



THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



Sermon Series Notes

“The New Covenant, Part 1 – A Marriage Made in Heaven” (Mark 2:18-27)

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We are not yet through Mark chapter two, and already there has been two very controversial situations between Jesus and the religious establishment of the day. The first was over Jesus telling a paralytic that his sins were forgiven, and the second over Jesus eating with tax collectors and “sinners.” at the home of Levi, a tax collector Jesus had just invited to become one of his disciples, and who would ultimately become one of the twelve apostles.

The controversy continues this week beginning in verse 18. Read Mark 2:18-28.

Two more issues of controversy, one over why it is that Jesus’ disciples do not fast, and the second over Jesus’ disciples picking heads of grain on the Sabbath.

Let’s deal with the second controversy first. The problem was not that the disciples had picked the grain in a field they did not own, but that they did so on the Sabbath. To do this on any other day would have been acceptable, but not on the Sabbath.

Deut. 23:24-25 If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. If you enter your neighbor’s grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.

The personal weight on any individual attempting to obey the OT law was bad enough, but Jewish leaders over time added all kinds of religious traditions to the law, and what was produced was a religious legal system that was not a blessing, but rather a heavy burden.

Matthew 23:4 They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders...

The Jewish leaders were legalistic about lots of things, but they were extremely legalistic about the Sabbath, to the point that on one occasion a synagogue ruler forbade anyone to be healed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14).

Even today, Jewish legalism is alive and well in Israel; Kosher elevators, etc. And religious legalism is alive in many parts of the world as well, including America.

But technically what we are dealing with here is not legalism, but in reality a violation of the Sabbath day. Jesus defends his disciples against the criticism of the Pharisees by citing what David did when he was running from the wrath of King Saul (1 Sam. 21:1-6). What David did violated Lev. 24:9, yet according to Jesus, God approved of (allowed) this violation for David’s sake.

Matthew’s account of this story adds something else Jesus said in defense of the disciples here (See Matt. 12:5.) There were twice as many sacrifices required on the Sabbath than on other days, so the priests were doing twice as much work on the Sabbath (Num. 28:9-10).

Even though some violations of the Law by Jesus and His disciples were violations of man-made traditions added to the Law by the Jewish leadership (legalism), in David's case, as well as the disciples here in Mark 2, it was actually a violation of the law given directly by God.

By healing the paralytic Jesus proved that he is God and therefore had authority to forgive sins. Here He says he has authority to overrule a violation of the Sabbath, because He is "Lord even of the Sabbath." And let's not miss the reminder by Jesus that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. In other words, God created the Sabbath for man's good, and man's good is at the heart of God. Instances of God permitting the violation of the Sabbath for the good of man proves without question God's love for man and His intention for the Sabbath to serve man, not vice versa.

So what we have is a violation of the Law within the Law, but these violations are meant for the good of man, and are motivated by God's love for man. They are also ordained by God. In other words, this was God's will, God's intention, God's plan from before the beginning of time. Why?

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

So a righteousness available for man apart from law is actually revealed in the law. It is called the new covenant.

Jesus' illustration of the unshrunk cloth on an old garment, and new wine into old wineskins refers to the new covenant verses the old covenant. The two cannot be mixed. Jesus has come to institute the new covenant, and it cannot be mixed with the old covenant. More about that in part 2 of this message next week.

To me, one of the most fascinating things about the new covenant is that it is revealed in the old covenant.

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, **to which the Law and the prophets testify**. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

The new covenant brings with it a righteousness that has nothing to do with law, and everything to do with faith in Jesus Christ.

David, story of his sin with Bathsheeba, under the old covenant he should have been executed. See Psalm 32:1-2; Rom.4:4ff.

Expound on Zechariah chapter 3

Abraham (Rom.4:1-3; Gen.15:6)

Jeremiah 31:33-34

So what was the purpose of the law? Romans 3:20; See Gal.3:23-25

Now let's look at the second controversy in our story, that of Jesus' disciples not fasting like the Pharisees and John the Baptist's disciples.

As far as I know, the only time the OT Law required fasting was during the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the most solemn of the Jewish feasts under the Old Covenant.

Lev.16:34...Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.

Heb.10:3...those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.

There were certainly other times when people fasted, but these were not commands connected to the Law and its regulations, but rather occasions where people chose to fast for a variety of reasons. There were three main reasons to fast: mourning someone's death, mourning over sin, and seeking God in

prayer. The Pharisees fasted because they thought in added to their righteousness (Matt.23:23). It was one of the many religious things they did, thinking that by doing so, God was pleased with them. And they not only did it believing God was pleased, but in order that their fellow man might be impressed (Matt.23:5 Everything they do is done for men to see...).

