



Pastor Kyle Mercer
Jesus Redefines Everything

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Mark 2:18-3:35

BIG IDEA – JESUS CAME TO BRING THE GOSPEL & END RELIGION

Good morning, Sunday morning church! How are we? Hey, listen. This is an incredible weekend. Why am I wearing this tee shirt, you may ask? It's because this is the weekend, if you didn't get it with that video, the college students are back. We are excited. There are some in this service. There are going to be a ton next service, and many of our college students, maybe most of our college students, come to the Sunday evening service.

Let me tell you a couple of things. If you're new, welcome. If you're visiting, welcome. Maybe you've been around for a while, and you don't know this. Here's a question. We're about a six-year-old church. Why did we come to Winston-Salem? Well, there are a lot of answers to that.

One of the reasons we came to Winston was we saw the large medical community and were excited about investing in that. That's great. We've seen a lot of medical students and residents and fellows and attendings, and I'm learning the language. They're all in our church. It's great. So, we're glad about that.

We also came here because of what we saw happening in the city. If you're new here, this city is in its third revitalization. A long time ago it was like, "We're a tobacco city." We're not a tobacco city anymore, right? Then it was, "We're a banking city." Then it was, "Charlotte! You took all of our banks, so now we're trying to figure out who we are." What we found out was, "Okay. Maybe we are a medical city with a private institution at the center that's trying to make it with arts and innovation."

So we came and were excited about that. We came because of the spiritual state of this city. This city is overchurched and under-reached. There are a lot of great churches in the city, but we came and said, "We want to bring the gospel and continue

to do all the things, follow in the steps of where God has already been leading churches here." That's why we came.

One of the main reasons we came is the college campuses. If you didn't know, in this fairly small city of just a quarter million people, there are a lot of college campuses, and they're all unique. There's Wake Forest, a Top 25 school. There's Winston-Salem State, a historically black college. There's UNC School of the Arts, an artsy college. There's Salem College, an all-girls school. There's Carolina University, a Christian school. There's Forsyth Tech, a community college. You get it.

Here's our heart for college students. Here's what we have found. Think about your own life. I'm looking around. Many of you are out of college. You've been to college. Most people don't look at college as a neutral time for them spiritually. Think about your college experience. It's normally a spiritual greenhouse or a spiritual wasteland.

You either go, "That's where I came to Christ. That's where I was discipled. That's where I learned how to study my Bible. That's where I learned how to share my faith. That's where I learned what Christian community was," or you look back and go, "I'm still repenting. My marriage got off to a terrible start because of that."

Here's what we know. When you're in college, the cement is wet. That's a good way to think about it. It's like, you're going to college, you're 18 to 22, and you're deciding, "What am I going to believe about family and finances and friends and faith? Am I going to personalize and invigorate and own the faith that maybe my family raised me in or am I going to forget and forsake it?"

So, here's what we're hoping to do. Let me just say it, because there are college students in here. We want to invest in you. We think the college campus is a unique people group (one way to think about it). It's a unique population. People are only there for four years, and according to a recent Harvard study, only 6.7 percent of people in the world even get the chance to go to college.

Then everyone is in college for... Well, some of you were there for four years. Others of you were there for five or six years. Then from there you go everywhere. We're hoping that people who are part of our church, whether at Wake or Winston-Salem State or wherever they are, would look back on their college experience and see it as a spiritual greenhouse, not as a spiritual wasteland; see it as a place where they learned how to follow Jesus and help others find and follow Jesus.

So, let's pray for our college students. No one goes to college to become a Christian. No one drives down from the north, heading to Wake Forest, "I'm going to become a Christian at college. That's what I'm going to do." But God often works miraculously. We've seen a lot of that, and we'll be telling you more stories about that in the weeks

to come of how we've seen college students come to faith in Christ and be disciplined in our church. So, let's pray for the college students, and then let's dive into the gospel of Mark. Let's pray.

Lord, we pray for the college students. We think of the thousand Wake Forest freshmen who just moved in, literally from all over the world, but especially all over our nation. We pray for the Christian freshmen who are going to have to make a decision of how personal and how public their faith is going to be.

We pray for people, because even in those first six weeks of the college campus... So many of the relationships that are going to end up defining and directing the rest of their college life happen in the first six weeks. So, we just pray that particularly the Christians from our church who are on these college campuses would be there to meet students, especially freshmen, with the help and the hope of Jesus. We pray this in your name, amen.

All right. If you're new, welcome. We are in the second book in the New Testament. It's the gospel of Mark. Most think it's the first gospel written. You can turn to Mark 2:18. We are flying over this book, so, sorry; we're going to cover about a chapter today. It's an incredible book, an incredible gospel. We're looking at the man, the mission, the message, and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

We're going to be in this book for five months together. Let's just dive right in. Turn with me to chapter 2, verse 18. Here's what it says. **"Now John's disciples..."** Who's John? He's John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer, or as I affectionately love to call him, the "First Baptist." That's who he is.

