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Mark 2:13 - 2:28



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In Mark 2:13-28, Steve Gregg delves into Jesus' actions and teachings surrounding the Sabbath and sinners. Jesus called on Levi, a tax collector, to follow him and dined with other sinners, which scandalized religious leaders. Jesus compared himself to a physician healing the sick and saw a connection between sickness and sinfulness. He also defended his disciples' actions on the Sabbath and emphasized God's intentions for the Sabbath to benefit humanity rather than oppress them. Jesus used controversial actions to teach important lessons about the true meaning and purpose of the Sabbath and his authority over all days.

Transcript

Returning to Mark 2, which we got partially into last time. Our last session we saw the story of Jesus healing the paralytic who was lowered through the roof by his four friends. And the next item, which takes place also in Capernaum, the place where Peter's house was and where Jesus was now actually pretty much working from Peter's house in Capernaum, even through his whole Galilean ministry, which was about a year or more.

He would make his journeys around Galilee, but it was Capernaum to which he would return. So a lot of the stories about Jesus that are familiar to us have come from his time in Capernaum. And there was a tax collector in Capernaum who could not help but hear the stories about Jesus, I'm sure, although he may not have attended any of his meetings.

Jesus was definitely the talk of the town, because remember, sometimes the whole town would come and try to get into the house and see Jesus or hear him. And Levi, as he's called here, he's called Matthew elsewhere, is a tax collector in that town. And we read that Jesus went out again in verse 13 by the sea and all the multitude came to him and he taught them.

And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax office and said to him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. Now, this is really quite abrupt, even as the description of the fishermen responding to Jesus called to follow him, it seems

very abrupt.

But we know that in the case of the fishermen, this was not their first exposure to Jesus. They had met him before. They'd spent perhaps a whole day with him back in John, chapter one.

And then some months later, at least, that he encountered them at the Sea of Galilee. Even then, we're not sure, but then they might have seen and heard some of his activities even there in Capernaum before he called them. In any case, the story is told as if it's very abrupt, as if he just encountered these people who called them and they walked away from everything to follow him.

But obviously, men won't usually do that unless they have some sense of who it is that's calling them. And this man, Levi, he left his position, apparently without delay. And that would suggest that he already had heard of Jesus, at least maybe had seen Jesus walking down the streets.

These collection booths of the tax collectors were pretty much out in the street where passersby would go in the marketplace. Jesus, spending time and living in that small town, probably had passed his booth a number of times. And he's hearing reports about the miracles Jesus is doing and the amazing things Jesus is teaching, the crowds that were being drawn.

It seems to me probable that Levi, before Jesus had called him, had perhaps a wish in his heart that he could qualify to follow Jesus. He seemed eager enough when the invitation came. He didn't seem to have to think it over, weigh the options.

And he was, because he was a tax collector, he was, of course, an outcast from society. He was Jewish, but he was gathering taxes from his Jewish countrymen and giving them to Rome. He had contracted with Rome or with some other intermediary who was working for Rome to collect taxes and give them to the Roman oppressors.

That's at least what the Jews viewed the Romans as. The Romans were not friendly to the Jews in general, though from time to time you read about a friendly Roman centurion. Like Cornelius or perhaps the one whose servant was sick and came to Jesus.

I don't have the impression that all the Romans were always extremely hostile to the Jews, but the Jews were an unmanageable people because the Jews believed that they shouldn't be controlled by anyone but God. The zealot movement, which had begun in 6 AD under a man in Judas of Galilee, had actually taken as its theme the idea that it's unlawful for a Jew to pay tribute to Caesar because God is Israel's king. And to give tribute to Rome's emperor is a denial of God, Judas said, and he found a lot of popular support.

Of course, any tax revolt is going to find some popular support, even if it doesn't have a religious basis. But this resonated with many Jewish people. They said, yeah, you know, we're God's people.

He's our king. Why should we pay taxes to Caesar? And so the zealot party began with this theme when when at one point, much later in Jesus ministry, they came to Jesus and said, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not? This was in the climate of a very violent controversy because there were many people who sympathize with the zealots against paying taxes to Rome. And even though they might not come out and say they are with the party, because that would mean they'd probably get crucified because the Romans did not tolerate the zealots when they could identify them as more or less a secretive guerrilla movement.

But nonetheless, they were seen by many as freedom fighters. They would run raids on on Roman encampments and kill Romans when they could and so forth. A little bit like the Maccabean Revolt, only without success.

The Maccabean Revolt had been about 160 years before Christ, and it had been successful in overthrowing the pagan overlords of Israel. But the the movement started by Judas of Galilee never really did overthrow the Romans. Actually, when Jerusalem was ultimately destroyed after the close of the New Testament record in 1870, it was because these zealots, the same party, had started a revolt in Galilee again, another more overt revolt against the Romans.

And the Romans sent in heavy troops and then began the Jewish war, which for three and a half years, just it was a slaughter and a massacre of Jews until finally they destroyed Jerusalem as well. So these zealots were like the Maccabees, but not successful like the Maccabees. But people saw them as a freedom fighting movement, and most of the average citizens probably were sympathetic to them.

