

**Mark 2:18-22 Final**

2.25.18

The Gospel of Mark

Sunday Morning

**INTRO**

Most of us in this room have a smartphone. We're all familiar with updates to our phones and to the apps on our phones (sometimes it happens at the **worst possible times**). Now most of the time we're fine with those updates but other times we aren't.

The most recent example of this was the **mid-February redesign update to the popular social media messaging app *Snapchat***. People use Snapchat ALL the time, it's a constant stream of use. In many ways and for many people it has become a big part of who they are and how they communicate. So when the radical re-design updated to the app came out with radical changes, the users found them to be so different, that they **weren't happy**.

Millions of users took to **social media in anger**. After **one** angry tweet from a **well-known celebrity**, *Snapchat* lost an estimated **1.3 billion** dollars in stocks. One person from Australia created an online petition to protest the changes and had well over 1.2 million people sign it.

All because they are being asked to let go of something in their lives that they desperately want to hold on to and not let go. In this case, a **certain way *Snapchat* looks and functions**.

They aren't interested in radical change and transformation of the app, they'd be fine with **slight tweaks**, perhaps an **add-on** or **two** that would make life a little easier, but nothing **radical** or **transformative**.

And you and I **might not use *Snapchat***, in fact maybe you've **never heard of *Snapchat***, but chances are you've experienced this kind of thing in your own lives. There are **certain sins, preferences, routines, wants, hopes, dreams etc...** that you and I are holding onto desperately and we don't want to let them go. We're okay with **slightly tweaking them**, perhaps adding **something on to them** to make them easier to **maintain** or **foster** but we don't want them to be radically changed or transformed.

You and I have certain areas of our lives that we don't want to **fully surrender up to God and let go**.

Here's the problem, **Jesus** isn't interested in slightly tweaking us, or adding on a little bit to us; allowing us to hold onto things that we haven't fully surrendered to him. He requires **absolute surrender of everything** that we are and every sin, preference, routine, want, hope, and dream that we have. This is what it means to be his disciple.

And we know this from an interaction that he has with a group of people in **Mark 2**. So if you've already, **please turn with me to Mark 2:18-22**.

What we're going to see is that a simple question about a tradition leads to an explanation about what it means to be His disciple. And we'll see that as we struggle to give up all of who we are to Him in surrender, we can only do this when **we see him clearly** and when **we're convinced it leads to fullness of joy**.

If I had one thing for you to remember this morning, it would be that ***Jesus requires absolute surrender of everything from his disciples.***

So, to that end, I'll read the let me read our text for this morning and then we'll spend the next few minutes unpacking this and applying it to our lives.

*[18] Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" [19] And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. [20] The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. [21] No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. [22] And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."*

## PRAY

Now, if you're like me when you read this section of Mark for the first time you just move on because it makes absolutely no sense.

**NOTE:** when that happens in your Bible reading this is where a good study Bible or commentary can be helpful because oftentimes the most confusing or seemingly out of place things in our Bible are the places where we should slow down and read carefully instead of just moving on.

The first thing that Mark tells us in verse 18 is that John's (**the Baptist who we met in chapter 1**) disciples and the Pharisees (**and their followers**) were fasting.

**Fasting** is: *choosing not to participate in something for set period of time. Could be a day, an hour, a week. Traditionally it's food or drink but could be something else. It's most often accompanied by prayer.*

Now, the **only day** that anyone was required to fast in the Law was the Day of Atonement and this wasn't it. Voluntary fasting was widely practiced and acceptable in the in the OT (**and today**) for a few reasons:

1. There was a national crisis (Nebuchadnezzar destroying the Temple)
2. There was disaster (drought, plague, famine, etc...)
3. There were personal reasons (2 Samuel, David's first son with Bathsheba).

Now, notice that people fasted in

- 1) **times of mourning**
- 2) **or in times of deep need**

People fasted when they felt their need for God and needed him to answer. (**And this is how we view fasting today. This isn't a fasting message but if you want to know why or how to fast, this is it**).

In other words, fasting wasn't mandatory (**except for one day**). It was actually a sign of **mourning** and **fervent intercession**.

Now, we don't know why John's followers were fasting because it seems unimportant to Mark. He simply doesn't tell us. We could speculate about him being in prison or dead but it actually doesn't really matter. What matters is that they were **practicing a voluntary** fast of some sort.