"...and the Pharisees..." Now, when you see the "Pharisees," basically also think Sadducees. Think scribes. It's all of the religious leaders. They're all kind of bunched together. **"...were fasting."** We'll talk about that. **"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?'"**

Notice that people are confused about who Jesus is and what he's doing and why his disciples are acting how they're acting. Here's what we're going to see today. We're going to see three or four different accounts of Jesus interacting with a bunch of different people. Primarily, we're going to see him interacting with the Pharisees.

Here's one way to think about today's message. This is Jesus and conflict. This is Jesus and controversy. This is Jesus and critics. Here's the truth. If you're going to follow Jesus... I know not everybody in here follows Jesus. I know some of you are seekers and some of you are skeptics and some of you your spouse brought you and some of you your parents brought you and some of you are just checking it out. Fair enough.

But if you're a Christian, if you're a follower of Christ... Just remember, by the way, we follow a guy who was rejected, betrayed, and crucified, yet somehow we think our lives are going to be super easy. Here's what we see with Jesus. Jesus had critics. Jesus had controversy. Jesus had conflict.

Let me just try to bring this down for all of us. If you're going to be a faithful Christian... This is just the truth. This is one of the litmus tests of whether you are a faithful Christian. You're going to have some controversy in your life. You're going to have some conflict in your life. You're going to have some critics in your life.

Like, I remember... I was a brand-new Christian. I was a freshman at Elon University. I was trying to be a faithful Christian on my hall and a public Christian on my hall. Back then, we had these things called *answering machines*. I had a cell phone, but it was a dumbphone, not a smartphone. We had an answering machine.

I remember one of the guys on the hall who thought he was pretty funny called and left a voicemail on my answering machine. "Kyle, it's God. Calm down. You're scaring me." It was funny. We laughed about it. I showed some of the other guys on the hall. It was his way to say, "Kyle, you're a little too serious about your faith."

Do you know, by the way, that's what's going to happen? If no one has ever thought you're too serious about your faith, then I'm not sure if you're a real Christian. If no one has ever thought, "You're taking this a little too seriously. The way you're raising your kids, the way you're spending your time, the way you're giving your money... It's a little serious." Let me say it *this* way.

Tim Keller... It's always good to quote Tim Keller. If you don't know who that is, he's a former pastor in New York City. He's in his 70s, a godly man, faithful ministry for years. Here's what he says: if everybody likes you, you're probably unfaithful to Christ. I mean, we have a verse for that. These are Jesus' words. "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." He also said *this*, though: if everybody doesn't like you, you're probably a jerk. You have to hold those in tension. That's where we are.

So, here's what I want us to see. If you are ever going to stand up for something, if you are ever going to step out, if you are ever, in any situation... It could be Thanksgiving dinner. If you're going to speak up, you're going to expose yourself, you're going to expose your beliefs, you're going to expose your convictions, and what's going to happen is there's going to be some criticism.

Now listen. Jesus' greatest critics were religious people. Strange, I know. Let me just tell you, I've seen the same thing in our city. It wouldn't be appropriate for me to name the church, so I won't. When we came here, there was a church that said, "You can meet here for all your launch team meetings this summer." I met with the

associate pastor. I said, "Oh, thank God," because back then, we were so poor we couldn't pay attention. That's how poor we were.

They were going to basically let us use this place for free, and we were like, "This is great." We had a place all summer. I remember calling Pastor Dave. He wasn't even living in Winston yet. "I got a place for us." A week later, I get an email from the associate pastor. "I'm sorry. My senior pastor found out you're from The Summit Church. He doesn't like that church. We have rescinded our offer for you guys to have meetings here."

I thought, "Well, that was strange. Maybe that's a one-off." Well, then Pastor Dave moves here. While he's looking for houses, he stops by a church, which I also won't name, a different church. He's excited. "Hey, we're coming to the city. This is awesome. We want to reach people for Christ. We want to make disciples."

He meets with an executive pastor of a church. The executive pastor says, "Winston-Salem doesn't need any more churches." That's the religious spirit. You know the religious spirit because the religious spirit is territorial. The religious spirit doesn't want any change.

Here's what I want you to see today. Jesus got in so much conflict (here's the main point of this passage, the main point of the message) because he was bringing something new that didn't fit into the old. Jesus did not come to reform religion; he came to end religion. We're going to see this as we see fasting, as we see the Sabbath, and as we see the family. So, let's get started. We have a lot to cover.

01 JESUS & FASTING (NEW CENTER)

Go back with me to chapter 2, verse 18. Here's what it says: ***"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?'"*** He's talking about fasting. What is fasting? The word *fast* in the Greek means to cease from food.

Here's a good way to think about fasting. Fasting is when you starve your flesh to strengthen your soul. For most people it's food, but some people have medical issues and it can't be food or some people have some other big issue in their life. "I need to fast social media. I need to fast streaming. I need to fast alcohol. I need to fast this hobby that's getting too big in my life," or whatever it is. People can fast different things.

Here's the thing about fasting. Like I told you, it's when you starve your flesh to strengthen your soul. Now, when we hear "fasting" today, what do we normally think of? Intermittent fasting. Right? That's what you all think of. I saw recently that the police officer from *Stranger Things* lost 70 pounds from season 3 to season 4. He said, basically, the only thing he did was intermittent fasting. I was like, "What?"