On the other hand, there were Jews who said, well, why don't we just kind of keep the peace here? The Romans are over us. Perhaps we should accept this as God's, you know, discipline of us for our sins. And why don't we just learn to live and let live with the Romans? Let's pay them tribute and they'll leave us alone.

I mean, they won't go away, but they won't harass us or oppress us if we just do what they want us to do, because the Romans were reasonable people for the most part. They were not like the Assyrians who like to torture and mutilate their victims. The Romans just wanted to have people obey.

They just wanted to make the world obey. That was their goal, the Roman Empire. If the Jews would just obey, there'd be a lot less conflict.

Well, Matthew, or Levi as he's called here, was definitely on the side of being a

collaborator with Rome. He was working for Rome. As such, he would probably be a target for zealots, but they had more on their hands just to deal with the Romans directly.

But they would have despised any Jew that had gone over to the side of the Romans in the sense of collecting taxes against their own people for the Romans. And so the general public was very anti-publican. The word tax collector is the same as the older version refers to as a publican.

And so the publicans or the tax collectors were extremely ill thought of by the Jewish public. In fact, the term publicans and sinners we find often in the King James Version, tax collectors and sinners. Jesus would even name that category along with prostitutes.

He said that publicans and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees do. So although the tax collectors were not necessarily living immoral lives, they were lumped with the prostitutes and other sinners because they were traitors to their people. And, you know, I don't know if they ever experienced, you know, physical danger from their countrymen or if they were just shunned.

Perhaps from time to time people would throw things at them. Who knows? They were very much despised. And he probably thought that he was just not the type that Jesus would accept.

After all, there was one of the disciples of Jesus. And we don't know if he had joined the band yet or not, because we are not told in the Gospels when he joined. But one of Jesus' twelve apostles was Simon the Zealot, actually somebody from the Zealot party.

Matthew, on the other hand, comes to be a disciple and he's on the opposite political end of the spectrum. And so Jesus obviously was not calling people to one or another of the political polls on the spectrum, but rather he had an alternative movement in his kingdom, which drew from people of many political stripes, including, as it turns out, Levi. Now, I'm of the opinion that Levi, probably having heard of Jesus and maybe seen him, was pretty much drawn to him and maybe would have followed him already if he could have, but probably thought that he wasn't really acceptable.

That Jesus probably wouldn't want someone like him associating with him. And yet Jesus walks by and looks at him and says, follow me. And the man just jumps up and leaves his job.

He doesn't give two weeks notice and he doesn't ask, well, how am I going to make my living? He he's ready to go, and so he does follow Jesus. Now, it happened as he was dining in Levi's house that many tax collectors and sinners. Also, sat together with Jesus and his disciples, and there were many and they followed him.

So here we have sinners and other tax collectors following Jesus because of Levi's

inviting them to a feast at his house. This is no doubt intended just as a reception. Levi is so glad to be with Jesus that he invites Jesus and the disciples to come have a feast at his house along with his old outcast friends.

Now, to invite a rabbi to come to your house when your other guests are prostitutes and sinners and tax collectors is to really kind of stick your neck out in a way to say, Rabbi, would you mind coming to a feast? By the way, the prostitutes and the tax collectors are going to be the principal guests. Certainly, he took the risk of rejection in this invitation, but no doubt he was encouraged by the fact that Jesus had invited him. And Jesus hadn't waited until he had left his profession.

He called him while he was still actively collecting taxes. So he realized that Jesus was a friend of sinners, as his critics later called him. There's a sense in which Jesus calling this tax collector was a little bit like him touching the leper in chapter one, as we saw, because the leper and the tax collector were both kind of outcasts, but for different reasons.

At least the leper could not be blamed for being unclean, the tax collector could be blamed for having made his career choices and he was a social leper, for sure. But he had friends of his own type, just like lepers had their leper colony. Tax collectors had their tax collector circles and other people who were outcast, probably excommunicated, excommunicated from the synagogue by prostitutes and such.

You know, they the birds of a feather flock together. All the people who were rejected by the society knew each other and accepted each other. And now they all came to have dinner with Jesus.

And, you know, when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to his disciples, how is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? Really, no self-respecting rabbi would do this. There's a similar story in Luke's gospel. It actually has to do not with Jesus eating with tax collectors, but eating with the Pharisee at a Pharisee's house named Simon.

And yet while there, a woman who was a notable sinner from the town came in and started weeping and washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. And the Pharisee would invite him, said if this man knew what kind of woman this was, he wouldn't allow her to touch him. Because that's, you know, religious people in those days, of course, you got to remember to the Jew, defilement had a lot to do with what you touch and what touches you and what you associate with.

But Jesus kind of ignored that, obviously. And Jesus heard that they were challenging his choices here of his company he was keeping. And in verse 17, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. By the way, the words repent to repentance are not found in some manuscripts of this particular verse in the Alexander text. It leaves out to repentance.

But the parallels in Matthew and I think in Luke both include the word. So we know that Jesus did include that, even if Mark may have left it out or some of the manuscripts of Mark and may have left that out. Jesus apparently didn't know what we know about preventative medicine.

He said those who are well don't need a physician. I know a lot of people who go to doctors who aren't when they're not sick and maybe he's right. Some people get sick at the doctor's office.