It's more clear as to why the Pharisees were fasting, for many years they had practiced voluntary fasts each week on **Monday's** and **Thursdays** as a **sign** and **demonstration of piety** and **self-consecration**. They had been doing this for a long time and were simply continuing this tradition to demonstrate their devotion to God.

And to the people of the day, **both John** and his **followers** and the **Pharisees** and **their followers** were seen as **devout, pious,** and **godly groups** worthy of imitation. They were highly **respected** and taken **very seriously** by the people.

And a group of people quickly notice that Jesus and his disciples aren't following the lead of **either highly respected group**. Jesus isn't falling in line with them in their practice of this voluntary and at least in the Pharisees case a traditional **fast**.

And so they come to him in verse 18 and ask, "*Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?*"

In other words, since these groups that are **devout, pious, highly respected** in the community, and **worthy of imitation** are fasting, if you want to be seen as devout, pious, highly respectable in the community, and worthy of imitation you should be fasting too.

It's clear by their question that they assume Jesus is just **another new teacher coming into their lives offering some tweaks and add-ons**. Perhaps they figure that they'd listen to him if he proves himself worthy of it and in the end they'll be a little better for it.

And he could prove himself worthy by falling in line with the traditions of those around him.

But Jesus isn't in the business of surrendering himself to the traditions and culture of those around Him, he requires that those around Him surrender themselves to Him. And so he asks them a question in return. Look at verse 19:

*[19] And Jesus said to them, "Can the **wedding guests** fast while the bridegroom is with them?"*

And after their confusion about a seeming change of subject, their immediate answer to that question would have been absolutely not. In that day wedding feasts could last for an entire week and it was a time for the wedding guests to share in joy-filled feasting and merriment; celebrating the newness of the marriage with the bride and groom.

And those invited to the feast would never think of mourning and fasting during the wedding celebration. It would have been inappropriate.

In other words, my **disciples aren't fasting because they've let go of the traditions of their community and culture in order to gain me**. They want me more than they want your **approval or your traditions**. They are willing to surrender themselves to me and my ways instead of you and your ways.

Listen, it would have been far easier for the disciples to not surrender themselves and their cultural expectations to Jesus. They would have avoided all the **questions**, all the **trouble**, all the **looks**, all the **confusion** of the **crucifixion**, all the **deaths they died for him** to just go along with what they were comfortable with. But they didn't.

**His disciples were willing to surrender everything to Him.**

And this is what Jesus expects and requires.

He isn't looking to slightly tweak us, or add something on to us to make a little better. He wants us to **surrender everything to Him**.

And the people missed this, the Pharisees missed this, to some extent the disciples of John missed this. You can't bring your own held-tightly to ways and expectations to Jesus and assume that's okay. As a disciple, it's all or nothing.

Which is what Jesus says in these seemingly confusing parables in verses 21-22. These two parables (the first in Mark) highlight the reality of coming to Jesus having surrendered all of who you were to Him.

In these parables, Jesus represents the **new**. He is this **patch**, a new piece of unshrunk cloth. He's also the **new wine**, which would still be **fermenting**.

And in both cases, it is **incompatible** to simply add or combine the new with old. What happens if you do this is that the new destroys the old.

If the people were looking to hold onto their OT Jewish traditions and simply add Jesus to that, it would be utterly worthless.

Those who come to Jesus must come with open hands, surrendered all of who they are to Him.

To be a disciple of Jesus requires us to absolutely surrender every part of us to Him and His will.

New wine is for fresh wineskins. Period.

### **Being a disciple of Jesus means total surrender in everything to Him.**

And this is really hard because we live in the now. We live in the moments of the day where real choices, and wants, and preferences, and sins, and hopes are always upon us and there are many times where absolute surrender to Jesus of these things is painful. It's difficult.

It often means **radical change** which we've already seen is something humans don't like.

***But church, this is what Jesus requires of us.*** In your life, what have you been unwilling to surrender to Him because you're afraid it will radically change things?