I read more about this. You can only eat food for four hours of the day. You don't eat food for 20 hours; you eat it for four hours. Here's why I say this. Most of us, when we think about fasting, think about the physical benefits of fasting. God gave us fasting not for the... Yes, it gives me a clearer mind or, yes, I can lose some weight. God gave us fasting for spiritual reasons.

Let me give you three reasons. This isn't the main point of the text here, but just to help you. When it comes to fasting, why might you fast? Fasting is one of the ways you turbocharge your faith. A brand-new Christian... He'd just started fasting one time, and he was still raw in how he communicated things.

He said, "Kyle, when I fast, I feel like I'm cheating. When I fast, I feel like I'm cutting corners, because when I fast, my prayers feel like they go faster to heaven. When I fast, I feel like the Bible comes alive to me. When I fast, the things that are in me that I couldn't get because I covered them with food I can now feel." So, that's one reason you'd fast.

Here's another reason you'd fast: if you have big decisions to make. I mean, you should be fasting occasionally. We'll see this. Jesus assumes we fast. You should fast big decisions. "Should I get married? Should we have another kid? Should we buy this house? Should we change this job? Should we pursue foster care and adoption?" It's like, "Well, we should probably fast about this."

Fasting gets all of the mess out of our lives so we can more clearly hear from God, but also, fasting is often (we'll see this today as well) a time to mourn. Sometimes, if you're stuck in a sin, you might want to fast. "I just keep giving in to it." Part of what you do when you fast is you communicate to God, "I'm serious. I'm so serious I'm not eating today. That's how serious I am about dealing with this thing."

Well, how was fasting back then? The Jews were only supposed to fast once a year. They only had one day on their calendar every year where they had to fast. It was the Day of Atonement. It was Yom Kippur. So, that was the only time where they *had* to fast. Here's what the Pharisees did. The Pharisees took fasting and made it a badge of honor.

What the Pharisees would do (we know this from other writings) is they would fast twice a week. They would fast every Monday and every Thursday. Jesus would tell us

later that when they fasted, what they would do is they would look really sad, and they would let everybody know, "I'm fasting." That's kind of how they did it.

Here's what happened. This is what's wrong with religion. The Pharisees put themselves at the center of fasting. I want you to understand this. If you're not a Christian, I just want you to know how broken Christians are. Christians are so broken and so depraved and so messed up and so selfish that we are somehow (I don't know how we're able to do it) able to make everything about us.

You go, "How could we make fasting about us?" Well, it's going to be a way for people to think we're awesome. How can prayer be about us? Well, all I do is just give God my grocery list of all of the things I want. We can make Bible reading about us. "Let me just search the Scriptures to see about my finances. I need some more verses on how to work." We've made it all about us.

Now, today you don't see people fasting and showing that. What you see today is people reading their Bible for five minutes and then taking an hour to post about it online. "Here's my Bible next to my journal next to my cup of coffee. #blessed" Or something like that. It's a silly example. We're not saying you can never post about your devotional life. We're not saying everybody who does that has bad motives, but it's a way we do that.

What Jesus is going to do... I want you to see this. This is so important. This is so profound. Jesus responds to their question about fasting. Look at verse 19. ***"And Jesus said to them..."*** Now, if I were Jesus, I'd probably be like, "Listen, guys. I just got done with a 40-day fast. Don't talk to me about fasting." Jesus is godlier than I am, obviously. He doesn't say that. Look at what he says.

"Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day."

Two things I want us to understand. First, he basically says that while he's on earth it's not a time of fasting; it's a time of feasting. He says that when he leaves it'll be a time of fasting. So this is the time of fasting. The main reason you fast is because you miss Christ. That's why you would fast. The deepest reason you would fast is you would say, "I miss Jesus. I want him to return. I want to be with him, but I have so much..."

I mean, is this not true for Americans? We have so much stuff in our lives that I forget that, and I need to get all this out of my mind to remember how much I miss him. But he says, "Look. Now is not the time." *Now* is the time for fasting, but he was saying

when he was writing this... He goes, "Now is not the time for fasting. It's the time for feasting."

Do you see the illustration? He says, "I'm the bridegroom." Basically, "I'm the husband. I'm the head of this. I'm throwing this massive wedding." When would be the absolute worst time to fast? During a wedding, especially if rich people are throwing the wedding. You're like, "This is awesome. There's a live band. They have real food. They have dessert. This is amazing."

You wouldn't want to fast during that. In the same way, you wouldn't want to fast during a vacation. The principle in Scripture, by the way, is that... We've known this for a long time. This is common knowledge. All of life is supposed to be in moderation, but there are times for fasting, and there are times for feasting.

If you only feast, that's hedonism. If you only fast, it's like, well, you're a glutton and a drunkard and you die of a heart attack at 42. If you only fast... Well, we don't really have problems with that, but historically, there have been problems with that. That's asceticism. That's the monastery mindset. That's "I forgot God is a good Creator and wants me to enjoy."

Here's what I want you to really see. Do you see that Jesus puts himself at the center of fasting? This is what's so controversial. This is what creates so much conflict. Jesus says, "Guys, here's the problem: you've been the center of your life." By the way, that happens in religion or rebellion. I'll show you how this happens.

