

Mark 2:18-28 - The Lord of the Sabbath

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[0:00] So I will be reading from Mike 2. Jesus questioned about fasting. Now, John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.

Some people came and asked Jesus, how is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not? Jesus answered, how can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?

They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. No one sues a patch of unshrunk cloth of an old garment.

Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined.

No, they pour new wine into new wineskins. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. One Sabbath, Jesus was going through the cornfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some ears of corn.

[1:07] The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? He answered, have you ever read that David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?

In the days of Abiathar, the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat.

And he also gave some to his companions. Then he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath.

Good morning again, church. Okay, so here we are, a continuation in the book of Mark.

And this section, what we're going to look at today, is a passage where Jesus discusses the old and the beginning of the new. Where it highlights Jesus' authority over legalism and interpretation of the law.

[2:07] So we will see in there, we'll see some of the traditions of the Pharisees, some of their many thoughts and their behaviours that doesn't fall in line with God's word and his truth.

And when we think about traditions, traditions are maybe something I'd say that, you know, it's something that is enduring, that groups or behaviours, you know, adapt and it's rooted in longstanding practices.

And I dare, if I think back to some traditions in the past, once upon a time, that, you know, when I was growing up, there may have been traditions that, you know, some folks from the Caribbean or so forth, they would have had pictures of Jesus in their house with, you know, depicted as blue eyes and certain narrative.

And that became a stumbling block to many people in the Caribbean community. Because that was not in line with the gospel. As Deuteronomy told you, we should worship nothing in heaven, on earth or under the earth.

So we see traditions of things sometimes, often that man puts in place and it is an endurance to what the gospel is. And we have traditions, some of us from family, with family members, where we act out certain values, we conduct ourselves in certain ways.

[3:27] And when it comes to the gospel, it can hinder us in displaying who Christ is and walking within those ways. The good thing is, though, is West Kilburn has great traditions.

I believe the church would have been established over 150 years with the intention of proclaiming, preaching the gospel, raising disciples and meeting the needs within the community.

West Kilburn, sorry, I mean, Queen's Park Church, as we now merge. We have a tradition where we used to have our worship service on a Saturday. And God is not dealing with legalism, you know.

He quite welcomes our soul to worshipping them on a Saturday. Though Sunday is the Lord's Day, but our practice, our tradition, we used to worship the Lord on a Saturday for various reasons. And we see God bless that by people coming to know the Lord and being baptized. So legalism and traditions, they have their place, but at the same time, they're all measured by the word of God.

[4 : 30] So traditional ways were strict professors of a certain order or way of doing things to make their practice standard and to censor and condemn all that do not come up to.

And it can not become legalistic and not in line with God's plans and purpose for his people. So just a little upkeep to where we are right now. We've started the book of Mark.

And what we've seen so far is John has proclaimed the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And we see that in chapter one. And that's fulfilling Isaiah chapter 40, verse three, as the way has been prepared.

Then Jesus continues to proclaim the kingdom of God is at hand and he calls people to repent and believe in the gospel. Chapter one, verse 15. Then Jesus continues where he calls his disciples to follow him.

And he continues to demonstrate that he preaches with power and authority. We see, as we heard last week, as Steve preached, how Jesus was sitting and he was eating with sinners.

[5 : 42] And this is the first attempt now where we see the momentum of the kingdom coming into effect. We see the religious leaders and those in authority start to question him because they're misguided.

So we do see the scribes. They were saying in their hearts, you know, why is he eating with sinners? And Jesus calls them out. And yeah, we see a manifestation of that going to be continued now as we continue in chapter two.

But before we hurry into this, I just want to, you know, as we, as Joanna just read in chapter two, verse 27 and 28. It declares, Jesus said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

So the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath. So when we stop and just think of that, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The son of man, first of all, that is a title that we hear first about in Daniel chapter seven.

Daniel chapter seven, right? So we hear about this. We're about that. It says, in my vision at night, I looked and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

[7 : 00] He approached the Asian of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.

All nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom will never be destroyed.

That is Jesus. Sorry, that's the wrong one, right? My apologies. All right, sorry.