I don't think I'm going out on a limb when I say that all of us have some, and when we see it how do we actively work to surrender it to Him? Three quick ways we can grow in surrendering all of us to Him from the text:

#### **1. WE SURRENDER WHEN WE SEE THAT THIS IS WHY HE DIED**

Jesus died on the cross to make us new. The only reason that the old garment of ourselves, the old wineskins we once were can be changed to new garments and wineskins is because Jesus marched his way to the cross.

It's interesting in verse 20 that there will come a day when the disciples will fast. Jesus isn't condemning fasting for his disciples, but he renews it for them. They will fast for radically different reasons than these other groups.

Notice when they'll fast:

*...when the bridegroom is taken away from them*

Bridegrooms at wedding aren't taken away forcibly. They either leave with the Bride or the people leave to let the new couple begin life. Here, the Bridegroom is taken from them. And certainly this means taken until he comes again with the clouds, but for them it also meant physically taken to be killed on the cross to forgive the sins of all who would place their trust in Him.

And in those days, the disciples fasted with renewed vigor because their master had been taken from them. And we all know that the mourning they experienced would be turned to joy three days later with the empty tomb, but in the moment they didn't know that.

Their mourning and fasting wasn't routine or cultural, it was a longing to be with Jesus.

And Church, Jesus died so that **his disciples**, INCLUDING **you** and **I** could take every part of us: our hopes, fears, wants, desires, sins, cultural norms, and routines and hold them out to him and say this is who I am, this is what I have, I **surrender the all to you**. *Do with me what you will*.

I surrender them all to you because you died to make me new.

But you and I need to work to see that clearly and feel it deeply if we want to surrender all to Him.

That's first.

## 2. WE'LL SURRENDER MORE AS WE KNOW HIM MORE

Jesus' disciples had spent time with Him, they knew Him to be patient and kind. They experienced his love for them. And they had surrendered themselves for the most part to Him. They didn't know him yet as the Christ, Peter won't confess until chapter 8.

But Jesus is slowly revealing more of Himself to them.

His reference to Himself being the Bridegroom is a veiled reference to His deity because in the Old Testament only God Almighty is depicted as the husband of Israel.

And he would continually reveal himself to them more and more as the days went by. And if we read our Bibles, we see that the more the disciples knew Him, the more they surrendered themselves to him. Peter held onto a lot of baggage, even into Acts.

But the more they saw Him and knew Him, the more they trusted Him and knew his love for them. And the more they grew in this knowledge and understanding the more they surrendered themselves to Him.

And Church, this is the same for you and me. The more we know Him, the more we'll freely and **joyfully surrender every part** of us to him, even the **dark corners**. Even the **strongly held preferences**. Even our **deepest hopes** and **fears**.

We must work to know Him, and we have **pages and pages (in our Bibles)** that tell us who He is. We can get to know him in ways that the disciple never knew.

Perhaps one of these areas in your life that you need to surrender up to him for is simply the area of **knowing him better**. Meaning that in the morning when you wake up and are confronted with the alarm clock, going to work, working out, or your Bibles which do you choose? What does surrendering to him look like in that moment?

That's second.

### **3. WE SURRENDER OURSELVES TO HIM WHEN WE'RE CONVINCED IT LEADS TO JOY**

Jesus' disciples are wedding guests experiencing fullness of joy with Him.

Now, it's true that being His disciple doesn't always feel like joy. Like I said earlier, the lives of his disciples would have been far easier if they had simply ignored him and went along with the culture and the routines.

But surrendering themselves to Him gave them an invite to the wedding feast.

Not surrendering themselves to Him would have left them like the old garment and the old wineskin in verses 21-22.

Church, a disciple of Jesus surrenders because they long for the joy of see Him face-to-face. **Not that we don't experience joy here**, we do, but the joy that is the **fullest will be when we are with Him and see Him**.

A wedding guest cannot fast while the Bridegroom is present. And you and I still fast because he isn't here. But one day, he will be.

*Psalm 16:11 – You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

The disciples experienced the wedding feast for a season but then they had to go back to fasting because their savior had been taken from them. And they lived life surrendering themselves to Him and they found that joy in His presence upon their deaths.

This is the life of disciple, giving all of us to Jesus in hopeful expectation of the joy to come.

**Jesus requires absolute surrender from His disciples.** Which things in your life do you need to surrender up to Him?

**Pray**

**BENEDICTION:** Psalm 16:11 – *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*