

# The Old and the New

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[ 0 : 00 ]     God willing. We're here to worship God. Let's sing to God's holy name. Scottish Psalter and Psalm 91. Scottish Psalter and Psalm 91. That's on page 351 of the Blue Psalm books. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 91 on page 351.

You can sing verses 1 down to verse 5 of the Psalm. He that doth in the secret place of the Most High reside, under the shade of him that is the Almighty shall abide.

I of the Lord my God will say, he is my refuge still, he is my fortress and my God, and in him trust I will. Psalm 91 verses 1 to 5 to God's praise.

Psalm 91.

Psalm 91. Psalm 91. Psalm 91. Psalm 91. I know the Lord my God will say, he is my refuge still, he is my fortress and my hope and in him.

[ 1 : 32 ]     Psalm 91. Psalm 91. He is my fortress and my hope and in him trust I will. Psalm 91. He is my fortress and my refuge still, he is my fortress and my hope and in him trust I will.

He is my fortress and my hope and in him trust I will. He is my fortress and my hope and in him trust I will.

I will. He is my fortress and my humble need. He is my fortress and my having great need, alright I will. He is my fortress and my poverty.

He is my fortress and my pine gratitude. From sand volve-avers, His male child behind the house, Under His wings shall be His faithfulness shall be a shield But under God to Him

Thou shalt not bid to be our gift For terrors of the night Not for the hour, O God Thou thine, O God In my death is high Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray.

[ 4 : 03 ]     Lord God, we come before you this day and we acknowledge that you are God. You alone are the one true living God that is none other like you.

You alone are sovereign. You alone are king. You alone deserve all our worship and all our glory. You alone are the one true living God.

You alone created and you alone at this very second of time sustain all things. There is nothing beyond you. There is nothing beyond your knowledge.

There is nothing beyond your power. But even just now there is not one person here in this building and not one person in the whole of creation that you do not see and know fully.

You know all that we are. You know all that we have done and all that we will do. You know all our thoughts and you see and hear all our words. Before they are even formed in our minds, Lord, you know them.

[ 5 : 02 ]     That future and past and present. That all things are clear and open to you. That you are without beginning and without end. You are unchanging in all your ways.

Lord, help us with that heart of worship to understand we come before you this day. We confess as we often come to this place with our hearts and our minds so full of so many things.

We come to this place ready to give you a small time of worship. But not ready even for this short time to give you all our minds and all our concentration and all our hearts.

We confess that we bring to this place today. We bring to this place so many worries, so many burdens, so many anxieties, so many stresses and strains of this past week.

So many worries and burdens and anxieties of this coming week. Lord, you alone know what presses heavy perhaps on our minds just now. We do pray for these burdens and worries to be lifted.

[ 6 : 07 ] To be lifted as we look and as we come near to the throne of grace. We know that for your people this day, for those who know Jesus and who love Jesus. As we approach the throne of grace, we approach a place where we are welcome.

A place where our Saviour tells us to go. Where he lovingly directs us to go. To lay down our burdens, our pains, our anxieties, our worries.

The things which bother us so much. To lay these things down at the foot of the throne. Knowing that there we find grace and mercy and help in time of need.

We thank you Lord for this gathering today. This opportunity we have once more to worship you in this place. We thank you for everyone gathered here. For those here today who know Jesus and who love him.

For those of us who can call him our Lord and our King. Our Saviour and our Friend. Thank you Lord for this chance to worship together. As brothers and sisters.

[ 7 : 08 ] To worship together as a church family. We pray also for those here today who again who as of yet cannot say that they know Jesus. Who as of yet cannot say that he is theirs and that they are his.

We thank you for them. We thank you for their attendance of this place. We thank you Lord that they all hear once more your word. We ask once more that they would know that we love them. That we are thankful for them.

But we ask more than that. And of eternally more importance than that. They would leave this place today having encountered perhaps the first time. The living Saviour.

The living Saviour who asks them. Who tells them. Who bids them. Who commands them to come to him. To find rest for their souls. To come to him and to lay aside all the man-made structures.

The man-made so-called religion. To come to him and to lay aside their sin. To leave behind their waywardness. To come to him and to cry out for salvation.

[ 8 : 09 ] And to know that he hears all who cry to him. That he hears all who cry to him for that salvation. That he ignores none of his people. Lord we ask that even this day they would come to a saving knowledge of you.