But that, that's, yes, set up my apologies here. So we hear that in that verse, right? Jesus is the Lord of Sabbath. And if he's the Lord of the Sabbath, he's Lord of everything practically.

Because he created the Sabbath. He established the Sabbath for man to rest in. So if Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, as he made that for man, he created man and he created everything else.

[7 : 57] So in verse 18, we see the first, we see the narrative starting there now. We see John's disciples, we read, and the Pharisees, they're fasting. Then some people come and query and they ask, why is Jesus' disciples, why are they not fasting?

But Jesus, he turns and he speaks to them and he addresses them to let them know, while the bride is here, the guests do not need to fast because they've acknowledged his presence which is there.

Enjoying the presence of the Lord. That's something I want us to just consider and talk about. So Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom. Isaiah 62 verse 5 will bear witness to that.

It talks about the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. The bride is the church, is God's people, you know. And it says, so shall your God rejoice over you. So God takes joy and he rejoices over his people who he created and those who know him and confess him as Lord and Saviour.

So while Jesus is present in this text with the disciples, they are to enjoy his presence. There's no need for them to be fasting because they've come to the realisation that their Messiah, their

long-awaited king, is present and there with them.

[9 : 13] Fasting is for a particular reason which we'll look at a little bit more in a text. And for us just to really consider, you know, as we've done with the children's service, you know, considering when you're invited to a wedding or if you're invited to some kind of do or something.

It's usually a good thing that we do celebrate. So as guests at a banquet, you would be invited to enjoy all that is provided for you in honour of the host.

Guests receive all the privileges the host as an offer. And here we are to understand that the guests of the bride are those with Jesus who acknowledge him as the awaited Messiah, as their king, as the one who was promised to come.

We are invited to acknowledge the Lord's presence and as guests of honour accept his invitation to enjoy his presence and celebrate him.

And that invitation is extended to all, no matter who you are, what creed, culture, background, wherever you are from. That invitation is an invitation for us to acknowledge that we all have a default.

[10 : 21] We all have inherent sin. We all never adhere to the standard that we would love to adhere to where we can consistently do what is right. And often things that we know is wrong and things that we know we shouldn't do, we often at some time, one time or another, we do that.

That is our inherent sin, our default, and we are all in need of a saviour. And that invitation is extended to all mankind, whoever you are.

Whoever accepts that invitation, you'd be greatly welcomed by the Lord of Lords and Kings of Kings to be a host, to be his guest at his final banquet.

And the picture of this, this is the verse I want to give now. So here we go. Revelation gives a picture to this, right? This is read from the New Living Translation Testament, right?

It's Revelation 19, 6 to 10. It reads, So she has given the finest of pure white linen to her.

[11 : 48] And the angel said, And he added, These are the true words that come from God.

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him. But he said, No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus.

Worship only God for the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness to Jesus. amen so we all still have this invitation that it's extended to us we are invited as guests to receive God's glorious offer and to place our trust and hope in Jesus Christ for him alone is the way the truth and the life no one come to the father but by acknowledging him as Lord and Savior and we do get the opportunity to celebrate the goodness of God even right now as we journey and as we walk in this fallen world we get the opportunity to enjoy Jesus Christ in his presence by his Holy Spirit as we come together collectively here we are worshiping the living God because of what he has done for us and we acknowledge what he's done for us we get to collectively acknowledge the work that he does in each and every one of us and in the body of Christ in this church right here as we sing songs to him as we listen to his words and as he speaks to our hearts we get to rejoice and we have hope we are encouraged through what he speaks and says to us we also get to enjoy his presence when we come together collectively in the week whether he's going to be in a community cell group or whether he's going to be in prayer meeting when we meet together and also when we're by ourselves we get to bow down before our king in faith and pray to him and get to experience his presence through his spirit so these are the joys that the Lord has made available to us and these are the things that we have instantaneously here for us Psalm 16 11 tells us you make known to me the paths of life in your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hands are pleasures forevermore