You know, you're well, you know, we we never took our babies to well baby clinics or to or to baby clinics at all. But not saying that people shouldn't. But my wife was always afraid that they'd contract something there.

They know they're well at home. You take them to the clinic and there's some kid there with a sniffly nose and our kid ends up getting a sniffly nose, too. You know, we seem to be so paranoid about our health.

And no doubt there is something to be said for, you know, being screened for early signs of cancer or whatever. We do have that ability. We do go to doctors sometimes.

I don't. But some people do when they're well. And I'm not going to criticize that.

Jesus just didn't know that there was a need to do that. And probably because they didn't have those screening technologies. But I'll go with him when I'm sick.

I'll maybe go to a doctor when I'm not sick. I generally don't. And he said those who are well don't need a physician, but those who are sick do.

So Jesus approved of physicians for sick people. Some people think that it's a lack of faith to go to a doctor. But Jesus said, well, people who are sick need a doctor.

And he did not think that a physician, for example, was an illegitimate trade like perhaps a tax collector was or was considered to be. Physicians have their place. Luke was a physician and he traveled with Paul and very possibly in the role of a physician, partially at least.

So there's nothing really in the Bible against physicians. There is a statement in the Old Testament about one of the kings of Judah who was sick in his feet and he consulted the physicians instead of the Lord. And that didn't please God.

But, you know, it's possible, I suppose, certainly to consult physicians and be trusting God. And many times Christians have not seen any conflict there. And I don't particularly

either.

But, of course, although he's making statements that are about physicians, he's making that as an analogy. He's like a physician and these people are sick. Now, I said in a previous lecture, and I don't know if it was our previous lecture on this subject or not, because we have so many lectures in between.

But I said that the miracles that Jesus did had symbolic value. And the healing ministry just in general had symbolic value because Isaiah had spoken of Israel as a sick man. Sick from head to toe, full of putrefying sores, untreated, unbound sores.

And in Isaiah's book, throughout the book of Isaiah, the idea of Israel being sick is a theme that you'll find again and again recurring. However, the sickness is not organic sickness. It's not talking about the kind of sickness that you go to doctors about.

It's actually talking about a moral problem and particularly alienation from God. And in Isaiah, he eventually, when you get far enough into the book, he begins to suggest that the solution to the nation's sickness is the Messiah and that with his stripes we are healed. With his suffering, the nation's sickness is healed.

That is, of course, moral sickness. But it also says in Isaiah 53, 4, that he carried our sicknesses and bore our infirmities. And that is true also.

Jesus came and he literally did heal people's sicknesses. He did lift off of them their infirmities. Now, some people think that's a reference to the atonement.

But Matthew quotes that particular passage in Isaiah, Isaiah 53, 4, and he quotes it in the context, actually, of Jesus healing all those people in Capernaum that night after Peter's mother-in-law had been healed. Matthew says after he healed everyone in town, he said that fulfilled what was written in Isaiah the prophet, that he carried our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. So Matthew understood that statement not to be about something that happened in the atonement, but something that happened in the active healing ministry of Jesus.

And the active healing ministry of Jesus, I believe, was a visual sign to Israel that he was the healer of their spiritual needs. And we saw that in the previous story, too. When the man who was lowered through the roof, Jesus said, your sins are forgiven you.

And when it was the question was raised whether he really had the authority to say such things, he said, well, so that you may know that the man does have authority on her to forgive sins. I'm going to heal this man. And so by doing a physical healing, a demonstrable physical healing, he was illustrating that he was the healer of the spiritual condition.

And so also here he raises that connection to between sickness and sinfulness and

himself being like the nation's physician. But but in the sense of a spiritual physician, he says, sick people go to doctors. Well, people don't go to doctors and I am like the doctor for the sinner.

I've not come to call righteous people, but sinners to repentance. Now, when people read this, they sometimes get troubled by the fact that Jesus seems to imply there are people who are righteous who don't need repentance, but he hadn't come to call them. And and in order to avoid that idea, some say, well, he means people who think they're righteous.

People don't you know, there are people who think they're righteous. He didn't come for them, but he came for them, too, because they are also sinners. What he's simply saying is this, if people were righteous, they wouldn't need me.

If everyone was well, there wouldn't need to be doctors. But people aren't well. People aren't righteous, and for that reason, they need a physician, they need me.

I'm here to be a physician and I'm here to heal them by calling them to repentance. That is the healing. Over in First Peter, chapter two, Peter actually alludes to that passage in Isaiah 53 about by his stripes we are healed, but he applies it in the way that I've been speaking about here rather than applying it to Jesus being the healer of organic sicknesses.

Peter sees it as other than that, in First Peter, chapter two and. Verse 24 and 25, speaking of Jesus, said who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed. Then he explains what that line means in the next verse for four means because.

The reason I said you were healed by his stripes is because you were like sheep going astray. You were alienated. That's your sickness.

Your sickness, like Israel's sickness, was that you were alienated by sin, like straying from God. But you have now returned. That's your healing, the healing of your backsliding, the healing of that alienation.

You've now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your soul. So Peter understands the statement with whose stripes you're healed to mean you were wandering before, but now you're back. You were sinning, but you've been called back to repentance.

