

Missing the Point about Jesus

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0:00] Well, when the iPad first came out, it was a bit of a game changer. Suddenly, tablets were all the rage. Microsoft brought out their version called a Surface.

Samsung has brought out their version. And now most households, even in this room, I'm guessing, have an iPad of sorts at home. In fact, the schools are now full of them.

But some people have missed the point of them. I like this German couple in this video clip you may have seen before. It's in German, but you'll get the idea. It begins with the daughter asking, So, Dad, how do you like the iPad I brought for your birthday?

We'll need to make sure the volume's up, Tim. Thanks. Sag mal, Papa, habe ich dich noch gar nicht gefragt? Wie kommst du eigentlich mit dem neuen iPad zurecht, was wir dir zum Geburtstag geschenkt haben? Gut. Mit den ganzen Apps kommst du klar?

Was denn für Apps? Geh mal bitte einen Schritt zur Seite. Was denn?

[1:16] Now, did you get the point that he missed the point? And because he missed the point, he's trying to fit this new thing into an old way of life, like a chopping board.

Well, last week, I wanted to help you see afresh how good Jesus is, that he's willing to touch the untouchable, to cleanse, remember the leper, that he's able to forgive sins, if you remember the paralytic, and that he came to call people sinners like us, if you remember Levi.

But this week, we see the religious leaders have totally missed the point of who he is, that he is such a game changer. And to fully see it, we're going to have to do a bit of work in the Old Testament this morning.

But our passage really kicks off continuing the conversation for last week, which is why I've got that first paragraph on your sheets that we actually looked at last week. So, if you look at verse 30 there, the fourth line down, we see that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law started complaining to Jesus' disciples about the company he keeps, sinners and tax collectors.

Well, if you go down now to the second paragraph, to verse 33, our passage, they refers to the same Pharisees and teachers of the law.

[2:37] And they are now complaining again to the disciples, not about the company they keep, but the religious rituals they don't keep, like fasting.

So, we're at point one, verse 33. They said to Jesus, John's disciples often fast and pray, and so the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.

And in the Old Testament, our fasting was commanded once a year, but it was practiced quite regularly, particularly at times of crisis or crises. People would go without food and not to lose weight, but to humble themselves before God.

And they'd spend the considerable time that it took to prepare and eat food in those days, to pray instead. And that's why the disciples of the Pharisees ask why they don't fast and pray in verse 33.

But because it was a crisis, whether it was someone dying or some bad news or some gross sin that they needed to repent of, fasting often went with mourning.

[3 : 42] It was a legitimate practice in the Old Testament. And by the time of Jesus, it seems fasting had become a regular practice to express the mourning over Israel's sin that landed them under the rule of the Romans.

So, verse 33, the followers of John the Baptist fasted, and the followers of the Pharisees fasted. Of course, the Pharisees then turned it from a legitimate thing into something to boast in, and we see that later in Luke's Gospel.

But the problem here is that they've missed the point about who Jesus is. They were there last week when he healed the paralytic and proved he's able to forgive sins.

And so to fast and mourn over Israel's sin, when the one who can forgive sins is right there with them, or is as crazy as fasting and mourning at a wedding?

Verse 34, Jesus answered, Can you make the friends of the bridegroom, that's the groom, fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them.

[4 : 52] In those days, they will fast. Here is a picture of a wedding with the groom and his guests, and presumably the bride is there too. And weddings are times of feasting and celebration, are they not?

I have a couple of weddings coming up to conduct. Can you imagine me getting up at the front of the church and saying at the start, thank you for coming today as we mourn the marriage of X and Y.

It's such a sad occasion, there'll be no food at the reception, just fasting and tissues. It'd be the worst reception ever, wouldn't it?

No food, that's why you go, isn't it? And it's totally unfitting for the occasion. Well, so too is fasting and mourning over sin, when the one who has come to forgive sins and call sinners is here.

Oh sure, verse 35, they will mourn and fast, and not for sin, but when Jesus, the bridegroom, is taken from them, hung on a cross. But at the moment, it's totally unfitting.

[5 : 57] What's more, if Jesus can forgive sins, then he is the bridegroom and saviour, the Old Testament promised. You see, Jesus deliberately picks a wedding picture, and calls himself the bridegroom, because God was called that in our first reading.

And so on the slide, you can see at the top there, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you. And notice the next line, it'll be a time of eating and drinking, not fasting.

Why? Well, because of the bottom, your saviour comes to you, Jerusalem. He comes with reward, or to restore his people.

And here is Jesus, as we saw last week, doing only what God can do, forgive sins, and restore people. He is that promised bridegroom, and saviour, you see.

