

Jesus Came To Turn Sorrows Into Joy & Burdens Into Rest

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Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

- [0 : 00] Well, if you have a Bible with you, please turn to Mark's Gospel.
We are going to be looking at the last part of chapter 2. Thank you.
Mark chapter 2 from verse 18. Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.
And the people came and said to him, that is Jesus, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?
And Jesus said to them, One Sabbath, he was going through the grain fields.
- [2 : 17] 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?
And he said to them, So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.
Amen. This is God's word. And we pray blesses the Bible. What is the biggest burden in your life right now?
Is it a person? Is it a person? Is it an illness? Is it a debt? Is it work?
Is it keeping on top of finances? Is it keeping on top of housework? Is it an addiction? Is it an addiction? Is it anxiety?
- [3 : 42] Depression? Guilt? Sin? Religion? There are many things in the world that are running out right now. Many things with limited supply.
Many things with limited supply. But one thing the world is not short on is burdens. And so, how many burdens did you bring with you through the door this morning?
How many did you pull in in a suitcase? Maybe you brought one or two. Maybe you got a case full of burdens. Maybe you didn't bring any burdens with you today.
I think a more difficult question is, will you leave with more burdens? Or will you leave with less burdens?
Some of that is going to be up to you. Some of it will be up to you. Will you lay it down? Some of it is up to the rest of us.
- [4 : 43] Will we pile it on you? Before you leave. Or will we help to relieve your burdens? And my hope and prayer is this morning that God's word will lead you to the one whose burden is light.
You see, in first century Israel, people were burdened enough by life. Especially the Jews. Nation of Israel being occupied by Rome.
Their life was burdened enough. And then the Judaism of the day piled on more burdens than anyone could handle. And we see two particular areas in this passage.
First, a complaint about something Jesus' disciples are not doing. And secondly, a complaint about something Jesus' disciples are doing. And the phrase comes to mind, damned if you do, damned if you don't.

And what life is like with Jesus.

[5 : 50] And so life without Jesus. How do you deal with sin? Whoever you are, wherever you are, people in life.

Without Jesus, how do you deal with sin? How do you avoid disaster? How do you answer the problem of death? What will become of us?

Will we ever find true joy and rest? For the likes of the Romans, first we'll deal with them. They're not really in the passage. But what about people who just do not have religion?

For the likes of the Romans or non-religious people, they perhaps didn't care much about their sin. Have you ever been there? In a place where you just don't care about your sin? Non-believers tend not to care too much about their sin.

But that doesn't mean they don't have burdens. You know, so perhaps they're not trying to live up to some standard of righteousness. But nevertheless, we all live in the same world. And eventually we're all subject to the same problems.

[6 : 54] Of sickness and pain and sorrow. Suffering, sin, evil. And death. Even for people who are not wrestling with morality, they will be getting tired of the pursuit of peace and happiness and rest.

And never finding it. Stan said something like that the other week. People are scrambling about trying to find these things and never find them. And people have different ways, don't they?

Of trying to avoid the problems of humanity. I wonder what your experience is. We've all probably dabbled in some of these things. Some people move to a different place.

Some people run away from their problems. Some people build mansions to hide. Some people build bunkers. I don't know if you know anyone who's got a bunker. Might be handy in the days to come.

Some people try to, with all their money, get the best doctor that money can buy. Or get the best treatment. People with the most money get access to different treatment that we don't.

[7 : 59] Or perhaps they spend money on the best security. But in the end, nobody can avoid all of these things. Nobody can avoid sickness, pain, sorrow, suffering, sin, evil and death.

Nobody. No matter what you spend your money on and where you hide and where you run to. There's no corner on this earth where you can escape from it. And so, people try in different ways.

Maybe they just drown their sorrows in alcohol and try and forget it or bury their head in the sand. However, for other people, religion. That's where they try and deal with these things.

For the Jews in our passage and many people today, it is in strict adherence to religion. The Jews had hard lessons in their history that when they turned from God, disaster came.

Even to the point in their history that their temple was destroyed and the people were taken into exile. So, they were very mindful of these things. They didn't want to repeat the same mistakes.

[9 : 08] And so, what they did was they built customs and practices in order to try and avoid disasters like that again. They had the law, but they built a hundred fences around the law to try and avoid disaster again.

Strict adherence to fasting and to the Sabbath, among other things. And so, in the Torah, there is only one day per year. One day that the Jews were to fast.

