust trial, death, burial, resurrection and exaltation by The Father for His work in which He *bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors*. Mark has several references to the book of Isaiah but here are two more which allude to **Isaiah 53** in particular. **Mark 9:12 – Isaiah 53:3** and **Mark 15:4-5 – Isaiah 53:7**.

*The Word Applied: Meditate on Jesus suffering God’s wrath for your sin and read **Isaiah 53** with an understanding of your place in the phrases using “we”, “our”, and “many”.*

Suggestion for Prayer: Jesus, thank You for suffering in my place. Help me love You greater.

FRIDAY – Jesus says there will be a time when His followers will mourn and He describes the time as *in those days* (**vs. 20**). Jesus’ followers would express their sorrow by fasting but by God’s grace it would not be for long as Jesus pointed out Himself in **John 16:16-22**. Quite simply for those of us in Christ, our mindset is not primarily one of sadness but gladness. Notice the particular fact of the joy promised by Jesus in **John 16**; namely, that “*no one will take it from you*”. Jesus was *taken away* to the cross so that we could never be taken away from Him. Christ *in us* is our *hope of glory* which brings through His indwelling Holy Spirit a joy that can never be taken away. Think also of the birth of Jesus when angels announced that they brought, “*good tidings of great joy*” (**Luke 2:10**). It is evident that the Apostles and many disciples of Jesus learned this lesson (**Luke 24:52, Romans 15:13, 1 Peter 1:8, 1 John 1:4**).

The Word Applied: Are you a joyful & joy filled follower of Jesus? Turn to Philippians & take a look at all 4 chapters noticing the words joy & rejoice. Notice we can have joy despite the.....

Suggestion for Prayer: Holy Spirit, help me know real joy through Your power and Your Word.

SATURDAY – Jesus uses 2 illustrations from daily life showing how inappropriate it would be for His disciples to fast now in His presence as He emphasizes the *new* situation brought about by the arrival of the King & His Kingdom. We’ll break down the *garment & wineskin* tomorrow but suffice to say there wasn’t time for *old*, familiar, empty, ritualistic, heartless religion while Jesus ushered in healing for the sick, freedom from demons, cleansing to the leper, food to the hungry and most important salvation for the lost in sin. Read **Mark 2:21-22**.

The Word Applied: Are you practicing a form of religion based on your work & not Jesus’?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thanks for the fullness and sweetness of Your new wine.