But by fulfilling the Old Testament promise here, Jesus actually begins, a new way to God. He brings a new covenant, with a new way of life, that simply cannot be patched on to the old.

[7 : 08] Have a look at verse 36 and 38. He told them this parable, no one tears a piece out of a new garment, to patch it on an old one. Otherwise, they'll have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new, will not match the old.

And no one pours new wine into old wine skins, otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out, and the wine skins will be ruined. Here there are two pictures, of clothes and wine, but we're told in verse 36, it's one parable, because it's one point, which is, Jesus cannot be forced, his new way cannot be forced, into the old way.

It just doesn't match. And if you try to, it ruins. And so if you have an old t-shirt, like I've got here, which I used to wear on a camp, it's pretty old and tatty.

You wear it on a camp, which is why it's orange, because you stand out as leaders. But anyway, here it is. And then if I get a new t-shirt from Maya, here we go, I'll pull out a new one, there we are, nice and soft.

And then what we do, is if we tear a bit out of it, there we are, a patch I prepared earlier, and then try and put it onto this one, like so.

[8 : 31] Now tell me, does it match? Lovely. You got new glasses the other day, didn't you? Now of course it doesn't match.

And what's happened to the new one now? It's, you know, it's ruined, isn't it? I didn't bite new, it's okay. You get the point, don't you? And if I get a new bottle of wine, and if I, no, I'm only joking, I'm not going to do that.

You get the point, don't you? The new cannot fit into the old, it cannot be patched in or poured in. Rather you need new wine, wine skins to match the new wine.

You see, Jesus brings a new era, a new covenant, which is why we've got the New Testament in the Bible. And it's such a game changer that like the iPad, you cannot fit it into your old way of life.

Use it as a chopping board. We don't follow Jesus and then still try and live the old covenant life of animal sacrifices for sins, of pilgrimages to the temple in Israel, or abstaining from bacon, nor fasting for sin.

[9 : 40] All those religious practices are now no longer necessary. They've been fulfilled. Not that they were wrong at the time. Even John's disciples fasted here in verse 33.

The difference between the old and the new is not about wrong and right. It's about promise and fulfillment. But once the fulfillment is here, once the promised bridegroom is present, then something new has started that simply cannot be patched onto the old.

It's like when a couple gets engaged, one asks, will you marry me? And presumably the other one says yes. So there's a promise of marriage, isn't there? But they still largely live at their old places and living their old lives and so on.

But on their wedding day, when the promise is fulfilled, when they become husband and wife, it's a game changer, isn't it? And they no longer live their old life.

They don't get married on the wedding day and then drive home to their separate homes, do they? Or they don't get married as husband and wife and still call each other boyfriend and girlfriend. It's a game changer that demands a new way of living and so too with Christ.

[10 : 53] The new covenant means a new way of life, just like new wine needs new wineskins. And so the lesson for us from this part is not so much about fasting, though we don't have to, and certainly not for sin because Jesus forgives sins.

You might like to fast so you can pray and there's a couple of examples of that in the Bible. But rather the point here is to be certain about Jesus. Remember, Luke has written the book that you may know the certainty of the things you've been taught about Jesus.

And here, the certainty about his exclusivity, if you like, that he demands to be followed exclusively. He's such a game changer, he demands a new way of life that cannot fit into any other old way of life.

Now, I realize we didn't grow up with Judaism and the old covenant, so I doubt we try and patch Jesus on to Judaism. But some of us have grown up with other religions like Islam or Buddhism, or non-religions like atheism and secularism that follows the world's ways.

And even if we have grown up as a Christian, there's still the temptation to live the world's way. But we cannot simply patch Jesus onto those old ways of life.

[12:08] They don't match. All religions are not the same. And if we try to, it only ruins. I mean, just think of those we know who started off as Christians but wanted to live the world's way too.

You know, they'd follow secularism during the week and then try and patch a bit of Jesus on on Sundays. Or they'd follow the teaching of the world about some issues and topics and then patch on a bit of Jesus' teaching that they like too.

But it doesn't work. In the end, it drags them away from Christ and only ruins their eternal life. Rather, Jesus is so new, he demands new wineskins, you see, a new way of life that is about Christ alone, that follows him exclusively, that's all in with him.

And so it's worth asking ourselves, are we all in with Jesus? Are we following Christ alone? Or are we trying to pour a bit of his teaching into our old way of life?

If we are, the wineskin will burst. Of course, living a new way with Christ alone can be really hard, especially for those who've grown up a completely different way.

[13:22] Because what we're used to is often so much more comfortable, isn't it? Do you see verse 39? No one, after drinking old wine, wants the new, for they say the old is better or good.

You see, some people are so used to their old way of life, what they've grown up with, that they think it's better and won't even bother trying to even taste the new wine, like Christianity.