And that is the Day of Atonement. Only one day in the law. But they had built a custom of fasting two days every week. So, one day a year in the law.

And they had added a hundred days to that. A Monday and a Thursday. Why a Monday and a Thursday? Well, as a connection to the next part of our passage, the Sabbath.

These days of fasting were chosen because they had sufficient distance from the Sabbath. You can't have your fast on the day next to the Sabbath. You don't want to interfere with the Sabbath.

[10:13] Because we need to keep the Sabbath and we need to do all these other things. And so, they had it on a Monday and a Thursday. Sufficient distance from the Sabbath and sufficient distance from each other.

And then on the Sabbath, they had so many different rules about what you could carry. And how far you could go. You could go X amount of thousand steps, but not one more. Or you would be sinning.

You could lift a certain amount, but not too much. Or you would be sinning. How many steps? What counts as work? What can you lift? What can you put down? What can you sew?

What can you stitch? Who can you help? All these different things. You can go and read about it. But what they did was they took God's law. And they added countless customs to tell people exactly how to avoid breaking God's law.

But in the process, they were so focused on the form that they missed the spirit of it. And they took one day of fasting and added a hundred more. And they took a day of rest and made it impossible to rest or do any good.

[11:15] And in the process of trying to avoid disaster and please God, they created a system of fasting and fretting and trying to earn their way into God's good graces.

Maybe if we can fast enough, and maybe if we can do enough to keep the Sabbath, maybe we'll avoid God's wrath and we'll gain his favor.

And maybe even, maybe we will hasten the day of the Messiah if we just get our act together. And we see the same today, particularly with religious people.

Whatever religion it is, you pick. Even Christianity. Fasting and fretting and trying to earn God's grace. But in the process, you never find joy.

You never find rest. And you never find the grace of God. And this, my friends, is life without Jesus. The people look at Jesus' disciples and they say, Hey, they're doing all this stuff.

[12:19] They're not doing the stuff that we're doing. You need to sort them out, Jesus. And then they say, Hey, they're doing stuff that you're not allowed to do. You need to sort them out, Jesus. And the ironic thing is, that as well as to trying to earn God's grace and avoid disaster, they thought that doing all these things would hasten the day of the Messiah.

If we can fast as much as we can and keep the Sabbath perfectly, God will send his Messiah and the nation of Israel will be free. And in the process, they instruct the Messiah on how to act so that God might send his Messiah.

It's ironic. Hey, Jesus, your disciples are stopping the Messiah coming. And Jesus is like, Do you not see? Have you not been listening to John?

I mean, this is the disciples of John. Have you not been listening to your teacher? Sure. Some of them have. Andrew came from John. But he's right there in front of them.

Standing in front of them, and they cannot see him. Think about all that Jesus is doing. I mean, we're only in chapter 2, but he's done so much already.

[13 : 36] All that he's doing. And still they can't see the wood for the trees. Why? Why can they not see it? It's not that Jesus isn't doing things obvious enough.

It's because they have hard hearts. They have become hardened in their hearts. And there's something about, there's something very prideful about morality, isn't there?

When we begin chasing down that morality, I'm going to be the most moral person in the room. And then you take the moral high ground, and you become prideful.

And you start to look down on people. And then there's something inflexible about legalism. It makes it very difficult for people to humble themselves, and consider that God can work in ways that they do not expect.

And so it hardens the heart. And that's a theme we're going to see throughout Mark. And Jesus tells them some parables to answer their questions and complaints.

[14 : 43] And so firstly, Jesus says that he is the bridegroom. He refers to himself as the bridegroom. And they don't recognize who he is, but John the Baptist also called Jesus the bridegroom.

In John chapter 3, he called, he told his own disciples that Jesus was the bridegroom. And yet here's his own disciples still struggling to see it.

And just as John also called Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But yet here they are. You know, the devout disciples of John and the devout disciples of the Pharisees fasting and fretting to hasten the day of the Messiah.

But when the Messiah turns up, not only should you no longer fast and fret, but he shows us actually what all these things and the law are all about.

He brings us back to the law and the proper interpretation of it. He brings us back to the heart of the Father. And so you see, Jesus is not breaking any of the laws of God.

[15 : 53] He's never once broke a law of God, but he isn't indulging the customs and traditions of man. All these traditions and customs that man is about, whereas Jesus, he is always getting to the spirit of the law.