Jesus delights in us and he calls us to do likewise so they go and ask Jesus why they're not fasting so Jesus addresses them but he does go on also to say in verse 20 but the time will come when the bride will be taken from them and on that day they will fast fasting which involves abstaining from food for specific periods of time was mandated by the laws of Moses you can read that in Leviticus chapter 16 29 31 and also Leviticus chapter 23 26 to 32 right um yeah they were ordained by um the Lord speaking through Moses so they were called to afflict themselves God commanded Israelites to fast in the seventh month on the tenth day of that month each year this was their day of atonement and we read also in Luke 18 12 you know we can see how things escalated how you know there's a Pharisee and there's also a sinner the sinner you know didn't even want to lift his head you know considering himself a wretched man who'd sin but a Pharisee in his pride he said I fast twice a week so we know that the Pharisees had practices where they were fasting more than

we saw ordained through the law of Moses at the same time we do read in a book of Zechariah I believe it's chapter 7 maybe for chapter 6 how when Jerusalem had had the walls broken down and they had been led into captivity in Babylon they were fasting four times a year but God does rebuke them and say your fast was not for me that was for yourself then he goes on in Zechariah chapter 8 telling them that a fast that they have been fasting that fast would be replaced with seasons of joy so they would no longer continue need to be grieving and fasting like that because it would be replaced with joy and feasting so clearly now they had a practice the Pharisees that they were fasting more than what was commanding or told for them to do and it seems like they appeared outwardly pious rather than generally spiritually reflective considering they were known to publicly publicize their fasting practices they were preoccupied with maintaining ritual purity and regarding fasting as a means to achieve spiritual state but again Jesus does say that you know they will fast at a particular time and they will return to this practice you know when when they when that time arises and and what Jesus is talking about that you know that time will come where he will be going to the cross he will die you know and then they will be they'll have him taken away from him so at that season from what they know there will be a time where they will pursue him and they will want to be seeking him as we often might find in our life there's times of great rejoicing times of great joy but there is times where me may really want to be seeking the Lord because um you know it doesn't seem so near to us though we know he will never leave us or forsake him so with that I mean here's a quote from John Piper many of you may have heard of John Piper he says right many times we don't fast because we're lost because we've lost our spiritual appetite the absence of fasting is the measure of our contentment with the absence of Christ he adds further to this if we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God it is not because we have drunk deeply and are satisfied it is because we have nibbled so long on the table of the world our soul is stuffed with small things and there is no room for the great so that's a quote from John Piper whether you agree with that statement or not but again fasting is when we choose to give up something personal to us or replace it with and we're to replace it with the intimacy of God usually it's giving up food that's the usual content but at the same time for us today it can be you know things like social media it can be things like excessive entertainment it can be the gym and it can be hobbies or a number of things that often take the place of God or God is not involved in that because when saturated consumed with something else rather than having time to allow God to be a part of that and um I just want to give a few points of things that possibly the Bible shows us that we can fast upon and they may be helpful for us so we see in terms of major decisions right in Acts 14 yeah Acts 14 verse 23 right we read this is Paul and Barnabas right and when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayers and fasted they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed so for us likewise we can see right maybe through major decisions we may need to get clarity from God that could be a good time to fast also for personal revival this is the Damascus road when the Lord met Paul on the Damascus road chapter 9 verse 1 to 9 Paul had to go away you know for three days he was out without sight and he neither ate nor he drank so you know we might feel spiritually dry in our journey we might not feel that we're really connected to God so we may have lost our passion for God or we may feel bewildered or we may feel lost so that could possibly be a time where we could seek the Lord I'm not saying to fast for three days but it's a possibility we could really seek the Lord to see if he revises us also again we know in Matthew chapter 4 we see like um Jesus before he started ministry he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights I'm not asking anybody to fast for 40 days or 40 nights but we're just looking at this illustration before Jesus started his ministry he fasted 40 days 40 night and spiritually it was strengthened and likewise some of us in here we may feel under spiritual attack we may strongly be tempted to sin in some way or another fasting can be a way to experience spiritual strength and spiritual power which is all found within the Lord Jesus Christ and empowered by spirit within us and and again Joel chapter 1 verse 14 spiritual leaders in Joel they declared a holy fast so they would have called a nation you know they would have called the assembly they would have called a sacred assembly summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord

[21 : 48] and sometimes as churches collectively collaboratively we call the members together that we fast together when we earnestly want to seek the Lord and of course everybody has liberty so it's not something mandatory everybody needs to do but sometimes it's a good practice that we do call together that we seek the Lord's face we seek direction we seek answers for him we seek for his guidance for us collectively as a church and then lastly you know health benefits fasting does

have health benefits as scientifically they would tell you study shows that there is some great health benefits within fasting so I'm only saying these things to say not exactly that will be your experience but it is something that as believers at times we sacrifice ourselves to give ourselves to the Lord and we fast to seek his face to see how he might answer us he may answer us in a way that's favorable he may not answer us so likewise you know as the Pharisees and John's disciples were fasting

Jesus disciples did not need to fast then but there would be a time when they would fast so we see that so we see that and then you know he goes on straight from there in verse 21 to verse 22 he talks about no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth and an old garment otherwise the new piece will pull away the old and they'll make it here now what Jesus is doing now he's ushering in a new era he's ushering in the new testament the new covenant so they're coming out of the old testament and coming into the new testament and that's going to be fully established when he dies for our sins upon the cross and his blood is shed for us so um just as a new unshrunk cloth cannot co-exist with an old garment because um new cloth obviously you know it's new old cloth you know that's shrunk and it's already been stretched you put a new one on there it's not gonna it's not gonna marry together and and what what Jesus is saying in this is the kingdom of God cannot be regarded merely as a patch over the regulations of the mosaic law and the extra biblical tradition so you know you cannot add it to that it's going to be a new way a new confidence going to be established you can't join it to that just as we know the law was something there to help the people to see their thoughts hopefully that they could not adhere to the law but Jesus is coming with grace and truth he's coming with something new and that is what is going to be established there so he uses that illustration for them so we see that and then he comes into verse 23 verse 24 so we see the pharisees it started earlier they complain about Jesus eating with sinners then they complain about Jesus disciples not fasting now they come again and they're going to complain with their traditional legalistic ways they're going to approach again now so we see verse 23 and verse 24 one sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields and as his disciples walked along they began to pick some heads of grain the pharisees said to him look why are you doing what is lawful on the sabbath sorry why are they doing what is lawful on the sabbath unlawful on the sabbath so Mark's narrative highlights different groups of people seeking answers to why Jesus or his disciples do what they do deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 25 if they had adhered to the law of Moses the Torah they should have been fine with this because God addresses everything that says in deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 25 if you go into your neighbor's standing grain you may pluck the ears with your hand but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain God already provided a system to allow the poor and the needy to get sufficient provisions to sustain them the pharisees interpretation sought to guard against work on the sabbath clearly applying their traditions while neglecting God's grace for his people again the pharisees objection is based on Exodus 34 verse 21 it was that the disciples were doing what what sorry what was what what the disciples were doing was equivalent to working on the sabbath so just plucking some grains to eat they considered that as work Jesus answer was based on a holistic view of the scriptures he accused them of not paying careful attention to the scriptures which implies that where human needs exist allowance can be made God is not a legalistic God God cares about his creation he cares about his people as we saw countless times as we will see in the text on the sabbath in the synagogue Jesus will take the opportunity to heal people rather than legalistic views consider don't heal people today it's a sabbath we shouldn't be working leave them in a place of captivity leave them in a place of bondage we are to be greatly encouraged the way the Lord looks at us he's concerned about us he's concerned about our lives he's concerned about how we live he relates to us on a holistic point of view so he continues this conversation carries on now right in verse 25 and 26 he answered have you not heard about David so to counter react and help them based on you know them saying that they're working on a sabbath Jesus goes in to help them with a narrative he tells them right have you not heard what David did when he was in his company when he was hungry now that refers back to 1 Samuel chapter 21 to 6 right Jesus goes on to emphasize that the restrictive pharisees interpretation of the law does not take into account the situation of the need in which David and his men found themselves in also so um we will find in 1 Samuel 20 sorry 1 Samuel 21 to 6 that David ate the bread of presence so it follows that at least in the case of need actions are allowed on a sabbath that otherwise might not be permitted because that bread of presence was for the priests that was that was left there but David when he was on the run he took it we furthermore see within