Some have suggested that John's disciples are fasting because this is after John was arrested by Herod, but I do not take that view. It appears to me that both John's disciples and the Pharisees are fasting for religious reasons. We know that John the Baptist lived a very ascetic life, so it should not be surprising that he practiced fasting, and taught his disciples to do so as well.

There is a very clear clue to what Jesus is trying to communicate here in response to the question about why His disciples are not fasting. The clue is Jesus' reference to Himself as the bridegroom. A bridegroom means that there is going to be a wedding, and a wedding is meant to be the most festive occasion anyone can take part in, especially the bridegroom and the bride. Weddings are times for music, laughter, feasting, & merry-making. Fasting at a wedding would be extremely inappropriate.

Jesus is a bridegroom who has come to seek out a bride, so it is not a time to fast, but to feast, especially if you understand the love story behind this particular bridegroom, and the bride he seeks.

Bible references regarding the bridegroom and his bride: Mark 2, John 3:29; Eph.5:25-27; Rev.19:7-9; 21:2, 9; 22:17; II Cor.11:2; Matt.25:1-46 (parable of the ten virgins);

Just as we see pieces of the OT (the Law) used to defend the disciples eating kernels of grain on the Sabbath, in the same way pieces of the OT defend the party atmosphere enjoyed by Jesus and His disciples. Take a look with me.

Matthew adds a third argument Jesus gave in defense of His disciples, and I find this one most fascinating, and compassionately compelling. See Matthew 12:6-8. Now go back to Matthew 9:9-13. After the Pharisees criticized Jesus and His disciples for their actions at Levi's party, he gave them some homework, go and learn what Hosea 6:6 means. They obviously did not do their homework, because if they had, they would not have made the mistake of condemning Jesus and His disciples. What would they have learned from Hosea 6:6?

The homework the Pharisees and Jewish leaders did not do, I have done. And I would like to share with you my homework, so that as your teacher we may both have the privilege of knowing and potentially taking part in the blessings these poor students of the Bible missed.

Hosea is the first book in our Bibles of what has been dubbed "The "Minor Prophets." They are called minor not because they are less important, but simply because of their brevity when compared with other books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Hosea's ministry began during the latter reign of Jeroboam II (II Kings 14:23 – 17:41; II Chron.26-32), spanning about four decades. It was a time of temporary economic prosperity and political peace, which produced a false sense of security. The spiritual climate was dismal, and God had been warning that judgment would come if they did not repent. Immediately after Jeroboam's death, the nation began to deteriorate rapidly, running swiftly to its destruction in 722 B.C. Hosea's prophecy was God's last attempt to call the Israelites away from their persistent idolatry and wickedness before giving them over to full judgment. Through Hosea's words, and his very life, God makes abundantly clear how intense is His love for His people. Hosea's name in Hebrew literally means "Yaweh has caused salvation." The Greek form of the name is one we know well - Jesus! Matt.1: 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

1:1-3 Hosea, what's your girlfriend's name? "Gomer". Ever see some girl with a pretty decent looking guy and think, "What is HE doing with HER? That's probably what it was like with Hosea and Gomer. Some scholars believe that Gomer was not unfaithful until after Hosea marries her. I don't know how we can

know for sure, but one pretty smart writer said this: "...the Hebrew syntax of the phrase in which 'adulterous' occurs can (and usually does) describe the present behavior of the wife, thereby favoring the notion that Gomer is promiscuous at the time Hosea marries her." Either way, the message God communicates through this relationship is the same. She could have been a prostitute, because she is said to have had "many lovers."

Note: This text does not give grounds to marry an immoral person. God at times uses biblical characters to teach us without expecting us to imitate the actions or behavior of those characters. One writer put it this way: "...desperate situations sometimes call for unusual practices. This being so, God was not unfair to ask Hosea to marry a prostitute in order to help save God's people from apostasy, in the same way a fire chief is not unfair to ask a firefighter to break into a house in order to save a family trapped inside. In such circumstances, Hosea can no more be aptly called unwise or immoral than can the firefighter be considered a burglar."

Gomer is Diblaim's daughter. The name means "raisin cakes." Raisin cakes were used in ancient fertility cults. So Hosea's mother-in-law's name is "Raisin-Cakes." It appears she was an idolator, and her daughter follows in her footsteps.

Ezek. 38: 4 I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army--your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.⁵ Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, ⁶ also **Gomer** with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops--the many nations with you.

Gomer's family line were arch enemies of God. Romans 5:10

1:4-9 Jezreel is associated with judgment (II Kings 10:1-14); the age old battlefield on which the kingdom was about to collapse at the hands of the Assyrians. Lo-Ruhamah means "not loved." Lo-Ammi means "not my people."