The healing is coming to repentance. Sinners are sick. Spiritually speaking, and repentance is the cure.

And Jesus said, I'm like the doctor who comes and calls these people to take the pill to take the cure. And so he rebukes the Pharisees with what sounds like an eminently reasonable justification for what he's doing. They were not satisfied, but they were silenced.

We know they weren't satisfied because at a later time he pointed out that they were saying about him that he was a friend of sinners and a winebibber and a glutton. And they said that because of his associations like this time. But he gets criticized on another point here now, not only by the Pharisees, but also by the disciples of John the Baptist.

In verse 18, the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. Now, the Pharisees fasted twice a week and no doubt John's disciples did the same. They were both fasting the same day.

So no doubt John's disciples had adopted the same two days a week for fasting. I forget what day. I think it was Mondays and Thursdays, if I recall.

But it doesn't really matter. The Pharisees fasted two days a week and this was one of those days. And John's disciples were fasting, too.

But Jesus disciples were not fasting. In fact, they were in the house of the tax collector eating a feast, not exactly operating in the same spirit as the ascetic who's not only avoiding sin, but even avoiding food. And so Jesus disciples are challenged on this.

And Jesus, of course, is challenged. They came to him and said to him, why do you why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast that your disciples do not fast? So Jesus said to them, can the friends of the bridegroom or literally the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them.

And then they will fast in those days. Now, this is one of the few places that Jesus says anything about the subject of fasting. As I recall, there's really only two other places and one is disputed in the manuscripts.

One is where he said this kind of demon doesn't come out except by fasting and prayer or prayer and fasting. But of course, in the Sermon on the Mountain, he mentions fasting. He says the disciples in Matthew chapter six, when you do your own, don't be like the hypocrites.

When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. When you fast, don't be like the hypocrites. So Jesus apparently assumes his disciples would indeed fast just like they would pray and give alms.

But they should not do it the way the hypocrites did. However, that does not translate into a command to them to fast. He did not say thou shalt fast any given number of days out of the year or of the week.

He just said when you do, don't be like the hypocrites when they fast. And here also, he doesn't actually give a command to fast. He only anticipates that it will happen.

My disciples will fast when I'm gone from them. But when I'm with them, it's like a wedding. You don't fast at weddings.

Weddings are not for mourning and fasting is for mourning. Weddings are a celebration. Now, this is very important that Jesus saw his own ministry as a celebration.

Which made it quite inappropriate to be mourning and fasting, although he was calling people to repentance, he was calling them to a joyful repentance. He was calling them to a repentance that he said the angels in heaven all rejoice when one's in a repentance. Israel repented many times in dust and ashes and with fasting and mourning.

And perhaps there are times when there's little else you can do. You're so broken over your sins that you can't hardly not mourn. But Jesus idea was I'm calling people to repentance.

That's like a sick person getting well. That's something to rejoice about. That's something even God rejoices about.

This is not a time for mourning. This is a time for celebrating like a wedding. And and by the way, if you would consider the parallel to this in Matthew and Matthew, chapter nine.

It's rather interesting that Jesus words it a little different because in Matthew, chapter nine, what he says is in verse 15. Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and then they will fast. Notice that in Matthew's version, fast and mourn are used interchangeably.

In Mark, the word fast is in both places, but Matthew has mourned in the first position because that's really what fasting was about. You know, in the Old Testament fasting, although the Jews fasted quite frequently, it was not really commanded except one day out of the year. That day was the day of atonement.

The Jews were supposed to fast along with all the other ceremonies that were going on this one day a year. But no other time did God command them to fast. The Jews adopted for themselves many days out of the year as traditional days to fast, especially four days.

The book of Zechariah actually talks about that after they came back from Babylon, after the captivity, they wondered, should they still observe these fasts? And Zechariah says, God never told you to fast in the first place. Are you fasting for him? Are you fasting for your own self-pity? Because what they're fasting about was they fasted on the anniversary of the day that Jerusalem had been besieged by the Babylonians. They fasted on the anniversary of the day that the walls had been broken through.

They fasted on the day that was the anniversary of the burning of the temple. And they

fasted on the day that was the anniversary of the murder of Galileah, the governor, because of whom the Babylonians came in the first place and destroyed Jerusalem. In other words, they were fasting on four days that reminded them of disasters they had suffered.

But those disasters were judgments from God, and God didn't ask them to mourn for those. In fact, he told Ezekiel not to mourn for the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's wife died on the day that Jerusalem was besieged.

And God said, don't don't fast, don't mourn, don't do any of the traditional mourning things for the death of your wife. Because I want you to illustrate to people that it's not a time to mourn that Jerusalem's going down. This is something that's good.

It has to go down. It's bad. It's a bad city.

The judgment of God is good and it's not something to be mourned. And yet the Jews mourned and they fasted regularly to basically feel bad about what had happened to them. But God had never commanded them to do so.

And then, of course, the Pharisees had added many more fasts twice a week. They were fasting. But again, fasting was usually associated with mourning.

And Jesus ministry is more like celebrating. In fact, Jesus made a clear distinction between his the spirit of his ministry and that of John the Baptist. And since we're looking at Matthew at the moment, just turn a few pages over to Matthew chapter 11, because in Matthew chapter 11.

