

## Jesus Is Not Interested in Becoming Part of Your Life – Mark 2:18-22

## Series: Look and Live #10

There's a song called "All or Nothing" where a man in love with a woman is telling her that he is tired of her having *some love for him* and *some love for* another man at the same time. He says, I want *all* of your affections. "I don't care if that's not fair. Cause I want it *all*, or *nothing at all*..." In a powerful way, that song echoes Christ's words to his Church. It is staggering how many times God is pictured as a jealous husband demanding the affections of his wife. God says, "No I will not share you! No you cannot love another." He *purchased* us; he redeemed us; we belong completely to him. If God liked country music, he might just sing this song to us today, "*I want it all, or nothing at all!*" Jesus is not interested in being *part* of your life. **Reading of Mark 2:18-22.**

Probably this story took place while Jesus was still at Levi's house from the last story, still at this big dinner party with all the tax collectors and sinners. While Jesus is having this feasting party, two other groups that many Israelites considered "very religious" were fasting (choosing to abstain from food).

Fasting means deciding to give up food and to keep something from your body which it needs. God designed it to be a sign of mourning. The only time God told Israel they were supposed to fast was on the Day of Atonement as a way to *mourn and lament* the sin in their lives. We don't know why the men of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were all fasting that day. There are some good guesses but they're just that. Either way it was a sign of mourning and sorrow.

But some people come to Jesus in verse 18, presumably while he is still feasting at Levi's table, and they say, "If you're so religious, then why aren't you fasting too? *They* are giving up food! They are mourning for sin. And here you are, feasting!"

*Structure of sermon:* first we're going to try to understand the three answers that Jesus gives in the form of parables; second we'll consider what Jesus was saying and how that answers their question; finally we'll consider what all of that *means* and how it changes our lives?

**First, what are these three parables all about?** A wedding, a clothing patch, and wine. Jesus asks, "Can the wedding guests *fast*", literally that would be *groomsmen* or *groom's attendants*, "while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."

In Jesus' day, weddings were the highest moment of joy in the life of a community. The wedding ceremony and the honeymoon celebration were held at the groom's house. The new couple didn't leave for a honeymoon; they and all their guests stayed at the groom's home celebrating, sometimes for an entire week. The groomsmen were in charge of keeping the festivities going. This was such an important and joyous task that the Rabbis actually declared the groomsmen exempt from any religious duties that would take away from the joy of the celebration. What a horrible thing it would be for the groomsmen to *fast* while they were supposed to be leading this celebration of joy.

Perhaps Jesus did not make this little saying up but rather he's using an old saying to make the point: as inappropriate as fasting at a wedding is, so now Jesus' disciples are in a situation were

mourning would be entirely inappropriate because this is a time of joy. (*There will be a time coming when they will mourn and express that by fasting. Jesus is going to be taken away from them (which implies violence). That will be an appropriate time for them to fast and mourn, but not now.*)

Now the second and third parable. “You don’t take an *un-shrunk* piece of cloth and use it to patch an already shrunk garment, and you don’t put new wine in old wineskins.”

In 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, before fabrics were used they were sent to a fuller to be treated and pre-shrunk. If you sewed a non-treated patch of cloth on your husband’s blue-jeans, the second he sweats or gets caught in the rain that *patch* is going to shrivel up like a raisin and make the original hole worse than when you started. **The point is: new cloth doesn’t go with old cloth!**

The same thing is true of the wineskins. They didn’t have pristine glass bottles to hold their wine. Instead they used animal hides to lug around their drink. This worked great at first because the skins were so pliable. Unfortunately though as the skins age and weather from the sun they get rock hard and filled with little cracks. If you were to take one of those dry, cracked skins and put what the Israelites called *new wine* in it, you’d have problems. New wine is not done fermenting. As it ferments, it releases gases and builds up pressure. After a day or two in dry cracked skins, those old skins blow up and the new wine is going to be wasted on the ground. **The point: new wine doesn’t go with old wine skins!**

**Second, what was Jesus saying here and how does this answer the question, “Why aren’t your disciples fasting Jesus?”**

So mourning doesn’t go with weddings, new cloth doesn’t go with old, and new wine doesn’t go with old wineskins. So what? Don’t you think the people Jesus was answering already knew those things? They’d probably heard these exact sayings before. Jesus, what’s *really* your answer? What are you *saying* Jesus?