Despite the evidence we have for Jesus, even the evidence we have for his miracles, which we do have, they simply refuse to seriously consider Christ. And it seems those Pharisees are like that.

Despite the evidence, they prefer their legitimate old practice of fasting for sin, and even their illegitimate old practice of Sabbath legalism.

Which brings us to point two and chapter six, verse one. One Sabbath, Jesus was going through the grain fields and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.

[14:28] Some of the Pharisees asked, why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? Now, for those who don't know, the Sabbath refers to the seventh day of the Jewish week, which is actually a Saturday.

And one of the Ten Commandments was to do no work on the Sabbath. Can you remember which commandment that was out of the ten? Don't worry, I had to look it up too. It's the fourth commandment and it's on the next slide, where he says to remember the Sabbath day, to set it apart as holy and do no labor or work.

And the reason for that is because the creation account in Genesis says that God made the heavens and the earth six days and then rested the seventh day.

Here the law was about keeping the seventh day set apart as different to the rest of the week. Do you remember the seventh day at creation where God rested from his work of creating? The Bible tells us that God is still at work in our world, upholding the laws of physics and so on, but he rested from creating.

And so the important part about remembering the Sabbath was actually remembering God's rest at creation. Why? Well, because that rest was God's goal for us.

[15:44] You see, God created us to enjoy right relationship with him and one another in a perfect world with a perfect body. That's what he achieved in creation.

Remember, he said everything was very good. And so God's rest referred to enjoying that life, life to the full, life as it was meant to be, a better than the best holiday you've ever had.

And when he reached this rest on the seventh day, he blessed it because he'd reached his goal to have us enjoy his rest, relationship with him, one another, perfect creation, perfect bodies.

And what's more, this perfect life of God's rest was meant to last forever because when you read the creation account in Genesis 1, every day has a morning and evening except the seventh day.

There was no evening. There was no eighth day. It's as though the seventh day just went on forever because that rest was meant to be enjoyed forever.

[16:49] Genesis 1 is not a scientific textbook. It makes a theological point that God created a good world for us to enjoy with him. But as we saw last week, sin spoilt all that.

Do you remember? It corrupted creation and produced sickness. It corrupted people and produced selfishness. And the rest of the Bible is really about God's plan to bring us back to his rest, to restore relationship with him and one another now, with new bodies and a new creation later.

And the Sabbath law, well, it was meant to point people to that rest and to enjoy a glimpse of it as they rested from their own work to enjoy relationship and good parts of this world.

That's in part where the Sunday lunch came from and to enjoy food from this world in relationship with one another after enjoying relationship with God at church. But the Pharisees had missed the point.

All they remembered from that law was do no work. They forgot the resting part, the enjoyment part, and so they became legalistic about not working. They even added another 39 laws to make sure you didn't work, like not being allowed to even touch a tool like a hammer, just in case you accidentally did work with it.

[18:08] And it's the same today. On the next slide, there's even a Sabbath elevator in Israel and it stops automatically at each floor both up and down so you don't have to push the button because they consider that work.

So the Pharisees had turned a day of rest and enjoyment into a day of burden and work, ironically, where you had to work at obeying all these laws about not working.

And it seems the Pharisees in our passage were following the disciples and Jesus around on the Sabbath to see if they would work. And, ha-ha, busted. They spotted the disciples picking a few heads of grain to eat.

They were harvesting and harvesting was work. But they've missed the point about the Sabbath law, haven't they? It's not meant to prevent people from picking heads of grain.

It was to help people remember God's rest. As Jesus said on the next slide in Mark chapter 2 where the same account is written, he said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

[19:17] The Sabbath was made to help people remember God's rest, to help them enjoy a glimpse of it now as they look forward to enjoying it fully later. It wasn't there for people to serve the Sabbath law legalistically.

In fact, even the Old Testament wasn't legalistic. Rather, it showed times when the law was broken for people's good. Have a look at verse 3 and 4 of chapter 6.

Jesus answered them when they were being accused of breaking the Sabbath, Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, the temple, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for the priests to eat.

And he also gave some to his companions. Here, this is a story from the Old Testament where David and his men are hungry because they're on the run from King Saul. You see, God had just anointed David as the next chosen king because Saul was dodgy.

But no king likes to be replaced and so King Saul was chasing after David to kill him. And when David came to the temple, the only bread available was this sacred bread that was lawful only for the priests to eat.

[20 : 29] But David ate it. without being condemned for it. And the point is, even then, the law could be broken for people's good. But the Pharisees had missed this point and cared more about blindly obeying the law than caring for people.

And so they became legalistic. What's more, they missed the point about who Jesus is. You see, Jesus is king from David's line. He was born in the city of David as we sung at Christmas time.