Verse 16 and through 19, Jesus said to what shall I like in this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to their companions, saying, we played the flute for you and you didn't dance. We mourn to you and you didn't lament. Then Jesus applies this, he says, for John came neither eating nor drinking.

That is, he is fasting. And they say he has a demon. The son of man, by contrast, came eating and drinking.

And they say, look, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Now here, Jesus makes it very clear that the Jewish people, God had appealed to them two ways. One through a spirit of repentance, like John, like John the Baptist had called them to repent and to fasting and mourning.

And Jesus had called them to celebrate. And it was like children in the marketplace trying to get recalcitrant other children to play with them. They say, let's play a happy game.

Let's let's play a dancing song. Let's dance. Oh, you don't want to dance? Well, we can play a mourning song and we can mourn.

You don't do that either. Well, you don't want to do anything, do you? You aren't responsive to any of our approaches. And Jesus says, that's what this generation is like.

John comes with one approach and he's got a religious spirit. He's got a demon. And so I come.

Jesus says with a different approach, the opposite approach. And you complain about that, too. But it's interesting that Jesus did draw this contrast between his own approach and that of John the Baptist, because now we have the disciples of John the Baptist saying, why aren't your disciples fasting? And Jesus essentially because they're not mourning.

They're not sad. They're at a feast, a wedding feast, to be precise. Now, this particular analogy of his ministry to a wedding feast, no doubt, was intended to remind them of something their own master, John the Baptist, had said to them back on another occasion.

If Jesus wasn't calling attention to it, then it's a big coincidence. That he said this to the disciples of John, because in John, chapter three, the disciples of John had come to John complaining that the popular movement had shifted from John the Baptist's leadership to Jesus' leadership and people were coming in larger numbers to be baptized by Jesus than by John. And John was not disturbed by this.

And John answered and said in verse 27 of John, John three, twenty seven, John answered and said, a man can receive nothing unless it's been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I'm not the Christ, but I've been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom.

But the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase.

I must decrease. Now, the disciples of John were concerned because John, their master, their rabbi, was losing popularity and Jesus was gaining popularity. John says it's time to rejoice.

The bride is coming to the bridegroom. Jesus is the bridegroom. These people are the bride.

Shouldn't the bride have the bridegroom have the bride? Not me. I'm the bridegroom's friend. I'll just rejoice as the bridegroom's friends do at his wedding.

And, you know, now that my is that I passed the baton, the bridegroom's friend actually in Israel was an actual specific title for someone who plays a specific role in the marriage, namely, is like the matchmaker. The bridegroom's friend was the guy who went on his behalf to negotiate with the bride's parents on behalf of the bridegroom and

so forth. And therefore, John said, I'm like the matchmaker here.

The matchmaker has his role to play. But the time comes when the bride goes to the bridegroom and then the matchmaker, he doesn't have any more role to play, except to just rejoice that the bride's gone to the bridegroom. And so John himself, who is now in prison and his disciples were not with him anymore, but they were still loyal to him.

Jesus reminds them, this is a bride. This is a wedding. And I'm the bridegroom and the friends of the bridegroom, they're not going to be fasting, they're not going to be mourning while they're at the wedding, are they? So Jesus takes in a metaphor that John the Baptist had used with his own disciples and Jesus kind of brings it back up to them again.

Now, whether these were the same disciples of John, I don't know. But my guess is that John didn't have a lot of disciples at this point because John had said, there's the land of God. And we know that some of his disciples followed Jesus.

I'm not sure why anyone would not if they were disciples of John. Why would they stay with John when he says, that's what I'm of God there. That's the Messiah there.

And I'm just here to testify that it seems like John's disciples would have been a very small number remaining, especially after he's in prison. So I wouldn't be surprised if these are the same guys that John the Baptist had used that analogy with of a wedding. But Jesus isn't done yet.

He explains. Well, he says. When the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast.

And therefore, Jesus does predict that his people will fast, there will be occasion for that. But it's not entirely clear, at least not all agree on what period of time he's talking about, because if he means fasting simply mean to mourn, he might mean that they'd mourn during those three days when he was taken away from them and he's killed. Certainly, the disciples did mourn, although they didn't fast.

We know this because when Jesus surprisingly appeared after his resurrection, he said, do you have any food? And they already had some cooked up. They weren't fasting, but if fast simply means mourn, not and it's not really referring to literal fasting, then he might be saying, you know, when the bridegroom's gone from them, which is those three days he was dead. Then they will fast.

However, I think it's more like when he's taken away from them permanently, like when he was taken up into heaven. It's not so much that we we mourn, but there are occasions for fasting and you find them in the book of Acts and Acts chapter 13, for example. The leaders of the church in Antioch were fasting and praying and seeking the Lord when the Holy Spirit spoke to them and said, separate to me, Barnabas and Saul to

the work I've called them to.

Those are the opening verses of Acts 13. We see the church was fasting. At least the leaders were fasting on that occasion.

But again, there is nothing in the Bible, in the New Testament that commands Christians to fast. Jesus said, my disciples will fast. And maybe he meant by that when the mood hits them.

After all, he's equating fasting with mourning, isn't the reason they don't fast as they're not unhappy. But they'll have time to be unhappy when I'm gone, there'll be unhappy seasons for them. They'll have times when they fast.