Even this day you would transform their hearts and their lives. So they would come and know you truly for themselves. Lord we thank you for this gathering.

We thank you that we have the ability to come and to worship you week by week. We pray for those who are not here today. But who wish to be here. Those who would long to be here. But through age.

Perhaps illness. And for other various reasons. They cannot be with us as often as they desire to be. We pray for them. We ask that they would know your presence.

Even in their absence from us. That they would know your presence. We pray Lord for those in our community today. Those in the village here. Those who have no desire to come near this place.

[ 9 : 07 ] Who have no care and who never think of coming to worship you. Those who do not pray for themselves. Those who do not care for their never dying soul. Those who have no understanding as to the danger.

The eternal danger they are in. We pray for them. Those who are our neighbours. Our friends. Our family. Those who we love so much. Those who we long to worship alongside in this place.

So much. Those who are our dear neighbours. Perhaps of many years. Those who have perhaps even recently. In the last few years. Moved into this community. And who as of yet we have not met properly.

We pray for them. We pray for all of them. That would come to us saving knowledge of yourself. Lord we ask you. Use us as witnesses. For that end. Help us in our words.

In our conduct. In our thoughts. In everything we say. And think. And do Lord. To be witnesses. To be bold. Glorious. Gentle witnesses. To point those around us.

[ 10 : 06 ] To the one who has saved us. And who we know can save them also. Help us Lord. We ask as a witness. Help us as a congregation. To be brave. Witnesses in this place.

Help us as a congregation. To grow more and more together. As a family. Knowing that as we grow together. In our unity together. As we grow in our love for one another. As we grow in our service.

To one another. Lord you will bless that unity. You will bless that togetherness. Lord we will see the gospel. Cause spread. And grow. And increase.

Lord in this community. We do pray Lord. For days of refreshing. And days of renewal. As always we know. We pray for these days of revival. It's not in our power. To make them happen.

It's not in our power Lord. To see those souls. Revived and saved. We pray for it. Knowing it's in your power. But you're the God. Who saved your people here today.

[ 11 : 01 ] Who brought some here today. From such deep darkness. To your marvelous light. And we know that same reality. Could be known. For our friends. Our family. Our neighbors. In this place.

Lord help us. To be witnesses. Help us. To truly be missionaries. At where you've placed us. In this community. But we are not here Lord. For our permanent home. We are here as sojourners.

We are here as ambassadors. Help us for the short time. We have in this place. To be bold witnesses. To have no shame. In proclaiming. Our love for our saviour.

No shame. In proclaiming. The life-giving gospel. We pray for our brothers and sisters. Just now. Who have no shame. Brothers and sisters. Who are willing to lay. Even their lives. On the line.

For the sake of the gospel. We do Lord. Pray for the persecuted church. We pray today. For countries. And countries. In specific Lord. You know the country. In the Middle East.

[ 11 : 56 ] Where there's been much trouble recently. For your people. We pray for your people in that place. We thank you for their faithfulness. We pray for those who are in prison just now.

For having a gospel driven life. Lord. A gospel message to share. Brothers and sisters. Who are waiting to hear Lord. Of what their future may look like.

We pray for their families. And their friends. And their brothers and sisters. In this Lord situation. Who are waiting to hear news of their loved ones. Who have been imprisoned. For sharing the gospel.

Lord. Give us the wisdom we ask. To make the most of the freedom we have. Whilst we have it in this country. To share the gospel freely. To share it openly. We pray for those. Of our brothers and sisters in prison.

Pray for them as they wait. As they seek to serve you. Even that place. They would know that. That their brothers and sisters. Across the world. Remember them. That we remember them.

[ 12 : 51 ] That we love them. That we are thankful for their service to you. Or thank you for the good news we hear. Of their gospel spreading. Gospel spreading in places around this world. We know that we perhaps may live in a day of small things.

In our own nation. In our own time. But we pray Lord. And we thank you that the gospel is not stopped. It is not stopped whatsoever. It is spreading and expanding across the world. Help us to have that global view.

That we are just a small part. Of your worldwide church. Your worldwide church. Across nations and cultures and languages. Across people groups.

Across all the skin colours of this world Lord. That we small. We formed a small part of it. We thank you for that part that we have. We do Lord pray for our own government. Pray for our government locally.

Pray for our government nationally. Pray for the council. In Stornoway. Lord we pray for Holyrood. We pray for Westminster. Pray for all those who are in leadership over us.