1:10-2:1 Romans 9:25 As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," ²⁶ and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

2:2-5 Despite the love shown to Gomer, she is unfaithful to her gracious and merciful husband. Her unfaithfulness brings about a separation between Hosea and his bride. Just think about this, no one ever loved Gomer like Hosea. But despite that love, she went after other lovers. What a tragedy!! And a tragedy often repeated today! Leave the one who has loved you like nobody else, & lose the blessings of that relationship. Not only do you suffer as a result, but your children do as well.

II Peter 2: 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

2:6 A painful path; See Numbers 33:55-56; Joshua 23:12-13

2:7 An unsatisfied pursuit, then a realization that she was better off with her husband.

2:8 Blindness to the source of her blessings (note: Prodigal)

2:9a A fruitless life

2:9b-10 Folly exposed

2:11 The party's over!

2:12-13 Hits the wall!

2:14-15 An undeserved invitation!

The Valley of Achor was where Achan and his family were destroyed (Joshua 7:24-26). A door of hope was there for Achan, but he chose the door of destruction. God had repeatedly given Achan a chance to repent, to come clean, but he repeatedly refused! Additionally, this valley is in an especially desolate part of the Judean wilderness, so for it to become a door of hope and a place of vineyards (fruitfulness) is an outlandishly optimistic statement.

2:16 The relationship, if Gomer (& Israel) repent, and accept the invitation, will be like it never was before...

2:17 No more idolatry, because God would give her a new heart...out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

2:18 No more enmity, but rather peace

2:19-20 What an offer – to live happily ever after!

2:21-23 Blessings from heaven, undeserved mercy & grace!

The spiritual climate of Hosea's day was exactly as it was when Jesus gave the Jewish leaders their Hosea homework. And what they would have learned, had they done their homework, is that God is not looking for or impressed with the external duties of religious observance, but with the internal acknowledgement of sin and rebellion. This is something the tax collectors and sinners had no problem with. Once someone is willing to acknowledge their sin and need of a Savior, mercy is waiting at heaven's door to be poured upon them. And please note that it does not matter how far they have strayed, nor how much they have sinned.

Our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa.64:6); Verses on our adulterous ways, yet God's fervent love for us. The story of Rahab the harlot is similar to the story of Hosea. The last time I taught on Rahab I titled the message "A Cinderella Story."

Under the Law Hosea's bride should have been stoned to death, even before he had the opportunity to marry her. But instead, she is not only wed to Hosea, but after being wed, goes off to her old ways again. But even after her this she is taken back by Hosea again!

Hosea 6:6 God's heart longs to forgive, to show mercy, if we are only willing to acknowledge our sin. Now back to the context of our story.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law thought that religious sacrifice is what God requires. They ignored their personal need and by doing so missed God's mercy altogether. Throughout Israel's history they continued to practice the routine of religion, yet so often failed to confess their sin and plea for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Psalm 51:16-17 David...sacrifice and offering you did not require; also Psalm 34:18; Isa. 57:15; 66:2; See Isaiah 55:1-9, noting vv.8-9 in context.

Once someone has received undeserved mercy themselves, they naturally offer it to others. The fact that these Pharisees and Teachers of the Law did not show mercy is evidence that they had not received mercy. See Micah 6:6-8.

Matthew 23:23 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness...

The message of Hosea is that God loves you so much and longs to forgive you and pour out mercy upon you, but He cannot do so unless you come to terms with and acknowledge your sin. The most difficult people to do this were those keeping up the religious front, obeying the rules, and condemning all those who did not (the Jewish leaders in our story in Mark 2). If they chose to remain in the religious rut they were in, not only would they forfeit God's mercy for themselves, but they would also continue to condemn those who now enjoyed God's amazing grace.

As I bring this to a close, let me share with you a couple of the most exciting passages in the story of Hosea.

Hosea 3:1-2 Fifteen shekels plus the homer and letheq of barley would amount to thirty pieces of silver; this was the price for a slave (Ex.21:32; it was also what Judas received to betray Jesus (Matt.26:14-15; Zech.11:12-13).

Hosea 6:1-2 "the Hebrew text conveys actual restoration from death – i.e., resurrection." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, p.27)

CONCLUSION

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

John 3:16; The story of Jesus is a love story, the story of an unlikely marriage between the most perfect bridegroom and the most unlovely bride. But once betrothed, this bridegroom begins to make his bride the most beautiful thing. And once the marriage is completely consummated, the honeymoon is out of this world!

It's a "marriage made in heaven."

Summary of Luke 15, then invitation