

Mark 2:23-3:6 - The Servant is Lord of the Sabbath

Pastor Michael Engle, Clearcreek Chapel

Introduction

Pastor Dale introduced us to our text today when he preached two weeks ago on "The Mission of the Servant King". I want to take you back there for just a moment so you can see what I will call the Oreo cookie of texts that we have before us. Oreo Cookie Pastor Michael? Yes, think of our text this way and it will help you to understand why we have to go back and look at Pastor Dale's sermon. Have you ever seen one of those Oreo cookies dipped in chocolate. The chocolate is the outside layer, and it's yummy, but it's not the point. Think of Mark 2:1-12, what Pastor Dale called "Forgiving Sins!?" one side of the chocolate coating. Then we have the crunchy cookie part. It's yummy as well, but it's still not the point. We can think of Mark 2:13-17, what Pastor Dale called "Eating with Sinners?!" as one side of the crunchy cookie. Then we come to the middle. The cream! This has to be what manna from heaven tastes like before it hits the ground. The cream, the cream is the point! We should be thinking of Mark 2:18-22 as the cream. This is the point! Pastor Dale called this section "Not Fasting?!" I want to read over that section with you so that cream center is fresh in your mind as we go on to the other side of the cookie for some more crunch and some more chocolate. God's word says this in Mark 2:18-22,

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

Okay, you're with now right. We see from vv. 18-22 that Jesus is the new wine. He is fulfilling everything the Old Testament promised. If we try to patch up our old garment with a new, unshrunk, patch it tears. If we try to pour the new wine into the old wineskin it bursts. We saw this in the chocolate part of Dale's sermon where Jesus forgave sin, and in the crunchy cookie part where Jesus is the great physician of souls. Here in our text for today, Mark 2:23-3:6 we will see the same kinds of things happening. There will be much tearing and bursting, but also much to stand in awe of as we view our Savior who makes all things new.

Let's pray!

I Am Your Rest - 2:23-38

Let's start our time this morning by reading what God's word says in Mark chapter two, verses twenty-three and twenty-four. God's word says this,

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

Oh no, not another food issue. At first glance they may be what seems to be going on here if we don't stop here and check what it really says. You could read all the way through the paragraph and come out with the wrong impression. What the Pharisees are agitated by is that the disciples were "working". The law clearly stated that the hungry were in fact permitted to pluck and eat grain (see Deut 23:25) but the Pharisees wouldn't permit it. They were adding even more to the law - a law they were never able to obey in the first place - and making "pluck[ing] heads of grain" a violation of the law. They not only have an old wine skin, but they have attempted to double stitch the seams to make it more holy than God's standard. Not understanding that requiring something above and beyond what God has commanded is sinful.

Notice something though, look what they didn't do. They didn't turn to the disciples in mercy and plead with them to stop plucking the heads of grain. Isn't this what they would have done if the issue was keeping the disciples from sinning against God? Instead they look to Jesus and in effect say, "Why are YOUR followers doing something against the law. They don't seem to care about the disciples standing before God, they only seem to want to pick at Jesus for what his followers do. That song is still being sung in our day.

Let's see how Jesus answers them in vv 25-26. This is what God's word says,

25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?"

I can only imagine how verse twenty-five landed on the ears of the Pharisees. "Have you never read", he says! I have been reading and interpreting the law for most of my life. It is, in fact, my life I have put into this. How dare him even insinuate that I have not read. Remember, these are rule following glorifiers of self, like you and I and he just took a not-so-subtle shot at them. I can imagine their blood pressure went up. Their eyes got wide and they had half a mind to correct him. However, when they've done that up to this point he has claimed to be God himself and then made some veiled reference to being a doctor. Maybe we won't correct him after all. Don't be fooled though, Jesus is about to pour some new wine into these old wine skins.

Notice who he references in verse twenty-five, King David. What would the Pharisees have heard when he did this? David was to them the prototype of the Messiah to come. He was Israel's great King, not just one of many over the history of Israel. And you might be thinking yes, but I thought this was about working on the Sabbath? No, this is about who is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus doesn't refer back to his own authority like he did when he forgave sins. And he doesn't even follow the Pharisees argument that you shouldn't work on the Sabbath. David and his men weren't working, they were starving, and eating to sustain life on the Sabbath was within the law. Jesus was simply pointing out to them that what David did was okay for him to do because he is the fulfillment of all David meant to them. But he's not done. No, he makes the comparison to David's actions and then he drops this bomb on the Pharisees.