[ 13 : 52 ] Lord we ask that they would lead us well. Who would lead us fairly. We ask that they would lead us in a way that will benefit our country and our nation. Lord we also ask more than that. That they would come to know you.

They would come to serve. Not just the nation Lord. They would come to serve you first and foremost. They would come to know Jesus as their saviour. We do pray once more for your people and government. We pray Lord for those who know you in the council.

In Edinburgh. And in London. Those who seek to serve you. Those who love you and are seeking to do their jobs well. We pray for them as they seek to do a tough and at times seemingly impossible job.

We do pray Lord for your people in places of government and places of power. Lord we know that we live on a strange day. And perhaps for us it may seem like a dark day. But we know that nothing is impossible for you.

We do ask we would see laws Lord change in our country. In a way that would glorify you and honour you. Rather than glorify a man. Help us to be faithful in this day.

[ 14 : 52 ] Help us not too long Lord to be in times of past. Lord times of past glory. Times of past help. Lord we live in a day and in the time you have placed us.

Help us to serve you well in this day. And in this time. And in this place. Help us Lord to serve you well as faithful witnesses. Seeking to serve you even in this day of small things. Help us to be faithful witnesses.

To be faithful servants. Help us to be kind and to be gracious. Help us to be gentle. As we seek to see the word known. Jesus known. Jesus loved. And his gospel spread across even our wee small part of the world we have here.

Across this community. Lord forgive us our sins. As we confess we have sinned against you this week. This day. This hour. In our thoughts. In our actions. In our words. We find ourselves resorting back to sin again and again and again.

Lord forgive us for that we ask. Help us to find in Jesus our only place of salvation and safety. And the one who forgives the sins of all who come to him faithfully and honestly.

[ 15 : 57 ] In his name and it's for his sake we ask all these many things. Amen. Let's turn to read in God's word. We can read in Mark chapter 2.

We've been reading around the gospels. But we can read today back in the section we're looking at. Mark chapter 2. Of course carrying on our series.

We'll take a break perhaps. We'll finish off Mark chapter 2 next week. Then take a small break. And then come back to chapter 3 in a few weeks time. But Mark chapter 2.

Let's hear the word of God. And when he returned to Capernaum after some days. It was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together.

So there was no more room. Not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came bringing to him a paralytic. Carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of a crowd.

[ 17 : 02 ] They removed the roof above him. When they had made an opening. They let down the bed on which a paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith. He said to the paralytic. Son. Your sins are forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there. Questioning in their hearts. Why does this man speak like this? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And immediately Jesus perceiving in his spirit. That they thus questioned within themselves. Said to them. Why do you question these things in your hearts?

Which is easier. To say to the paralytic. Your sins are forgiven. Or to say rise. Take up your bed. And walk. But that you may know that the son of man.

Has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic. I say to you. Rise. Pick up your bed. And go home. And he rose.

[ 17 : 59 ] And immediately picked up his bed. And went out before them all. So that they were all amazed. And glorified God. Saying. We never saw anything like this. He went out again beside the sea.

And all the crowd was coming to him. And he was teaching them. And as he passed by. He saw Levi. The son of Alphaeus. Sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him. Follow me.

And he rose. And followed him. As he reclined at table in his house. Many tax collectors and sinners. Were reclining of Jesus. And his disciples. For there were many who followed him.

And the scribes of the Pharisees. When they saw that he was eating with sinners. And tax collectors. Said to his disciples. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners.

And when Jesus heard it. He said to them. Those who are well. Have no need of a physician. But those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous.

[ 18 : 59 ] But sinners. 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. 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. The days will come. When the bridegroom is taken away from them. And then they will fast on that day. 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. 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. One Sabbath.

[ 19 : 56 ] He was going through the grain fields. 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. Have you never read what David did. When he was in need. And was hungry. He and those who were with him.

How he entered the house of God. In the time of Abiathar the high priest. And ate the bread of the presence. Which is not lawful for any. But the priests to eat. And also gave it to those who are with him.

And he said to them. The Sabbath was made for man. Not man for the Sabbath. So the son of man is Lord. Even of the Sabbath.

Amen. We give praise to God. For his holy. And his perfect word. Let's again sing. To God's praise. This time from Sing Psalms. Sing Psalms.

[ 20 : 53 ] And Psalm 16. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Sing Psalms. And Psalm 16.

Handily on page 16. Off the blue psalm book. Psalm 16. On page 16. We can sing verses 1. Down to verse 6.