I used to think it was very good and important thing to choose at least one day a week to fast. I mean, the Pharisees did it two days a week. Of course, they only did it during daylight hours, sort of like the Muslims during Ramadan.

You know, the Muslims, they fast for 40 days each year during Ramadan. That sounds impressive until you find out they only do it while the sun's up. When the sun goes down, the gods themselves.

So they just have they have their meal before sunup and another meal after sundown, and they just go through the daylight hours without eating. They call that a 40 day fast. But the Pharisees had the same thing.

It was during the daylight hours. But I used to think it'd be good to just take a, you know, one day a week and fast for 24 hours. And I I did that for a while.

And I even during the same period of time, I would take a three day fast at the end of every month. So I fasted one day a week and three days at the end of each month. And I thought, well, that should that should be enough to make me spiritual.

But I found out that, you know, it sometimes had a positive effect on my awareness of God, on my spiritual state. And sometimes it didn't. And when it didn't, I'd wonder, why am I doing this if it's not? I mean, is this kind of getting brownie points with God? Is this somehow earning something? I mean, if it's not something that's having a spiritual benefit on me on this occasion, maybe it's not what I'm supposed to do it right now.

And I don't know. I can't speak for anyone else. But my own thought is based on what Jesus said here is, you don't fast when you're happy.

You fast when you're when you're sad. And there are times that I have been, you know, I fasted because the occasion was something a crisis. Somebody I cared about was in trouble.

There's something to be sad about. There's something to grieve about. There's

something to get focused on because it's something that needs attention because all is not right.

And those times are good times to fast. Those are natural times to fast, and it makes sense to fast at those times. If people fast at other times, I'm not going to criticize them.

But I would say that there is always that danger of institutionalizing anything, anything that is, you know, on occasion, something the Holy Spirit would lead people to do to say, oh, that was good. I'm going to do that every week. I'm going to do that twice a week.

I'm going to do that on this regular schedule. And you sometimes find that when you begin to schedule the things that God blessed you in that, you know, they don't they don't automatically carry that blessing with them. It's God and being led by the spirit that is a blessing, and he will lead you to fast, I believe, at times.

If you never fast, it's possible that you're never really bearing the burden of the Lord or you're not really getting involved in interceding for things that are true crises that Christians ought to be concerned about. But on the other hand, if you schedule fast once a week or twice a week or something like that, again, while I won't criticize that, my guess is that you're going to find that sometimes it's very routine. And you find yourself saying, why am I doing this? Of course, nowadays, people do it to say, well, at least I'm burning calories.

I'm going to lose a few pounds here or, you know, it's healthy. It's cleansing my digestive system. But those are not the reasons people fast in biblical times, nor is that a spiritual thing at all.

There's great reasons to fast for health, but but that's a different issue. This is talking about spiritual as a spiritual activity. It should be that our fasting, I think, corresponds with the state of our hearts or our moods.

If we're grieved about something or alarmed about something and concerned, then I think fasting makes sense at those times. It may make sense to you at other times, but for me, it makes sense at those times. Now, verse 21, he continues, no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment or else the new piece pulls away from the old and the tear is made worse.

What he means, of course, is that if you wash the garment, the unshrunk cloth is still going to shrink the old garment. It's been washed plenty of times. It's not going to shrink anymore.

But if you patch a hole on a shrunken garment with an unshrunk piece of cloth, well, it's going to shrink and it's going to pull at the edges. It's going to pull away and it's going to damage. I know because back in my hippie style days, this is partly for image and also partly out of necessity.

I had to patch my pants all the time. Having patches on your jeans was also an image thing as a hippie. But I really had a great pair of pants.

There was not one bit of the original denim still visible. And it had all these, not big patches, little patches. And they were really put on real holes.

They weren't there just for like hippie merit badges. They were, my pants really were going through the material a lot. And I found that I don't usually let my pants get that old anymore.

But when the material got really old, the patch itself, even without shrinking, it would tend to pull away where you sewed it on because the old cloth was brittle. Now, it's more so if you put unshrunk cloth on and wash it, it's going to pull harder against it. And Jesus said, that's just not something that's done.

That's not sensible. That's mixing things that aren't alike. You know, in the Old Testament, there's a law that you couldn't sew two kinds of grains in the same field or you couldn't wear a garment that was part woolen and part linen.

And this is not a moral issue, but it's a ceremonial issue. It was basically trying to say, you don't mix unlike things. You don't put an ox and an ass into the same yoke.

You don't yoke together with unbelievers. Things that are morally unlike each other shouldn't be joined. And Jesus is saying there's something that's spiritually not like each other, your movement and mine.

You guys fast twice a week. That's your idea of religion. That's not mine.

And he gives another example, like the patch in the next verse. He says, and no one puts new wine into old wineskins or else the new wine bursts the wineskins and the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined. But new wines must be put into new wineskins.

Now, wineskins were made out of goat hide. And it was basically like a what do they call those Buddha bags or what do they call those things that people carry water and it's made out of goat skin, has the fur on it and stuff. Goat bags, something like that.