He’s telling them that when the disciples of Jesus *became* the disciples of Jesus, they entered in to something *new*. They entered into something so radically new that everything they used to do has now become old and obsolete. It would be inappropriate (and it just wouldn’t work) to go back to the old way now that they’ve entered into the new.

Jesus has been *announcing* this new situation since verse 14 of chapter one: *the Kingdom of God has come*. Jesus’ *disciples* have entered into that Kingdom of God. They have entered into a new reality, and these three parables are revealing that to the inquirers.

*Think about it like this:* I go to the office bright and early on Monday morning like always. And, at my office, we have meetings first thing to kick off the week. This morning, I walk into the meeting and I always sit between *Joe* and *Andy*. There’s *Andy* sitting in his usual spot, so I plop myself down, grab a doughnut and a cup of coffee and wait for the meeting. When the meeting is getting ready to start, I notice, *no Joe!* Joe’s seat is empty. And then, in walks *Joe* at the time of the meeting. Instead of sitting next to me where he *always* sits, he goes to the head of the table, opens his brief case and says, “Okay folks, let’s get started this morning!” Well I’m perplexed. Where is the boss, and what in the world does *Joe* think he’s doing? I lean over to my friend *Andy* and whisper,

“Psst, why isn’t Joe sitting next to me? What in the world is he doing?” Andy says, “Oh, you didn’t hear? Joe got a promotion. He’s our new boss.”

The reason I was confused is because I didn’t realize that something new had happened. Joe was no longer a regular employee like me, he was now a boss. It wouldn’t have made any sense for Joe to walk in and sit next to me like he had always done, grab a doughnut and shoot the breeze. He was now the boss. It was no longer appropriate for him to act like he was an employee just like me.

That’s why the people in verse 18 who ask the question are confused, they don’t understand why the disciples are doing what they’re doing. They are confused because they don’t know that something has happened, something has changed with the disciples, and now it would be all wrong for the disciples to live their lives like they used to fasting and mourning.

Now we need to think a bit further about what happened to the disciples. They didn’t get a promotion. They entered into the Kingdom of God that Jesus was announcing. What exactly does “Kingdom of God” refer to?

Think about that time in the future when Jesus Christ comes back. When Jesus comes *back* he’s coming as the glorified, Risen Savior, surrounded with his angelic armies. He will set up his great throne of Judgment on the earth, and the inhabitants of all earth’s history will be put on trial and have their lives examined.

Since everyone is descended from Adam and Eve, all will be guilty of despising God, rejecting God, and rebelling against him. He will pass an eternal sentence of wrath and condemnation on each one and consign them to an eternity in *Hell*. But for a small portion of those men and women, even though they too were descended from Adam and had rebelled against God, yet he will see, not their sin and rebellion, but Jesus’ perfect sacrifice in their place. Instead of being filled with wrath for their sins, God will be filled with *delight* for Jesus’ perfect obedience which he *gave* to those few who trusted everyday that he was their one and only hope for redemption. *Those* God will consign to an eternity in the paradise of his presence.

That paradise is the full expression of the Kingdom of God. It’s called the *new earth*. After the Judgment, God will create a *new heaven and a new earth*. Heaven will reach down to earth such that there will be a *heaven-on-earth* (akin to the Garden of Eden). It will be filled with the light of God’s presence and the joy of knowing him. There will be no tears or mourning or pain or want. Those who were redeemed by Jesus Christ in *this life* will live with him in eternal joy *in that life*.

Jesus will be the God-King and the redeemed will worship him, serve him, love him, and enjoy him forever. For the inhabitants of the new earth, sin will be dead! Death will be dead. There will be no disobedience in their hearts whatsoever. That is the Kingdom of God. What Jesus is saying in Mark 2 is that **those who became his disciples entered in to that Kingdom of God right then and there.**

But, “How can that be? The disciples we’re still there! They were still there in the flesh and blood. They certainly were not living in the new earth. So *how can you say they entered into the Kingdom of God?*”

Well the full idea of salvation and redemption means God destroys and punishes everything that sinned, that belong to sin, and that was corrupted by the Fall. He then creates anew a people and a place for himself to live in that eternal blessed fellowship we just described.