Off the psalm. Psalm 16. On page 16. Protect me. O my God. You are my refuge true. I said you are my Lord. I have no good. Apart from you.

The godly in the land. For holiness renowned. They are the glorious ones. In whom all my delight. Is found. Psalm 16. Verses 1 to 6.

To God's praise. Amen. Protect me. O my God. You are my refuge true.

[ 21 : 51 ] I said you are my Lord. I have no good apart from you.

The godly in the land. Of holiness renowned.

They are the glorious ones. They knew. All my delight is found.

Their sorrows filled in peace. The goldrue hasn't undone.

But among us. affecting my student. That worship I deny it.

[ 22 : 59 ] O Lord, you are to me, my love and portion sure.

The fear that is a sign to me, your God and your Savior.

The land that Lord did me is in a pleasant sight.

And truly, my inheritance, to me is the new I.

Thank you.

[ 24 : 25 ] Thank you. 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.

This is what we're carrying on our long-running series into the gospel of Mark. And last week, we left with a glorious gospel proclamation.

A glorious reminder that who did Jesus come to save? He came to save those who needed saving. He came to save the sick. He came to save sinners.

He came to save those who needed him. And we saw that the reality is that every one of us need him. Those of us who think we do and those of us who think we do not.

Equally, we need to be saved by Jesus. So we leave that gospel question in the air from last week. That glorious moment where Jesus reaffirms the gospel.

[ 25 : 31 ] Reaffirms why he has come. He has come to save sinners. And here we find ourselves in this section. Perhaps we might think in the first reading with quite a technical question on theology.

If you're using the church Bibles, you see it's even got a heading there. A question about fasting. Now, that's not wrong. A reminder for us, of course, that the verse numbers and the chapter names, they're added.

They're not from God himself. They're useful for us. But they're not perfect. But really, this is a question about fasting. But we'll see in a second the section from verse 18 down to verse 22.

It's not really about fasting. Not really. The Pharisees think it's about fasting. But the truth is it's got nothing to do with fasting.

It's all to do with rejection of Jesus. All to do with our hearts naturally wanting nothing to do with him. It's all to do with us trying to please God by ourselves.

[ 26 : 37 ] This is the first of a new theme developing in the Gospel of Mark. It's a theme we'll see repeated again and again and again.

We read in chapter 2 again today the healing of the paralytic. And we saw then that the Pharisees and the scribes of the Pharisees, they were questioning Jesus.

But they questioned him where? In their minds. But after the miracle is done on this man, after he begins to walk, we then see the Pharisees, the scribes of the Pharisees, the religious leaders, feeling more free and, as it were, more able to question Jesus.

We saw last week, we saw them questioning who? Questioning the disciples of Jesus. He's supposed to be the Son of God.

He's supposed to be the Messiah. He's sitting with these scum, these lowlives, these sinners, these tax collectors. Who does he think he is? And then we find ourselves today, one more question from the Pharisees.

[ 27 : 45 ] They've gone from thinking of the questions privately to asking the disciples. And now we find them asking Jesus himself. As time goes on, as Jesus does more miracles, and as Jesus shows them more and more that he truly is God.

That he truly is the Messiah. They can't contain themselves any longer. As their anger and annoyance at him grows, they become more bold. And we'll see this as the chapters carry on throughout Mark.

Their questions go from private, to public, to angry, to completely incensed, to murderous by the end of the account. As always, just as a brief summary, I will say this every week, but I keep saying it.

If you're here today, and if, as of yet, you can't say that you know Jesus, that you love Jesus, again, we thank you. We praise the Lord that you're here.

We ask that you'd know, of course, our love for you, but also you would know, more importantly than that, you would know the Lord's blessing. And the Lord's saving. And if nothing else, in the next 20 minutes, half an hour today, please listen carefully to this.

[ 29 : 01 ] What is this saying to those who, as of yet, do not know Jesus? Well, this section we have today, it's a reminder to us not to be caught, as it were, in the weeds of man-made religion.

It's important we say that, of man-made religion, of man-made ideas and man-made philosophies. Don't get trapped in the weeds of that and fail to see who Jesus truly is.

Fail to understand who Jesus truly is. For those of us who know and who love the Lord, as we come to this section, it's a reminder for us to watch ourselves, to step back and to assess our practice, to assess our lives, to assess how it is we are serving our Saviour, and to see are we keeping our eyes and our plans and all that we are and all that we do focused purely on Jesus.