So if King David could technically break the law back then by eating bread, well, how much more so can King Jesus hear? Verse 5, Then Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is Lord, King of the Sabbath.

He is Lord, he's king, which means he has authority over the Sabbath. He has authority to allow his disciples to break the Sabbath law even though, technically, it could be done anyway. It's like an ambulance that's allowed to run red lights.

You know, they can break the law not only because they're acting for people's good but because the government has the authority to allow them to do it. So too Jesus and his disciples hear for his law to the Sabbath.

[21 : 43] Now you'd think after seeing Jesus heal the paralytic last week and hearing Jesus talk like this this week, the Pharisees might start to realise he's no ordinary person. Perhaps Jesus really is the promised bridegroom.

and saviour, the Lord of the Sabbath. But they miss the point again and they refuse to even taste the new wine to seriously consider Jesus.

Instead, they prefer their old religion and their old legalism. So now they're out to get him. Verse 6. On another Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagogue and was teaching and a man whose right hand was shriveled was there.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. So they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, get up and stand in front of everyone.

So he got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath? To do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it?

[22 : 48] He looked around at them all and said to the man, stretch out your hand. He did so and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

You see, they've missed the point again, haven't they? I mean, Jesus just healed a man with a shriveled hand with a word. He proves he is Lord of the Sabbath, not only with authority to break it but also fulfill it.

You know, he healed the paralytic last week which proved he can forgive sins and restore rest between us and God relationally and here he heals this man's withered hand proving he has the power to give us new bodies later to enjoy God's rest fully.

He really is Lord of the Sabbath. But instead of going, wow, did you see that? I didn't yet. This is incredible. They ignore the miracle and plot against him and in doing so they expose their hypocrisy.

They claim to teach the truth yet despite the evidence in front of them they deny the truth, don't they? What's more, they claim to teach the best way to live yet they prefer this man remain disabled than admit they've got the law wrong.

[24:01] How unloving is that? It's heartless hypocrisy and sadly this is what we see with the world today. For example, our state leaders claim to uphold truth but despite the strong historical evidence we have for Jesus they deny the truth by removing religious education from the school timetable or leaders who claim to govern for good.

So earlier this month the Queensland law reform denied an unborn child justice when it announced that the 17 year old who killed a couple in Brisbane on Australia Day, I don't know if you remember that, the title's on the slide there, he would not be charged with murder for killing their unborn child as well.

Even though on the next slide I don't know if you can see it, the newspaper there caused the child by his name Miles and even spoke about laying him to rest as though he was a real person.

And even though the Queensland police wanted justice and so the article goes on to say that they were going to charge him under section 313 of their criminal code. And yet despite all this, the next red line down there, the law commission said the abortion laws made it unclear whether the police could use section 313.

Basically, it was unclear if the unborn son was an imminent child or just a viable fetus. And so they ruled it wasn't murder. Here are leaders who claim to govern for justice, yet they prefer to deny justice than chance admitting their law is wrong.

[25:35] It's heartless, I think, and it's hypocrisy. But here's the thing, like with the Pharisees, it only makes the lordship of Jesus shine more brightly, doesn't it?

Again, Luke has written his book not so much to tell us whether we should have a Sabbath or not, but so we can have certainty about Jesus. In this case, certainty about the worth of following him as our Lord.

For he shows his Lord of the Sabbath who cares for people and can bring life. whose new way is love, not legalism.

Indeed, who so loved us he died to pay for our sins so we could enjoy God's rest. Right relationship now. New creation embodies later.

Is he not the type of Lord worth following? Worth being all in with? I mean, what other way of life or other leader really stacks up to this Lord of love?

[26:42] Well, there are some things in life that again changes like the iPad that we simply cannot fit into the old way of life like a chopping board. If we do, we miss the point and ruin the iPad such as it stops being an iPad.

Well, Jesus is the promised bridegroom and saviour who fulfills the old covenant and begins a new one. And with this comes a new way of life that we cannot patch onto an old way of life.

So we are to live exclusively for Jesus as our Lord to follow Christ alone. But he is worth following because he is also Lord of the Sabbath who gives rest with God in part now and fully later whose way of life that we follow is love not legalism.

And so his Lordship over our lives is worth it. He is worth following exclusively. He is worth being our Lord alone.

Let's pray. our gracious heavenly Father we thank you for this reminder today of the certainty of Jesus' Lordship that he demands a new way that serves him alone for he does not fit into any other old way of life and yet it is worth following and serving him alone for he is the Lord of the Sabbath whose new way is love not legalism.

[28:17] So Father we pray that you would help us with these encouragements to keep living for the Lord Jesus who died for us. We ask it in his name. Amen.