Yeah, yeah. Well, those things, that's what they were like, only bigger, probably about the size of a goat, actually. And it had a lot of wine in them, but they were they took the whole skin of the goat and sewed it up into a, you know, a bag that could contain liquid.

And they would put the new wine, freshly vintaged and squeezed into this goat skin bag. Now, wine, when it ferments, gives off gases and things like that. It gives off byproducts.

But this the new wine was sealed up in the bag. There was no outlet for the air. There's no vent.

And therefore, as the wine would ferment, it would require more space. But fortunately, a fresh goat skin can stretch. Leather is supple, it does stretch.

As you know, if you buy a pair of new shoes that are a little too tight, you wear them a little while and they aren't so tight anymore because the leather will stretch. Well, so would a goat bag, a wineskin, stretch to accommodate the expansion of the fermenting wine. But once it had done so, it had stretched out.

You use up the wine, you've got this old wineskin, you don't put new wine in there because that new wine is still going to have to expand and that goat skin is not going to accommodate it anymore. That goat skin is too brittle. It's not new anymore.

It can't stretch anymore. It can't accommodate growth and life. And so Jesus is saying there's two illustrations making the same point.

The patch of unshrunk cloth, it's going to change, it's going to shrink. You don't attach it inseparably from something that can't accommodate change, like an already shrunken garment that's going to pull at that, it's not going to agree with it. Likewise, you don't put something like new wine, which is going to change, something that's alive and dynamic.

You don't put that into some brittle structure that can't accommodate the change. And what Jesus is saying is, you guys think that because you guys fast twice a week and have this religious thing going on, that that's the way I should, I should try to contain my movement in those structures? No way. My movement is alive.

My movement is dynamic. It's like new wine. Your movement is like an old wineskin.

And I'm not going to try to confine what the kingdom of God is, which is dynamic, like a seed that grows or like leaven that spreads or like a little rock that grows into a great mountain. My movement, the kingdom of God, is going to spread and expand. And it's going to go quite beyond the borders of what your religious system will permit.

And it did, of course, because he, you know, eventually they were, you know, he's abolishing the dietary laws and all kinds of things. So essentially he's saying what I am doing here is like something that's alive and dynamic and it's going to change. It's not static.

It's not encrusted like your religious ideas. And don't please expect me to be so foolish as to try to wed my movement to yours. Because yours is already done a lot shrinking.

It's done all this changing. It's not going to be able to agree with the changes that my movement is going to make. So verse 23, now it happened that he went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.

And as they went, his disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to him, look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath? But he said to them, have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry? He and those with him, how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priest. And also he gave some to those who were with him.

And he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man from the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath. There's one problem with this particular story in Mark's gospel.

That's he mentions that David went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest. And the truth of the matter is that the high priest, when David did this, was not Abiathar. Abiathar was the son of the high priest, though he later became high priest.

And Abiathar was alive at the time. And some think that Jesus is using, speaking of Abiathar as the high priest, proleptically. That is, as he later was the high priest and later came to be known that way.

Just as I think I may have given the example when we're in our authority of Scripture series about how we might say, you know, President Washington as a boy threw a silver dollar across the Potomac. Well, as a boy, he wasn't President Washington. He became President Washington as a man.

But to say President Washington as a boy did such and such means we're calling him president proleptically. We're calling him what we later came to know him as and always will remember him as. But we're speaking about a time before he was that.

And Jesus could be using Abiathar's name proleptically that way. That Abiathar did become the high priest later. And yet some would say that this is just a mistake.

Well, it could be it. It could be a copious error, I suppose, but it's not too important. There's more than one way to resolve it.

And therefore, it doesn't justify a lot of time worrying about it or trying to play with it. As far as I'm concerned, it could be a proleptic reference to Abiathar as high priest. It could even if it were if no other solutions really were obvious.

It could even be that some scribe stuck in Abiathar's name because it's not in the parallels. Any other gospels, it doesn't mention Abiathar's name in the parallels. So maybe it wasn't even originally in Mark and some scribe may have added it.

Who knows? I'm not going to go to the mat about that. It's just the only issue I wanted to bring up here because it is brought up by people who are looking for faults in the Bible.

And the more important thing is the story and the teaching.

The disciples were going through the grain fields. It was a Sabbath. Now they were eating grain that they picked and rubbed in their hands.

So that was technically labor work. You're not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath under the law. And so they were criticized for that.

Now, they weren't criticized because they were picking somebody else's grain. That was actually permitted in the law in Deuteronomy 24. A man walking through somebody else's grain field was allowed to pick a few heads of grain and eat it.

He couldn't carry in a bushel basket and take grain out. He couldn't harvest in another field, but he could take a handful or two and eat. That was specifically allowed.

But the Pharisees would say, well, it's allowed, but not on the Sabbath because that requires harvesting and threshing wheat. And so they said, your disciples are breaking the Sabbath. They're doing what's unlawful for them to do on the Sabbath.

Now, some people think that the criticism was untrue. And they think, well, the disciples certainly weren't breaking the Sabbath because Jesus seemed to defend them here. So he wouldn't do that if they're breaking the Sabbath.