So the three very broad headings, three very general headings for us. First of all, we can see new traditions. Verse 18, new traditions.

Then verse 19, we see new marriage. So new traditions, new marriage. And then verse 20 to 22, new life. New traditions, new marriage, and new life.

[ 30 : 27 ] First of all, new traditions. Verse 18. Here we see the problem the scribes have. Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.

And people came and said to him, that's Jesus, said to Jesus, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? John the Baptist's disciples, there were many of them, they were fasting.

The Pharisees and all their crowd around them, they were fasting. So two massive religious groups were fasting. And this new group who are following this so-called Messiah called Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, who claimed to do these miracles in the power of God, who claimed to be the Messiah, or at least it was claimed about him he was Messiah.

They're saying, these religious men are fasting. These religious men and perhaps women are fasting. Why are your disciples not fasting?

You claim to be the Son of God. Why aren't you doing what you're supposed to be doing? This wasn't, as it were, a personal fast. We see from the context, this was a fast being done, not just by one group, but by both groups.

[ 31 : 51 ] There were fasts, we are sure, that John's disciples did, the Pharisees didn't do. But the fact that both John's disciples and the Pharisees are both fasting, it shows us this is perhaps a nationwide, if not citywide fast that was being done.

The problem here is, and the sense here is, what's the problem?

What's the problem? Why aren't the disciples of Jesus fasting? If this is a fast that everyone should be doing, as the crowd is saying, if this is a fast that everyone else is doing, why aren't Jesus' disciples also fasting?

Why aren't they not eating food during daylight hours? Well, just some very brief context for us. Throughout Scripture, throughout the Old Testament, we see two types of fasting.

We can call them private fasting and perhaps community or communal fasting. So private fasting is seen throughout the Old Testament.

[ 33 : 02 ] There's plenty of examples, tens if not hundreds of examples, really. There's fasts before battles, fasts before life situations. There's fasts all the way throughout, all the accounts of the judges.

There's fasts mentioned again and again in Psalms. We see in the life of David, plenty of fasts. Specific fasts for specific situations, for specific people.

David, Esther, and so on and so on and so on. So fasts that people did, say, before a battle. They fasted for a few days and prayed during that time of fasting that the Lord would give them success.

We see, of course, in the account of Esther, the Jewish people fasted so that they wouldn't be destroyed. They fasted and they prayed during that time of fasting. But these were private fasts, we could say.

One-off fasts for one-off situations. We also see in Scripture a communal fast. A nationwide fast that was imposed on all people.

[ 34 : 07 ] The private fasts weren't imposed at all. The nationwide fast, of course, was imposed. Everyone had to do this fast. Where or how many fasts did the people have to do according to the law of God?

According to the law of God, how many fasts did the people have to keep? One. There's private fasts, plenty of them.

Yes, but there's one communal fast that had to be kept around the Day of Atonement. And Leviticus chapter 16, if you've got time to read it today, you see that being prescribed.



Leviticus 16, that the one national fast that they had to keep was the Day of Atonement. This is not this fast. The Day of Atonement is not of this time of year.

That's not what the disciples are being told to keep. The law of God requires one national fast. But we see, of course, as we know, the Pharisees and the scribes, for the last few hundred years, slowly but surely, they were adding on to God's Word, bit by bit by bit.

[ 35 : 26 ] And they were prescribing. And because they were the religious leaders of the day, they were mandating fasts. It wasn't just suggested you did them. You had to do them.

They had fasts for every occasion, certain days of the month. They had fasts upon fasts upon fasts. And when you begin to look into it, it's almost ridiculous.

Every third day on a certain month, you had to fast. Every second Tuesday, almost, you'd have to fast. If the moon was in this part of the sky, it's almost a joke.

But it wasn't a joke. And they defended it, and they added to it. And we see that in Jesus' parable in Luke 18. Jesus mentions the Pharisee praying that he fasts twice a week.

And some Pharisees did. Some Pharisees were saying that God's Word clearly says we must all fast twice a week. It's not there in the Bible.

[ 36 : 29 ] You won't find it in Scripture. But they twisted and they added to make themselves look holy, to feel holy, to sound holy. And here's a problem.

The scribes and the Pharisees were saying to the disciples of Jesus, were saying to Jesus himself, this is a fast the Word is telling us to do. This is a fast that God is telling us to do.