Look down at your Bibles in vv27 - 28. God's word says this,

27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

If you're like me, maybe those two verses haven't always been clear to you. Let's start with the first part of verse twenty-seven, "The Sabbath was made for man". Think with me here, why did God give the Sabbath? It was for man to rest. God says in Genesis that he rested on the seventh day. He stopped his work and he rested. He didn't do this because he needed a break and had to put his feet up for a while, but because we would need time away from our work to stop and rest. The Sabbath is for man.

He continues, "not man for the Sabbath". The Pharisees had gotten in backwards. You weren't put here for the Sabbath. The rules you have put in place aren't serving you as the command to rest on the Sabbath had. Now you have turned the whole thing inside out and made yourselves servants to the rules.

The last part in verse twenty-eight is the best though. The Pharisees may have thought after that explanation, "but who are you to be changing the way we think of the Sabbath. Jesus reply is simple, I'm God over it. I can speak with authority about the Sabbath because I am Lord of the Sabbath. And further we can read this text and see the wine of the covenant in Jesus being our rest. Sabbath literally means to stop, to cease and desist. Jesus has within him as the Son of Man the authority to say STOP!, stop your working to be good for God, stop your self-salvation projects, stop lowering the standard of righteousness to a level that you can easily attain, stop looking for ways to make yourselves right with God. Just STOP! and come to me for I AM your Rest! In me your work is finished, because my work is finished. The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath and he is your rest.

I Am Your Restoration - 3:1-7

We move on to chapter three and verse one. God's word says this,

3:1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

Here we are again, on the Sabbath. Only this time we are in the perfect place - the synagogue. We are here in time on the most Holy of holy days and in space we are at the very center of worship for the Jew. What better stage could there be. Also, there is a man with a withered hand here in the synagogue. Interestingly this malady is one that defines him. We only know him by what is wrong. We don't yet have picture of his character. We don't know his back story. All we know is that to everyone in the room, he's that guy. He's the handicapped guy. You know, the one with the messed up hand. Sad isn't it. He's defined by what he is not, more so than who he is. But not for long.

This guy who hangs out with sinners and claims to forgive as God forgives has come to the wrong place indeed. The people here are not like the prostitutes and sinners he has been hanging out with. These people will know the law and be law followers he will get no quarter here. We see this in verse two. "They", the Pharisees, "watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal [the man with the withered hand] on the Sabbath. Why, why are they watching. They know this guy's m.o. They know what he is like. They have seen him act with great mercy and compassion on the crippled man lowered through the roof and maybe they are "watching" to see the kindness of God right before their very eyes. Maybe, mercy and compassion are driving them on. Maybe, not. We see the motive at the end of the verse, "that they might accuse him".

Imagine it with me for a second. You have just seen a crippled man healed in an instant. He stood up and walked out of the house to everyone's amazement. And, apparently, to at least a few, their consternation. You would think they would have dropped their rules and regulations for a moment and given some time for celebration over this guy. How many times have you seen a person with some sort of physical handicap and wanted to help, let alone heal them completely. Wouldn't you just want to follow and watch in awe as these great miracles are performed. But not these guys. Jesus threatened their little kingdom. He wasn't a good guy like them. They were the religious right of their time and he didn't match up with their definition of holiness. And they were angry. So much so they couldn't see the how his compassion would honor his father, but only that he had broken their made up rules. Does this sound like us church? God help us if it does!

So there are the Pharisees, likely all standing close together on the outskirts of the crowd. Watching, whispering little snide remarks about Jesus as he walks around the synagogue and turns his eyes, full of grace and mercy, on the man with a withered hand. And he says two

words that are going to radically change this man forever. Look down at verse three. God's word says this...

3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here."