Here's what I'm suggesting: when Jesus calls a person to become his disciple, God causes that person to be *born-again*. (1 Peter 1:3) Physically they're still the same person. When I was born-again, my physical body stayed the exact same. But *spiritually* the person I was from birth, the person I was for 19 years, died. Then I was born a second time. (See all this is a divine work of God.) I was a new person. God gave me a *new heart*. Spiritually, I was *recreated*.

My physical body still to this day has to die. I still have to receive my new resurrection body after the Day of Judgment on the day of Glorification. So physically I still belong to this old world and have a body of this world, a body influenced by and under the punishment of sin. But *spiritually* I have received a new person that belongs to the new earth, to the eternal Kingdom of God! This new self is not under the effects of sin. This is the new heart or *inner being* that I need and that I am going to have for the *rest of eternity*. I'm never going to be spiritually *reborn* again! Even when God destroys the heavens and the earth and creates a new heaven and a new earth, this new spirit, this new heart that he has already given me, will inhabit my new body and live with him forever.

Even if I'm not there physically, I'm spiritually *in* the Kingdom of God. I'm already experiencing the fellowship with God, the joy of his presence, the ability to please him, know him, love him, and obey him that is going to characterize eternity with him. That's what it means to be born-again.

There's a visual illustration of this on the bulletin insert. Let's add one clarification to guard against error or confusion. Although we are reborn spiritually, still we don't experience the Kingdom of God or live out our new hearts perfectly. That's because we still have something spiritually today that we won't have spiritually after the Resurrection: indwelling sin.

So, that's what Jesus was saying to these folks who came asking him about his disciples. They didn't understand that *Jesus* had brought his new disciples into the Kingdom of God. The disciples had died to the world and been spiritually reborn. They were asking why the disciples weren't doing the things they used to do when they belonged to the Kingdom of the world. Jesus is saying, "Because a new reality has set in!" Like when Andy told me that Joe got a promotion. Something has happened to them which now makes their old habits and practices obsolete. That something was entrance into God's eternal Kingdom, ruled by Jesus Christ. The things that belong to the former era have now become obsolete. Remember: mourning doesn't go with wedding celebrations. New cloth and new wine don't go with the *old*. Jesus is saying that the new hearts the disciples have don't go with the old ways, customs, and habits of this old sin-infested and corrupted world.

Everything for the disciples has just changed! Their lives have just been completely restructured, and nothing, not even fasting, will ever or could ever be the same.

### **Third section: *what does all of that mean in our lives today?***

Have you heard of the religion *syncretism*? (More like a form of religion, not a specific religion.) It's a religious word comparable to *mutt*. A "mutt" is a dog who isn't from one particular breed; she's got all kinds of breeds in her background, and she's just one big combination of them all. A syncretist (not actually a word, but someone who is religiously *syncretistic*) is a religious mutt.

The Greeks were famous for being syncretistic. They had all different kinds of gods and beliefs, and as the Greek empire spread, they just continued to add new gods and to incorporate new beliefs. Pretty soon they had the equivalent of a Hindu-Muslim-Jewish-Christian. They took a few practices from over here, a few beliefs from over there, and a couple of religious rites from over there and combined them all together into one new religion.

Most American Christians are probably actually Christian-*syncretists*. We were going about our life with our habits, our job, and our relationships, we had our car, television, and friends, and at some point we looked over and said, "Oh what the heck. Come on in Jesus. There's plenty of room in here for you! I can handle a few hours of church. I could do without a few things. Come on Jesus, come be part of my life!" And we wrapped Jesus into our life. That's *syncretism*. Here's what I learn from Jesus: ***Jesus is not interested in being a part of your life***. Jesus Christ *looks* our American syncretism in the face with disdain and says, "Get thee behind me!"

That's exactly what these bystanders were expecting of the disciples in our passage. Sure, they knew the disciples were followers of Jesus, but they expected that they would continue most of their habits, customs, and traditions as usual, except now they'd have a few new things added into their lives that had to do with Jesus. Isn't that *exactly* what we have done? What does Jesus say about that? He says, "Ha, that's worthless! That's foolishness! That's going to be about as successful as carrying new wine in old wine skins. It'll work for about two days until the wine skin blows up all over you and wastes all your efforts." Wrapping Jesus and his ways into your existing life is as futile as putting an un-shrunk patch on an old pair of jeans.

Think about it: in chapter one, Jesus' call to the first disciples wasn't, "Hey Simon and Andrew, do you mind if I come out and join you? Do you mind if I become a part of what you guys are doing?" It was, "Leave your boats, leave your nets, leave your *father* and *workers*, leave your lives and follow me." Jesus is not interested in being a part of your life. He's only interested in giving you a completely *new* life.