Why are you not doing it? Why are you not doing it? Even though God did not make this fast. God did not command this fast.

What's quite sad is, just as an aside, it wasn't just the Pharisees. It's John the Baptist's disciples too. Even they were being fooled into following this man-made fast.

Even they had been fooled into believing they must do this thing which Scripture does not tell them to do. It shows us, it reminds us how quickly, how easily every one of us fall into these things.

[ 37 : 31 ] Those of us who think we know Scripture so well, and those of us who do, we're all liable to falling into believing what man tells us, not what God himself has clearly told us.

So we've added to the law. We've added these fasts. So they approach Jesus. They approach Jesus. We're getting more bold as time goes on.

It says here, halfway through verse 18, people came to him. People came to Jesus. When we see the people here, we ask, who are the people?

Perhaps people is a wee bit unclear. It's a good translation, but quite literally it just says they. And they came to Jesus. You ask, who's the they?

Well, we can assume, can't we go in from the context of the passage? And they came to Jesus. It must be one of the disciple groups of John or the Pharisees.

[ 38 : 34 ] Some group who are fasting come to Jesus and say, why aren't your lot fasting? Why aren't your disciples fasting? We're doing it. They're doing it.

Why aren't you doing it? The rabbi, the leader of the group, was always responsible for the group's actions.

That's why they come to Jesus. And we'll see that again next week for the Lord's help. When the Pharisees break the Sabbath according to the disciples, when Jesus' disciples break the Sabbath according to the Pharisees, they approach Jesus.

The rabbi was responsible. The leader of the disciples were responsible. So Jesus is, in their minds, responsible for his people not doing this fast which they must be doing.

They're not following this law of God, apparently, that they must be following. Jesus' disciples are completely and clearly going against the norm of the day.

[ 39 : 40 ] The religious leaders are saying, you must serve God this way. You must live your life this way. You must act this way. Then God will be pleased with you.

And Jesus does not. Jesus, of course, being God himself, he alone knows how to please God. He alone knows how wrong these people are.

As they try and please God by their actions. They try and impress God by fasting and fasting and fasting. Try and impress God by showing how holy they are.

We saw this two weeks ago, was it? We saw the danger of legalism. The danger of trying to impress God by showing God just how holy you are.

Just how well behaved you are. At the same time, losing. Losing the gospel. These people, we're sure, meant well. They probably meant very well.

[ 40 : 42 ] They probably were very genuine in their fasting. But it wasn't required of them. The one thing that was required of them was to worship the Messiah who stood in front of them.

And they were blinded by their own man-made rules. Blinded by their own ideas what it was to worship God. They ignored the Son of God as he stood right in front of them.

They followed the law. They followed their own laws. The problem is they had made the law equal to God's law.

They had made their ideas of the law equal to God's law. So what happened was, if you decided not to follow one of their man-made laws, you then blasphemed them.

And because they made their laws just as important as God's law, when you blasphemed their laws, you were, of course, then blaspheming God himself. They made themselves to be God.

[ 41 : 44 ] They wouldn't say that. They wouldn't think that. But that's what happens. When you try and impress God by your actions, you're saying to God, I know how to worship you right.

I know how to impress you with my lifestyle. I know how to impress you enough to save me with what I'm saying, what I'm thinking, what I'm doing. Like the Pharisees, you ignore Jesus who is right in front of you.

God says, follow him. It's only by knowing Jesus, by following Jesus, we are right with God. Not by church attendance, although it's good. Not by scripture knowledge, although it's very good.

Not by carrying on the traditions of your family and being here, of what's good. It will not save you in and of itself. The fasts, the man-made laws, would not save these disciples.

No matter how genuinely they tried to do it, they had to be saved only by coming to Jesus. And they're blinded to that. As he stood quite literally in front of them, they were so taken over by their laws, by their man-made rules, they didn't see Jesus in front of them.

[ 42 : 54 ] So they asked Jesus the question, why aren't you and your people doing this fast? So what answer does our Savior give this group?

How does Jesus defend the actions of himself and the disciples? Verse 819.

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.

Here we begin to see again a theme we see often in Mark, when Jesus is asked a question. How often does he respond? How does he respond? He responds with a question.

Jesus almost always meets a question of a question. The few times he doesn't do it is either to be direct in his condemnation of sin or to be direct in his care and love of someone who is suffering.

[ 43 : 58 ] We'll see that more as we go on through the chapter. Either to be direct to call out and condemn sin or to be direct in a loving and caring way.