this that jesus quotes that they've you know the the event mark written about in regards to david occurred when abimelech in 1 chapter 22 9 to 14 not his son abitoir so it was actually abimelech but jesus quoted abitoir who later became iron priest and um yeah we do see in that narrative that remaining as the high priest in the days of david that um yeah he was the high priest at that time so jesus helps them to see that in the presence and the need of mankind god's creation that that is the heart of the gospel god is concerned about people he's not legalistic he's confirmed about his creation who he created he wants us to find liberty he wants us to find freedom in him and that's why he came so that we could be set free from the captivity in the laws of the land and the laws of man so we see that and here's and and then he goes on as i said the last two verses right that the sabbath was made for man not man for sabbath so man is not made to fit into the laws of sabbath sabbath is there for man to rest as we know in genesis 2 3 that god blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day and he rested from all of his work and he does the same and he adains that same day for us and um the correct interpretation of the law is that it was put in place primarily that we could take time to reflect and acknowledge all that god done in his universal work in our work in the work of our lives in the work of all that we see around us and here's a brief history of where that comes from right really deuteronomy chapter 5 verse 15 this is where it comes from you know really he says to them you shall remember that you were slaves in the land of egypt so when he spoke to his people the hebrews the jews

when he brought them out of 400 years of slavery we can only but imagine what slavery was like none of us would like to experience that experience though we may understand it in a way that we may have been slaves to sin but we may not feel the harshness and see the reality what it was really like being slave in a land where you probably work seven days a week no break no rest you're a commodity and this is how the jewish people lived they were slaves maybe if they was ill they were sick they may have had that time so god ordained that for them he had to help them to have their mind renewed when you live a certain way for a long time that just becomes natural for you to continue living in the same light of what you've been taught and what you know so that's where god helps them to understand they need to have that sabbath he has created that for them for them to rest and i would say for us today in our mainstream cultural society sometimes it tries to shackles us in chains as secular world has values where it dictates to us that our life values are in what we achieve or produce and that we are not valued unless we accomplish more whatever it may cost us that's just the tide of secular society but again god gives us this rest on the sabbath he's provided for us as we acknowledge we are not slaves to an economical system which would encourage us to work 24 7 to be the best we can be and strive for the rewards that it so easily entice us to achieve as we rest in god's sabbath whatever that looks like whatever day of the week that is we publicly proclaim to the world and to one another each other that we are not slaves but we are of free men and women purchased by the blood of jesus christ who defeated every spiritual full force of evil at the cross and we affirm that human beings have infinite value and worth apart from the productivity and that god's love is the most important reality in the universe so with these verses here it's a call for us a hope that we will acknowledge Jesus calls us to be his guest of honor he is the bridegroom he sees us as the bride he calls each and every one of us to acknowledge who he is but first we have to acknowledge who we are we are all flawed in one way or another we all need a savior and as guests as honor he puts on a wonderful feast and a banquet for us and we are also likewise to invite other people to hear this good news that they can be part of his guest list and with that in his presence we will experience that fullness of joy and as we continue as a church that is merging together two churches becoming one part of his universal body the lord is doing a new thing it's not going to be exactly how each individual church is used to do things it will be according exactly as god's word proclaimed that we live our vocation and our profession as our faith as Jesus Christ being our lord and our savior and with all of that also we do want to find time to take time to have our rest that we can glorify god and realize and acknowledge it's not by our power or by our might but it's by my spirit says the lord amen we're going to pray father god we thank you for all that you have done through your beloved son Jesus Christ

lord i pray that you continue to help us lord that when we sway when we may be influenced by legalistic ways or rules father that govern us lord i pray that you would help us to measure lord to see that we are in line with your word and your truth lord we thank you that you have come with grace and truth thank you lord that you called us to be guests through trusting and believing in you lord father help us as many of us come from many different backgrounds many different traditions many thought processes lord but help us lord that we adhere to your word and your truth and we

respond to your invitation and accept you into our hearts into our lives and lord help us greatly lord to enjoy the new work that you in doing in us for you work in us to will and do your good pleasure so lord again today may we enjoy may we enjoy this liberty and this freedom and everything that we do lord help us that we do it for your glory and praise in jesus name amen you