Religious people put themselves at the center of their religion. "It's about me being a good person. It's about me showing everybody else how good I am." Rebellious people put themselves at the center of their lives. "It's about whatever immediate, cheap, instant pleasure I want." Jesus confronts both. He's particularly confronting the religious people. He says, "Actually, I'm supposed to be the center of fasting."

Here's the application for all of our lives, those of us who would say we're Christians: *if Jesus isn't the center of it, you're doing it wrong*. If you feel like I did in my preparation, well, then I have to change a lot of things. If Jesus isn't the center of my Bible reading, I'm doing it wrong. Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, and you don't know they point to me." If I'm reading my Bible and it's not about Jesus, it's wrong.

Somehow, we can make the church about us. The church is about my needs and my kids and my desires and my hobbyhorses and my pet projects. Somehow, we took the bride of Christ and made it about us. What you have to do... This is why God gave us a heart and a mind, the ability for reflection and affection. I have to think hard, "What

does it look like for Jesus to be the center of this?" I think about college students. What does it look like for Jesus to be the center of your academics?

I thought of one story as I thought about that. I had a friend, and he was taking Biology 101. This really happened. Imagine this. In the first day of Biology 101, the teacher goes, "I want each of you to tell me why you're in this class." I don't remember all of the other answers the kids gave. "I'm here and want to learn about *this*. I'm here and want to learn about *this*."

Imagine this. This is my friend Nick. He was bold enough... The first day of class, he said, "This may sound strange. I'm here to learn more about God. I think by taking this biology class I'm going to learn about the creation, and I'm going to learn more about God." Wow! That's somebody who somehow was putting God at the center of even how he was thinking about biology.

So, Jesus confronts them, but he tells two very interesting short parables that unpack why Jesus came. I want us to get these. These are not often taught on, but they're profound. Look at these. This is right after this parable. Look at verse 21. ***"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment."*** He's using a sewing parable. All of the guys are like, "I don't understand sewing." Jesus spoke both to men and women. He wants to use different illustrations.

"If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made." Basically, he's saying if you have this old garment with holes in it... I know, if you're under 30, you're like, "Wait a second. I buy clothes with holes in them." That's a new idea in human history. You're like, "I spent \$300 to have a kid in China rip holes in these." Too soon. Okay.

Back then, it was not cool to have holes in your clothes. I want you to understand that. That's key to understanding this passage. So, what he would say is... It's very simple. If you take a new patch and put it on an old garment with holes in it, the new patch hasn't shrunk yet, so when it's washed, it's going to shrink, and it's going to rip away, and the patch will be destroyed, and the old garment will be destroyed.

Now look at what he says. This is connected. ***"And no one puts new wine..."*** Some of you go, "I don't know anything about sewing, but I know a lot about wine." All right. ***"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."*** Basically, what he's saying here...

Wineskins were made out of goatskins. If you had a new wineskin out of new goatskin, it was very flexible. It was very expandable. It was very elastic. So, you'd put

new wine into a new wineskin. Not a big deal, because when you capped it, the wine would still ferment, and it would expand, and that's fine.

But if you put new wine into an old wineskin, it was brittle and wooden. You would think it would work at first, but as soon as you put the cap on and gave it some time, it would explode with the fermentation, and you'd ruin the new wine and the old wineskin.

Now here's what you want to ask. When you read parables, and especially when they're right next to each other, you want to go, "What's the point? What do these two parables have in common? One is about a patch. One is about wineskins." Here's the point of these parables: there are things that, if you combine them, you ruin both of them. Do you see that? The patch is ruined and the garment is ruined. The new wine is ruined and the old wineskin is ruined.

There *are* things you can combine in life. There is iced tea, and there is lemonade. By themselves they're amazing. Then there's iced tea and lemonade together. Arnold Palmer. Even better. Right? You can either put sweet tea, if you're from the South, or if you're biblical like me, un-sweet tea. That's enough. I mean, how sweet do y'all need this to be anyway? Come on. Then you add the lemonade.

We all know the experience of "Here are two things. They're good by themselves. When I mix them together, maybe you could argue they're as good or better." That's not what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about something like *this*. Fruit? Good. Cake? Good. Fruitcake? Horrible. Who came up with the idea of fruitcake? You know it's terrible. Every time you think about fruitcake, I want you to think about Jesus.

The whole idea is you ruin both things. Here's what Jesus is saying. He tells us things in parables so we would think about them for a while, and he would give us images to think about. What he's saying is when you try to add Christianity, Christ, the message of Christ, following Christ, to an old life... That's what the old garment is. It's your old life. It doesn't work.

I don't know how to say this any more clearly than what Jesus is talking about is the radical nature of conversion. What he's saying is Christianity doesn't fit *on* your old life as a patch. Even maybe more profound... Sorry, guys. Christianity doesn't even fit *inside* your old life. Jesus didn't come to patch up your old life. He came to give you a whole new life.

Jesus didn't come to make you a better version of yourself. He came to make you a new person. My concern is most people, especially in Winston-Salem, especially in 2022, view Christianity... I'll meet these people all the time. Christianity is a patch on

an already decent life that has one little hole. "My teenage kids are breaking my heart. I need a patch." I'm like, "Sorry. Go ahead and try that."