And so they say, well, what Jesus was really doing was not breaking the Sabbath, but just breaking the Pharisees ideas about their traditional rules about the Sabbath. But that's not what Jesus said. And Jesus would have given a different kind of answer if they were not breaking the Sabbath.

The answer he gave was that David himself did something unlawful once, truly unlawful. He ate the showbread and it was not lawful for him or the people with him to eat because they weren't priests and only the priests are allowed to eat the showbread. He violated a ceremonial Old Testament law.

Why? He was running for his life. He was hungry. His hunger was a higher priority with God than the keeping of rituals was.

And therefore, neither God apparently nor the Pharisees found a fault with David for that. So Jesus brings that up as evidence of their own inconsistency. You're criticizing my disciples for doing what's not lawful on the Sabbath.

David did what was not lawful in a situation that was parallel. He was hungry and he violated the ceremonial law to feed his hunger. And Jesus apparently saying that's a parallel case.

So Jesus is saying that the Sabbath law is a ceremonial law. And if people are hungry, well, man's need preempts the need of the ceremony. And that's why Jesus says in verse

27, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Now, there's two ways this has been taken. Sabbatarians usually understand it to mean the Sabbath made for all men. And to mean not just for Israel.

You see, a person like myself says that the Sabbath law was only given to Israel. There's never an occasion in the Bible that the Sabbath law was given to people outside of Israel, outside of the Old Covenant. And therefore, it was something that the Israelites were required to do.

But there's no... only people under the Old Covenant were ever required to do that. But some people say no. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man.

And they see that as sort of a rebuttal of it was made for Israel. It's not made for Israel, it's made for man, all men. But of course, that's not the point Jesus is making.

If that was the point he's making, he would have said the Sabbath is made for man, not for Israel. But he said the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath. He's making an entirely different point.

And besides, if Jesus were trying to say the Sabbath is made for all men, not just for Israel, how would that fit this context? Were there some people there thinking that, oh, the Sabbath is just for Israel? Well, if they did think that, why would they bring it up? Everyone there was Jewish. They wouldn't bring it up as an objection. Jesus, the Sabbath is just made for Israel.

No, it's made for all men. I mean, that was not the subject under discussion. The subject under discussion was, is it OK for these Israelites to break the Sabbath in the way they did in order to feed themselves when they're hungry? And the answer is, if David could do that kind of thing, they could do that kind of thing.

The ceremonial law was not made to oppress people. God didn't make the Sabbath and then make people to keep it. He made people and then he made the Sabbath.

And when he gave the commandment to keep the Sabbath, it was for the benefit of people, Israel to be specific, since they're the only people he commanded to keep it. They're people. They're men.

And so Jesus is simply saying, don't use the laws that God gave that are rituals to somehow oppress people so they can't even eat when they're hungry. That's almost along the same lines of the fasting thing, you know, like you're fasting and making yourself hungry unnecessarily at times. Well, God is not against people eating when they're hungry.

And he did not intend for the Sabbath to oppress them and keep them from being able to

eat when they're hungry. Sabbath is made to be a boon to people, not a bane to people is what he's saying. And he says, therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

And I talked about that. Also, when we're talking about the authority of Scripture, that when Jesus said the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath. Are also the Lord of the Sabbath.

Why the word also? I mean, wouldn't he have made the same point simply by saying the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath, in which case he would be saying something like. I'm superior to the Sabbath. I'm the Lord of the Sabbath.

I have the right if I wish to let my disciples do what they want on the Sabbath, because I'm even its Lord, not just theirs. But when he says he's the Lord, even of the Sabbath, my take is that he means he's the Lord of Monday and he's the Lord of Tuesday and of Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. He's also the Lord of the Sabbath.

He's Lord of all the days. Also, even the Sabbath day. That is to say, every day of the week, it doesn't matter what day it is.

Jesus is the Lord on that day. He's the Lord of his disciples on that day as well as the other days. And therefore, he is the important thing for his disciples is not that they check to see what day it is before they do something, but rather to see what the Lord wants them to do, because he's their Lord on that day, too.

And, you know, the obligation of people of the Lord is to do the will of their Lord. So the real issue is not a matter of whether there's a certain set of obligations that accrue on a certain day that don't occur on another day, but rather what does Jesus want you to do any given day? If the disciples were picking grain field with his approval, well, then that's he's the Lord on that day. That's the answer to him, in other words, not to the law.

He's the Lord on that day. And so we're going to have more Sabbath controversies when we come to chapter three. At the very beginning, there's a number of Sabbath controversies in a row because that was a big issue with Jesus.

And it would seem that we should have no trouble, therefore, discerning what Jesus teaching was about the Sabbath, because he did seem to pick out the Sabbath day as a day to do things that were controversial in order to give himself the opportunity to teach. About the Sabbath day. But it's interesting that on all the occasions where he taught about the Sabbath day, he didn't teach that anyone had the obligation to keep it.

He taught other things. It's lawful to do good on the Sabbath. The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

You know, my father works every day and I work every day. These are the things he actually said. He actually stir up controversy by doing something controversial on the

Sabbath, allowing the controversy to rise.

And then he'd make a teaching that was just right, right across the grain of his critics because. He apparently wanted to get something across about the Sabbath that they weren't thinking of. And we'll see him talking about that again in the next next episode when we come back next time.