If you're like me you might immediately think, "yes!" Awesome, If I'm this guy I want Jesus to pay attention to me. But would you? Think about his situation for a moment. You are only known as "the man with the withered hand". You have likely been judged all your life for what is wrong with you. Remember Job's friends. People are thinking this thing that is wrong with you was surely of your own doing. You must be a great sinner. Maybe you've spent your entire life trying to blend in and your own body won't let you. Now, the popular kids at school are giving the new wine kid the stink-eye from across the room and he has just asked you to join his team. Are you overwhelmed with excitement or would you just like to slink out the side door and come back next week. You've been asked to pick sides in a fight that was not of your making and you only have one arm with which to defend yourself. We'll see what side of the fight he picks later, but first, look down at verses four 'cause Jesus has something to say.

4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,

This is getting weird. He tells the man with the withered hand to "come here" and then turns his attention to the Pharisees and asks them two questions. One we get immediately and the other one seems a bit out of place. "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm"? That makes sense. These guys are the rule keepers and surely they will answer this one with a resounding, "it's lawful on the Sabbath to do good"! And we see the connection to what we think is about to happen. Certainly the good thing he wants to do is fix this guy's hand. Nice. All wrapped up in a little bow for them. Come on guys it's a softball question until he finish with this "save life or to kill" thing. What is that all about. If you're the audience here, worse if you're the man with the withered hand, what are you thinking. Um, my hand is a nuisance for sure but it's not killing me or anything. You're not going to kill me, or anything, are you? Is Jesus still talking about me and him, or is he talking about something else? The Pharisees know who that last question is aimed at and they can't bring themselves to speak the answer out loud.

And then you see in verse five that he "looked around at them with anger". The tension in the room just went through the roof. Can you see people trying to make room between themselves, Jesus, the man with the withered hand and the Pharisees. I'm not sure what God looks like when he mad, but I praise God I will never see it. These folks saw it. More so, I bet they felt it. After all this is the guy who will say of himself, "fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" The Pharisees now have the stink-eye returned to them. The anger is mixed with grief. Grief over hearts that say and teach much about God but have not compassion. They are the clanging cymbal of 1 Corinthians 13. All talk and no love and it

brings grief to the Son of Man's heart. His eyes looking back at the man with the withered hand, we pick up at the end of verse five. God's word says

and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

Does this sound like a normal invitation to a handshake? No, because it's not. Our man with the withered hand has reached the point of no return. He has come to Jesus and Jesus has essentially said to him, my team or theirs. Mine will be immeasurable wonderful and incredibly hard. You will be healed and you will be despised. You know God, and you will know suffering. Are you ready. You know what he going to do, don't you. His heart is put on display for the whole synagogue as we read the end of verse five. God's word says, this...

He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Faith came to the man with the withered hand and his identity was changed forever. No longer would he be looked upon with pity and perhaps shame, but he would be known for all of time as the man who stretched out his hand and was restored. Jesus, the great restorer of all that is wrong in the world had come and restored his arm yes, but more importantly his soul. On this Sabbath day in the little synagogue a battle of a much bigger war had been fought and Jesus was the victor. The new wine had blown apart the old wine skin that now only served to harm. He stands before all watching as the God of restoration. We don't have time, but just think in your mind what all that means. What all he will restore!

We were pointed for just a moment at the victorious Christ of the empty tomb but our passage has not ended and our great "rest" or "restorer" will have to suffer before then. Look down at your Bibles in verse six. God's word says this,

6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Ironic isn't it. God has just put his powers of restoration on display for the world to see and the Pharisees answer the question we asked about verse four. Why was he talking about saving life or killing. We see now don't we. He was speaking to them. He knew their hearts. Here these rule followers who wouldn't allow the plucking of grain or the restoration of a withered hand were willing, on the Sabbath, just outside the synagogue, to plan the Son of Man's destruction. They go away from the gathering with worship in their hearts. Worship of self. Worship of power, Worship of their own glory. Which will always, always, result in a hatred for God.

The only hope for them and us, is the new wine of Jesus Christ bursting apart the old wineskin of our hearts and restoring them to God through his work in the cross. You cannot restore what is lost, only the God of restoration can, Jesus Christ.

He has come to restore your soul to God and give you rest in him. He is the new wine and whoever drinks has eternal life, and he will raise you up on the last day. Come and be restored. Come and find rest. Come give you life to The Son of Man, The Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.