This is why people, by the way, six months into trying Christianity... And by "trying Christianity" I mean... I call it *patch Christianity*, throwing a patch on. They're like, "It didn't work for me." It's like, "Sorry. Because it doesn't work that way." "I just need a little help with my finances. Jesus, don't touch all of my life, but get over here and help my marriage. I just need a patch on this addiction in my life."

Part of it is we don't even understand the whole garment is ruined. We need a whole new garment. A lot of people view Christianity as a piece of the pie. You meet people like this all the time. Functionally, Christianity is like 10 percent of what they do. They're grateful for it, and they like a good sermon. They like singing a couple of songs. They're glad their kids have something.

But really, when you look under the hood, it's like, "This is one of seven things you do of equal value. You've got your hobbies, and you've got your education, and you've got your work. Christianity is a piece of the pie." Jesus is saying, "I promise you that doesn't work." He actually shows us an example back then of how they would try to put a patch on their Christianity, on their faith. Let me show you. This is how I think many of us try to do this.

02 JESUS & THE SABBATH (NEW CALENDAR)

Look at this next interaction. The whole Bible is connected, so look at what it says here. Verse 23: ***"One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?'"***

Here's what they do. The Sabbath was supposed to be a gift to us. It was supposed to serve us. It was supposed to bless us. It was not supposed to be a burden. The Sabbath was basically... You tithe your finances. The Bible talks about tithing, and the Bible also talks about tithing your time. The way you tithe your time (if you do the math, it's actually 14 percent) is you give one day a week to the Lord fully.

You rest, and you say, "Lord, I'm going to trust you in the same way that, when I give 10 percent, I'm trusting you to do more with 90 percent than I could do with 100." That's what you do when you tithe. When you take a day off, when you take a sabbath, you go, "God, I'm actually trusting you. I'm trusting you to do more in six days than I could in seven." Chick-fil-A made it work somehow. They figured it out.

Here's the thing. What happened here... I want you to see this. This is the patch religious people put, and this is the patch you're going to be tempted to put. Instead of really getting to the heart of the issue, which is the Sabbath is a day for me to rest and trust God, they made it about themselves through rules. They added more rules. Do you see? They said, "Is he picking grain on the Sabbath?" See, what religious people do as a patch on their lives is they try to create rules they can obey.

For the Sabbath... I won't go through all 39. There were 39 rules. One rule was you could only walk 1,999 paces on the Sabbath. If you walked 2,000, that was considered going farther than a Sabbath day's walk or a Sabbath day's journey, and you "broke the Sabbath." Is there a verse on that? No. Some religious guy made that up. You could write one letter on the Sabbath, but you could not write two. You could not untie a knot on the Sabbath. I am *not* kidding about that.

This is really important to understand about the human condition. Why do we make rules about the rules? Some of you grew up in a religious home like this. We've had certain moms in our church basically confess through tears, "I was a religious mom, and it hurt my kids. Lots of laws, little love. Lots of rules, little relationship."

So, you may want to ask, "Why do people have so many rules?" Well, there are at least two reasons. There are always more than this, but one reason is people like a lot of rules because it lets you be in control. You can be checking up on everybody if they're keeping the rules, and you can be the guardian of all that.

The heart issue here is it's easier to make rules... What the Pharisees would do is they would make rules they could keep so they would feel good about themselves. Is it harder to take a day off and trust God and truly cease from work and think about all God has done in your life and be grateful? Is *that* harder or is it harder to just not walk 2,000 paces? It's a lot easier to not walk 2,000 paces. That's why they did that.

Is it easier to worship God, give him a unique day, or is it easier just to not write two letters? It's easier not to write two letters. These are patches people put on their lives that make them feel good about it. Today, it could be the patch of, "Well, I'll go to church, and I'll get in Community Group, and I'll occasionally do a devotional." These are patches. They're not whole new lives.

03 JESUS & THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND (NEW CAPACITY)

Look at what happens next on the Sabbath. Verse 27: "***And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'***" Then he puts himself at the

center of the Sabbath, by the way. **"So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."** Now look here. Another thing happens on the Sabbath.

"Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand." Literally, in the Greek, a *hard hand*. This man is disabled, and he is unable to use one of his hands. It was hardened and stiff and unable to be used. **"And they** [the Pharisees] **watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him."**

Here's what we have in this situation. I want us to see this. We have a man with a hardened hand, and we have Pharisees with hardened hearts. Now, Jesus can work with a hardened hand (we're going to see that in a minute), but it's very hard... I mean, Jesus can do anything, but what hindered the work of Christ the most in people's lives was hardened hearts.

We're going to see what they do here. Look here. It says in verse 2, **"And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him."** We don't know this for sure, but most commentators, as we try to put the story together, think that potentially what happened was these men, the Pharisees, planted the man with the withered hand.

They knew Jesus was a good Jew so he was going to go to synagogue, so they may have brought this man in, and they were watching him to see what he would do. Now here's what's really interesting. I think this is really pastorally helpful and encouraging to us. They knew something about Jesus that we need to know. It's that when Jesus walks into a room, he's going to be most attracted to the need in that room.