There are going to be some who did this very thing, who told others and told ourselves that we became "Christians", that we were "born-again", but actually all we did was invite Jesus to come and be a part of what we were doing. We invited him to come be part of our lives, to add on some church and some religious duties and Christian phrases. Probably, if that's you, you are not a Christian. Probably you are still under the eternal wrath of God. For you the call of Jesus goes out this morning just like it did to Levi, Simon, Andrew, James and John, "Follow me! Leave *all that you have*, and follow me! Live for me." Turn from living for yourself, from living for your own way as your own Lord, and *follow and serve Jesus*, as True Lord of your life. *Trust* that he and he alone can reconcile you to God through his Cross. Plead with him to give you new life, a new heart.

For many of us we really have entered spiritually into the eternal Kingdom of God. The problem is, we have new hearts, we've been re-born, but we're still living our old life! Do you see how incongruous that really is? It doesn't make any sense. It's like we are mourning even though our bridegroom is with us.

What has happened to us is as drastic as me taking over someone else's body. Have you ever seen that Disney movie "Freaky Friday"? For some reason, a mom and her feisty teenage daughter mysteriously trade bodies. Mom wakes up in daughter's bed. Mom still has all of her memories, all of her mental abilities, desires, likes, and habits, *except* mom is now trapped in a teenage body (vice versa for the teenager trapped in mom's adult body).

Since the mom was in the daughter's body, she had to go to school, play in the sports, and do everything that the daughter did. But now she was doing all of those things *as a* middle-aged adult woman.

If you can excuse the corniness of the illustration, that's really something of what has happened to us. We have our old bodies, but we are not the same *person*! We have been born-again. In these bodies, we still have to do many of the same things we did before (although not all for sure) and yet we do them as our new self would do them, as someone of the Kingdom of God would do them, as someone living to please Christ and serve Christ and honor Christ would do them, not as our old self did them.

Being born-again changes everything. It doesn't change *that* we work, it might not change *where* we work, but O how it changes everything about how we work. It might not change who we have relationships *with*, but it changes everything about why and how we have relationships *with* them. It will **not** change who we're married to, but it will change everything about how we're married to them. I've just mentioned the really big things in our lives, but often where we fail to see the change is in the more regular, mundane parts of our lives.

If being born-again is essentially receiving a new person, then being born-again should even change the way that we drive our cars. The way a citizen of this old world (with its old passions) drives a car is certainly different from the way a new person, belonging to the Kingdom of God, fellowshiping with him, living in his joy, living to please him, will drive that same car. It even changes how we watch our favorite football team, how we check out in line at the grocery store, what we do with our annual raise from work, and how we respond to our boss' email.

It's just flat out wrong and inappropriate for me to live my life like I always did, just like it would have been so inappropriate for the disciples of Jesus (and just like it would be inappropriate for the groomsmen to be fasting when they should be joyously leading in celebration). If I do anything today with the same motive, the same attitude, and the same hope as I did ten years ago before God caused me to be born-again, then something is wrong. If there is any area of my life, from playing games to hosting barbeques to putting on make-up, if there is any aspect of my life that has not been altered, I am denying the reality of what Christ has done in me.

As you look around and scan your life and consider what there is in your life that has not changed at all since you were born-again, as you are overwhelmed at the vast size of this list, you have

to ask yourself the question: does this mean that I am not actually born-again and following Christ but that I just invited Jesus to be part of my life? (That would explain why most of your life has not changed, right?) Or have I as of yet simply failed to apply the grace of God to my day, and have I continued to hold on to those old ways of life while Christ is even now calling me to follow him with my whole life? That's an important question to answer.

One last time: if there is anything in my life, whether it's a relationship, a habit, a tradition, a way of thinking, a motivation, if there is anything in my life that has not been changed by receiving a new heart, then something is wrong. I need to repent of that immediately this morning and pray for God's grace to enable me to live out my new heart in that particular area of my life. To live like I am still part of the old perishing world, to have the exact same habits and lifestyle and then to try and add a little bit of Jesus, it doesn't work. The wineskins will burst! The cloth will tear away! The bridegroom will be offended.

*Preached by:  
Ryan Haider  
Hickory Hill Baptist Church  
January 25, 2009*