And so it's absolutely right for his disciples to celebrate. Fasting is often associated with mourning. That is what it says in Matthew's account of this.

And it says they do not fast because they do not mourn. And why would they mourn? Because they've got the Messiah. The bridegroom is here and they are the guests. When have you ever saw someone at a wedding mourning and fasting?

If you do ever see that, tell them to leave. They've got laws. They actually had laws in Judaism that you couldn't go to these feasts and celebrations if you were mourning and fasting.

Don't go. Or just don't fast. And so they can't see that this is a time to celebrate. This is a time for joy. This is a time for feasting. Because the bridegroom is here.

[17 : 01] He is here. They're not mourning over their sin. Why are Jesus' disciples not mourning over their sin? Well, as we saw before in Mark's gospel, Jesus is the one who forgives sin.

They're not mourning over their nation and worried about that because the Messiah is here. And so you don't mourn at a wedding, nor should you be fasting, and nor should your fasting be some kind of public display to make it about you.

And so there was a woman that used to come to this church, a Nigerian lady called Omolaya. Remember Omolaya?

She used to sit up there. And maybe you didn't know this. Maybe some of you did. Omolaya used to fast every Sunday. Every single Sunday she used to fast.

And that's why she didn't come to a church lunch. She used to fast on a Sunday. And the beautiful thing is you would never know it because she never ever came in with sackcloth covered in ashes.

[18 : 06] She never went, oh, I can't have lunch because I'm fasting. She was a good picture, you know. She kept it to herself and she kept a happy face about it.

And it was about her own devotion. It's not about a public display. There will be a time to fast, Jesus says. There will be a time to fast. Throughout church history, there has been times where Christians fast for different reasons.

In fact, we live in a time of now and not yet. And so now we celebrate because Jesus has come, but not yet because he's not fully inaugurated his kingdom.

And so we still feel these pains and sorrows and suffering. And there will be times to fast. But certainly when Jesus was among his disciples, it's not a time to fast.

Secondly, Jesus uses two parables to illustrate just how inflexible and worn out their customs were. A garment and a wineskin.

[19 : 09] And so if you, if you're ever into, oh, Deborah used to make stuff all the time. Every week, she'd come in with a different outfit. If you're, if you maybe, a previous life, you were a seamstress, this will make sense to you.

And if not, maybe you drink a lot of wine and this will make sense to you. So a garment and a wineskin. And Jesus says, an old garment, if it needs a patch, you don't patch it with a new piece of cloth because that new piece is going to shrink in the wash and it's going to rip the old garment apart.

If it's an old garment, you need to patch it with an old piece of cloth that's not going to move. That's become fixed. And so, if you patch it up with a new piece of cloth, the cloth will shrink and it will tear the garment and it will work.

It will actually ruin both pieces. It will ruin the old and the new. And then he says, similarly, an old wineskin over time becomes tough, rigid, inflexible.

And if you put new wine to it, it can't stretch when the wine ferments. And the old wineskin, the old wineskin will burst. And when it bursts, the new wine will spill out and it will ruin the wineskin and the wine.

[20 : 22] The old and the new will be ruined by trying to just add on the new to the old. And so you see what Jesus is saying? Jesus is saying, this new thing cannot just be added on to your old thing.

You need to put your old thing away. The new thing is fresh and powerful and new. You need some flexibility to receive it.

And so the customs that they had made made the spirit of the law inflexible and worn out.

They had taken the law and made it inflexible and worn out. You cannot add the newness of the gospel into their Judaism. You can't add Jesus into what you already have and hope to keep both.

Maybe it's a church tradition. Maybe it's a family tradition. Maybe it's just you want to keep your sinful life and add Jesus onto it. And we can't. We can't do it. You can't add the newness of the gospel into something old and hope to keep both because it will actually ruin both.

[21 : 29] Both things will be ruined. Notice that the new cloth and the new wine are both more fresh and more powerful. the new bit of cloth can rip the old bit to shreds.

The new wine can cause the wineskin to burst. There's something new and fresh and powerful about the gospel that cannot fit in to the customs of old.

So, similarly, we get on to the Sabbath. The Sabbath had become extremely inflexible. They made it extremely inflexible in their pursuit to keep a law and forgot the fact of something Jesus states here.

The Sabbath was made for man. Not man for the Sabbath. And what Jesus is talking about is back in Genesis man was made first and then the Sabbath.