Some of you feel like, "Does Jesus see my loneliness? Does Jesus see my anxiety? Does Jesus see my depression? Does Jesus see my grieving over the loss of my son? Does Jesus see our struggle with infertility? Does Jesus see just how hurting and how lonely I am?" The answer from this text is "Absolutely." In fact, he's attracted to need, and thank God, because we're all needy.

It's the opposite of us. What do *we* normally do when we're in a room? Maybe it's just me, but we don't normally walk into a room and think, "Who can I serve?" We normally think something like (maybe it's not this articulated), "Who in this room could serve me? Does somebody have influence? Does somebody have a network? Does somebody have affluence? Is somebody in here connected? If I knew somebody in this room, could they push me along further, faster in some area?"

Fair enough. Maybe there's a place for that. But Jesus comes and sees the need of this man. Look at what he does here. Verse 3: **"And he said to the man with the withered**

hand, 'Come here.'" He wants to honor this man, and he wants to publicly show his power. ***"And he said to them [Jesus said to the Pharisees], 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent."***

Here's what Jesus does. By the way, part of what we're trying to do in this series, among many other things, is we're trying to look at the life of Jesus and figure out how to better make disciples, how to better reach people for Christ. One of the things we see here (we'll see this again and again) is that Jesus is very good at asking questions.

You and I need to get better at asking questions. The world looks at Christians as those who think we have all of the answers, and we do have some answers about the most important things in the world, but it's not because we're more spiritual. It's not because we're smarter. It's not because we're special. It's because God has revealed these in Scripture.

I think we need to get better at asking questions. There's a book on this called *Questioning Evangelism* by Randy Newman. He's a messianic Jew, a Jew who came to faith in Christ. He did ministry on a college campus. He tells one of my favorite stories. Imagine this. He was in some big investigative Bible study at some big state school. He said there were 20 or 30 guys around.

They were talking, walking through whatever gospel, or something, and he said some arrogant guy... Well, I added *arrogant*. He didn't say he was arrogant, but you'll see. He was arrogant. Some arrogant guy says, "Hold on!" in the middle of this Bible study with 30 people. "Hold on! So, what you're telling me is that everybody who doesn't believe in Jesus is going to hell. Is that what you're saying? Everyone on this college campus who doesn't believe in Jesus is going to hell?"

Now, if someone said that to me, I'd start thinking, "Okay. How do I explain the doctrine of sin? How do I talk about how a sin created in finite time against an infinite God could deserve an infinite punishment?" I start going theology. He doesn't do that. He looks at the guy and says, "Do you believe in hell?" The guy says, "No." He goes, "Don't worry about it." That's just like Jesus.

It gets better. A different guy in the group said, "I believe in hell." He said, "Do you think anyone is going to be there?" The guy said, "I do." He said, "Why do you think someone is going to be there or not be there?" He said by asking questions, they were able to get to the heart of the issues. They were letting people think. We need to get better at asking questions.

Jesus asked a question. They won't even answer it. So, look at what happens here. Verse 5: ***"And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of***

heart..." Okay. Some of us need a different view of Jesus. Some of you think Jesus never gets angry. Some of you just think Jesus, meek and mild. Some of you think Jesus, the Galilean peasant who only drinks decaf coffee.

Now, Jesus didn't always get angry. He didn't even maybe often get angry. Obviously, there's a difference between unrighteous anger and righteous anger. Do you see Jesus is both angry and grieved? There are some things you probably need to get angry about. I know how anger works with people. Here's how anger works with people.

Some of you had a bad experience with anger. Mom was angry. Dad was angry. Grandpa was angry. Grandma was angry. Your boss was angry. Your ex was angry. So you told yourself at some point, "I'm never going to be angry." The Bible says, "Be slow to anger." The Bible says, "In your anger do not sin."

What we see from Jesus is anger should always be connected to grief. Do you see this? "I'm angry at sin, and I'm grieved at how it hurts people." So, you look at racism. You go, "I'm angry." It's an assault on the image of God. I'm angry at it. I'm also grieved. I'm grieved when we hear all of the stories of the people who have been affected by racism.

We get angry at abortion, the intentional killing of an innocent life. That's something to get angry about. It needs to be tempered with grief. We're grieved at millions and millions of babies lost. We're grieved at all of the women who have been lied to who were told, "This is a one-time decision; you're going to get over it," and then they never do get over it. We're grieved at the lies that are told. We get angry at abuse. We get grieved at all of the stories of the victims of abuse.

So, what Jesus does here is he gets angry. I love what Martin Luther, that famous monk, said about anger. He basically said, "I love to get angry." The right kind of angry. He essentially said, "Because when you're angry you think better. When you're angry, everything gets aligned. When I'm angry, I write better. I preach better. I think better."

Jesus gets angry, he gets grieved, and look at what he does next. Verse 5: "[He] **said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.**"

What I want us to notice here is another unique thing about Jesus. If you're reading this, he asked the man to do something the man was unable to do. It's almost cruel if Jesus wouldn't empower him to do it. To say to a disabled person, if their right arm is disabled, "Move your disabled hand," or to say to somebody who has been in a

wheelchair, "Get up. Stand up. It's time for you to stand up," or somebody who can't hear, "I need you to listen to me right now."

All that's really cruel unless Jesus is going to give you a command and create in you the ability to obey that command. That's the point of this story. Whatever Jesus commands us to do, he gives us a new power to do it. Here's why that's important. In your life right now, Jesus is telling you... If you're trying to really follow Jesus, he's telling you to do something... Usually in every area of our lives or every season of our lives, we feel like, "I can't do it."

There's a sin, and he told you to repent of it. Here's what you do. You go, "Jesus, you've asked me to do this. Would you please empower me to do this?" Sometimes it's to love a difficult spouse. "Well, you don't know how selfish he is!" "You don't know how selfish she is!" Sometimes it's to step out and share your faith. In any area... This is what's so amazing. Jesus doesn't just, from a distance, command us to do something. He comes alongside us and enables us to do it.

So, first we see Jesus comes, and he gives us a new center. He says, "I have to be the center, not yourself." That affects rebellion and religion. Then he says, "I'm going to give you a new capacity." We just saw that. "I'm going to give you new ability." Then he's going to, finally, give us a new community.

04 JESUS & DISCIPLES (NEW COMMUNITY)

In verses 7-12, he goes and teaches on a boat. Let's go to verse 13. ***"And he went up on the mountain..."*** Luke actually tells us he spent all night praying about this. ***"...and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him."*** This is a transition in the book of Mark and in the ministry of Jesus. From this point on, he spends all his time, primarily, with these twelve men.

"And he appointed twelve..." Now, you need to know in the Bible, *twelve* is not a common number to see. This is clearly pointing us back to the twelve tribes. In the Old Testament it was the twelve tribes. He's replacing the twelve tribes with these twelve men. He's saying, "All of Christianity and all of the people of God are now going to reorient and reorganize themselves around me."

"And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be..." Here's the key thing. This is all of discipleship. This is the whole Christian life: that we might be with him. ***"...and he might send them out to preach..."*** To understand the ministry of Jesus is to helpfully understand *your* ministry. Jesus loved the world. He helped many. He discipled a few.

That would be a good purpose for your life. That's all you can do. How are you going to love seven billion people? Well, you pray for the world. We have strategic partnerships. Jesus prayed and cried over Jerusalem. Jesus loved the world. He helped many. He was constrained in his earthly ministry to a body, to time and space, so he helped many.

"Here's some teaching. Hope that helps. Here's some healing. Hope that helps. Here's some casting out of demons. Hope that helps." But he spent all of his time discipling a few. Do you see what it says? They were to do two things: to be with him and to be sent out from him. So, he has mission, he has purpose, and he has vision for these men from the beginning.

Now, I think this is helpful. How do you know who you should invest in? Obviously, you're going to say, "My kids." Yes, you need to invest in them. But if somebody wants to be with you to be discipled... I mean, not exactly like with Jesus. They're not going to live with you for three and a half years.

In a church our size, all the time... A young mom wants to be discipled by some older mom. A young guy wants to be discipled by some older guy. A college student wants to be discipled by some married couple...whatever. Here's how to think about it. Let me give you an acrostic that I think is super helpful. It's the *FAITH* acrostic: *faithful, available, initiative, teachable, hungry*. This may be controversial, but I wouldn't invest in somebody who doesn't show those five attributes.

Faithful. Do they do what they say they're going to do? When somebody wants to be discipled by me, I play this game: "Tag, you're it." "All right. Here. Shoot me an email. Tell me the dates. Here are two books to read before we meet. Tag, you're it." A lot of times I don't get an email. Most times they don't read the books.

Available. Are you available? Were these guys available? I think so. Three and a half years. Most people say, "I'm not very available, but I'm able to watch five seasons of *Better Call Saul*." Gotcha. "I'm still able to work out every day, and I'm able to hang out every weekend, and I'm able to get my 10 hours of sleep." Okay. Maybe you're not very available.

How about *initiative*? "I want to be with you. I want to learn from you. Are you going to the grocery store? Can I help? Do you need help watching the kids? Can I come to where you are? What does your schedule look like?" *Teachable*. "I have a lot to learn. There are so many things I don't know. I don't even know what I don't know, and I need help knowing *that*." Then *hungry*. "I have a desire. I want to grow. I want to learn." As Jesus would say in the Beatitudes, "I hunger and thirst for righteousness."

So, he calls these men to be with him and to send them out. This is a huge conviction of our church. We are not a collecting society. We are a mobilizing and commissioning society. We bring people in so we can hopefully send them out. This is why when you come to our Weekender, it's like... To use that language, that might be a collecting moment. "Hey, let's all come together. Here's the purpose: so that we can all go out where we live, learn, work, and play."

Anyway, Jesus does this. In verses 16-19 (I won't read them to you), he gives us the list. Here's what you need to know: Simon is always mentioned first, and Judas is always mentioned last. In between, the order of the names changes. Judas is mentioned last because he betrayed Christ. Simon is mentioned first because he's going to be the leader of the disciples when Jesus goes to heaven.