And so God made the Sabbath for the man that was already made. He didn't make the Sabbath and then make a man and say, okay, Sabbath, here you go, there's a man for you. Beat him into shape.

[22 : 44] The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. And because they didn't understand who Jesus was, that he was the son of man, they couldn't see that he is Lord even of the Sabbath.

He made the Sabbath and he is Lord of the Sabbath and he has authority over the Sabbath to see that it does what it's supposed to do.

He makes sure that the Sabbath does what it's supposed to do. And we're going to see that next time in this little encounter with healing a man on the Sabbath.

But the Sabbath isn't serving man if it is making him hungry or adding a burden upon burden to his life. You see how the Sabbath doesn't give you rest if it's just adding burdens and stressing you out and putting so many fences that you can't find the help that you need just because it's a certain day of the week.

And so they didn't understand who Jesus was. And Jesus uses this history of King David as an illustration. And they rightly revered David.

[23 : 54] He was a man after God's own heart. One of the greatest kings of Israel. He was the Lord's anointed. And notice what Jesus does. He uses David as an example as though to say well you accept David doing this.

What about the son of David? What about the son of David? What about the branch that comes? What about the true Messiah?

The son of David the Lord's anointed the Messiah? If it's okay in certain circumstances for David to be refreshed with the bread of the presence which was only for priests how much more for the Messiah and the Lord of the Sabbath to allow his men to rub just a little bit of grain through their fingers for food.

And so in these two accounts we see what life is like without Jesus. How burdensome life is without Jesus. How ineffective religion is.

Religious burdens that we cannot find joy we cannot find rest. And these religious burdens even cloud our ability to even recognize the Messiah when he comes standing face to face with us.

[25 : 11] And yet we also get a glimpse in our passage of what life with Jesus is like. It's not just about getting off the hook with fasting.

Life with Jesus is not just so that we can avoid these religious practices nor is it about just we've gained the ability with Jesus to rub a little grain between our fingers.

is that the only benefit to Jesus? Is it not about the fact that Jesus brings celebration where there was once sorrow or that Jesus brings feasting where there was once fasting and he brings satisfaction where there was only hunger perpetual hunger and he brings something new and fresh with freedom and power in place of the old and worn out and inflexible.

Is that not what the whole point of life with Jesus is like? Is that not the picture that he shows like a like a wedding feast where everyone is joyous and celebrating and able to find freedom and rest?

We cannot fit the gospel into our traditions and inflexible religion. The great tragedy of legalism is that it makes God look inflexible and it makes sin look more joyful than God.

[26 : 34] what a travesty that is what a lie that is to think that sin is more joyful than God. It is absolutely not. There is so much joy and celebration and freedom and rest in God.

Jesus did not come to add burden. Jesus didn't say come to me all ye who are doing all right and I'll add burdens! to your life.

He says come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. His burden is light. His yoke is easy and he's the only one who can turn our sorrows to joy and celebration.

He's the only one who can turn our fasting and hunger into feasting and satisfaction. He's the only one who can turn our fretting every day fretting and fretting finally into resting.

But we cannot be inflexible with our lives whether it's rituals traditions religion or even just our own worldly desires. We can't add Jesus onto our lives and keep both.

[27 : 46] The old has to go and make way for the new in Christ. But that's no burden. It's no burden to do that at all. And just think about this maybe later in the week.

Have a think about and get the scales out and just say what weighs more? Does forgiveness weigh more? Or does guilt and sins weigh more?

Think about all the things that Jesus brings and just see that his burden is light. His yoke is easy and he will give rest for our souls.

He's the bridegroom not a task master. He's the Lord of the Sabbath not the Lord of burdens. He's the Son of Man the Messiah and in him is life in absolute abundance.

What a saviour we have. Let me pray. Lord our God please help us to see just how gracious how unbelievably merciful and overflowing and grace and loving kindness you are.

[28 : 57] Help us to see that you are an absolutely infinitely joyful God and that you are the one that can give us rest and freedom and that we could never ever ever please you without faith.

We can never ever ever earn grace but you freely offer it to us if we would just trust the one who can give us it we would trust your son Jesus who has come as a light and life to the world please help us to leave today with less burdens than we came in with please help us go to Jesus with our burdens and cast off our anxieties and help us to find true!

celebration and satisfaction and joy and freedom and forgiveness and peace and rest in Christ we pray in his wonderful and precious and powerful name