Look at what happens here. Verse 20: **"Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it..."** This is the first mention of Jesus' family in the book of Mark. **"...they went out to seize him..."** Wow! The Bible is just honest. It's telling us even Jesus' family was concerned and confused about Jesus. **"...for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"**

So, his family didn't understand him. By the way, that's going to happen to you sometimes if you follow Christ. "What has happened to you?" They were embarrassed, maybe, of how what he was doing would reflect on them. In the next few verses, he has another conflict that I don't have time to get into. He has a conflict again with the Pharisees where he warns them of committing the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

Let me give one minute on this because sometimes people worry, "Have I committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit?" If you're a Christian, you can't commit that sin. It is the final, total, lifelong rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to bring you to Christ. Here's another pastorally helpful thing: if you're worried you've committed the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, you haven't. That's the sign. You're like, "I'm concerned." Nope. Don't worry. It's not you. People who commit that sin don't care.

What I want us to see, though, is he tells that story, but he does what's called a *sandwich*. He talks about family, he gives that story, and then he talks about family one last time. I want us to end with this. Look at this. **"And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him."**

So, you can see, Mom and brothers are concerned. By the way, no mention of Joseph because we think, at this point, Joseph had died. Also something pastorally interesting to think about. Many people think Jesus was potentially raised by a single mom after his late teens. We don't know exactly when Joseph died.

"And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.' And he answered them, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'"

As the story closes for today, we see Jesus redefines everything. He redefines fasting. That was pretty central. He redefines the Sabbath. That was pretty central. He redefines the twelve tribes of Israel with the twelve disciples. You're like, "That's all really interesting." When you see how transformational Jesus Christ is in a person's life... You see it most clearly in what I just read.

Jesus coming into the world is so significant he even transforms how we think about family. Is there a more basic question to ask somebody than, "Who's your mom? Who's your dad? Who's your brother? Who's your sister?" We can take any 2-year-old or 3-year-old out of the kids' ministry and pull them in here, and they don't know their parents' phone number. They don't know their address. They might not know their birth date.

But if you ask, "Who is your mom, who is your dad, and who is your brother?" that's the one question they know, because it's so foundational. Here's what Jesus says: "When I come into the world, I don't get rid of your biological relationships, obviously." Jesus makes sure his mom is taken care of at the end of his life. On the cross, he makes sure John takes care of his mother. He cared about that.

What he's saying is there's something more significant... This was even a bigger deal back then because of how central the family was. There's something more significant than your biological family. It's your spiritual family. What Jesus is saying is that you're born into a family. That's great. Some of us had good families. Some of us had okay families. Some of us had bad families. He said when you become a Christian, you're born again into a whole new family.

I don't have time to unpack all this. This is unbelievably significant. When you realize that spiritual relationships are the most important relationships... Those are the relationships that are going to be primary in your life. Actually, when you come to Christ, he gives you an entire new identity, and being a Christian becomes the most important thing about you.

Now, where do we see the family of God on earth? It's hard to see. Where would you see it? The only place you really clearly see the family of God on earth is local churches. That's why the local church embodied is so important. It's where we get a picture of the family of God on earth.

So, here's what happens at the very end of this story. Everybody is confused about Jesus. The Pharisees are confused. His disciples actually are still kind of confused. We'll see that. Even his own family is confused. What they don't understand is what Jesus is trying to teach us. They'll get it by the end. By the end, we find out Mary believes, his brothers believe, and the disciples all end up believing.

What Jesus is saying at the very end is what I said at the very beginning. Jesus Christ did not come to patch up your old life, but he came to bring an entirely new life. If you're a house, he didn't come to an old West End/Buena Vista/Ardmore house and say, "All right. I need to spend a couple hundred grand and update this thing." It's "I need to bulldoze this thing completely and build a whole new structure."

The way the Bible talks about becoming a Christian is so radical. That's part of what I wanted... We're supposed to be shocked by it. Do you know the Bible says when you give your life to Christ you get a new mind? It's different than your brain. You get a new mind. The Bible says when you come to faith in Christ you get a new heart. You can't fake that. You can't patch that on.

The Bible says you get new affections. The Bible says you get new desires. The Bible says you become a new creation. The Bible says you go from spiritually dead to spiritually alive. Every once in a while, people think, "Here's how I became a Christian. I was in the ocean, and I was treading water, and I was barely breathing, and, thank God, Jesus threw me a raft." Okay. Not the right image.

Let me give you the right image. You were dead at the bottom of the ocean floor, and Jesus Christ went down, revived your life, brought you on the boat, and gave you a whole new life. If Christianity isn't working for you... Maybe that's a weird way to say it. The question to ask is...*Do you have the right wine, and have you been made a new wineskin?*

The wine is Christ. The whole story is about Christ. It's like, a new joy, a new power, a new community, a new family, but it doesn't fit in your old life. You come to Christ when you get to the end of yourself. We want to be a church that's super clear about the radical nature of conversion and the joy of being a new wineskin and receiving the new wine of Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, we just pray for this. We ask that we would be a church that understands the radical nature of conversion, that we would not be okay with moralism and conservatism and rules or even performing and pretending while we secretly keep ourselves at the center.

Jesus, we ask that you would be the center of our lives. Jesus, I pray that we would rediscover what it means for you to be the center of our spiritual disciplines, to be

the center of our families, our marriages, our Community Groups, and our whole involvement in the church. We pray this in your name, amen.