As someone comes to Jesus with a genuine question and to show love to them, Jesus answers that question directly. But more often than not, Jesus answers questions with a question.

Of course, that question almost always, and without our Lord, it always does. It shows the heart of the one asking. The question Jesus asks the ones who ask him questions, the questions he asks back, always shows the truth in the heart of the person who first asked the question.

The person he had asked of the crowd asks Jesus about fasting, but Jesus responds talking about a wedding. Perhaps a strange answer, first of all.

They want a technical answer about fasting, the laws and the rules about fasting. And Jesus doesn't mention fasting at all, first of all. He mentions a wedding.

[ 45 : 11 ] 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. In times of great joy, in times of happiness, you don't fast.

When God has blessed you with a good situation, a good providence, that's not a time of fasting. Before the time comes, yes, perhaps after the time goes, yes, but during a time of joy and happiness, that is not the time to fast.

That is the time to praise God, to glorify God in the abundance that he has given you. An obvious example, but a silly example, but it's a clear example, and it's what Jesus here is saying.

Imagine myself, even, our wedding guests, at our wedding, a month ago almost now. We've booked the food, we've paid for the food, the guests are all there.

And Emma and I walk in, and we sit down, and the guests don't touch their food. No one eats the food. They say, why haven't you eaten it?

[ 46 : 24 ] We've paid it for you. We've arranged it for you. You've all come here to the wedding. Why aren't you eating your food? And the guests say, we're just so happy for you. We're just so happy for your new marriage.

We won't eat the food you've made for us. You've prepared for us. You've paid for us. We won't eat the food provided. We're just too happy for you. You think, well, you've all missed why you're here.

You're here to be happy, to enjoy yourselves, to celebrate in our joy. Here we begin to see the root of the problem.

Because they are not speaking in their minds to the Son of God. Because in their minds, they're not really speaking to the Messiah. Because to them, they're just speaking to this upstart carpenter from this small village no one's ever heard about, who claims to be the Son of God, who claims to be Messiah.

This upstart man who claims to do miracles. This blasphemer who won't even follow the basic laws of our people. They aren't happy to see him. They aren't happy to be talking about him.

[ 47 : 35 ] They keep fasting because they're still waiting for the Messiah to come. They're still fasting because they still live in a day of sadness, a day of disappointment, a day of misery.

And in front of them is the Son of God. In front of them is the Messiah where people have been waiting for for centuries. He is in front of them, walking beside them, talking with them.

And they don't see it. And because they don't see it, they're still in mourning, as it were. And because they're still in mourning, they still take part in the fast.

And why don't they see it? Well, as we said, they don't see it because they're blinded by their own self-righteousness. Because if they see Jesus and begin to understand Jesus as Messiah, they will see very quickly they have added to the law of God, they have ruined the Gospels that was given to them as much as it was given to them in the Old Testament, the good news, the promises of God.

They've made a mockery of these things and they'll see that their own self-righteousness has meant nothing for them. They'll see they've wasted their time, they've wasted their lives.

[ 48 : 45 ] And because they can't even begin to deal with that situation, they ignore the Son of God who stands in front of them. They can't be happy.

The bridegroom himself stands in front of them and they can't be happy about it. They would rather keep doing their own thing, their own way, rather than stop and admit their sin, stop and admit their waywardness, stop for a second and see that they're being self-righteous.

But no, they'd rather keep sinning, they'd rather keep going, they'd rather do anything other than stop and see Jesus for who and for what he truly was.

Yes, as Jesus says, the days were coming when the bridegroom would be taken away. As we saw on the prayer meeting last Thursday, he would be tortured horrifically, killed horrifically, suffer in a way that's beyond our understanding, both physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, eternally suffer.

But at this moment, at this time, he is with his people. He is with his people. The question arises from this verse, the genuine question, is when you think of Jesus, when you, like the crowd here, have Jesus in front of you, and at this very moment, we all do have Jesus in front of us as he speaks to us from his living word, as Jesus is aware, as we often hear in the olden days, as Jesus is aware, makes his presence known in this place.

[ 50 : 33 ] As you come at this moment face to face with Jesus, are you like the crowd here? At this very moment, brothers and sisters, this very moment, friends, those who as of yet do not know Jesus, we are coming face to face with the living Lord Jesus.

His presence is here with us today, as his presence is with us today, as he speaks to us from his living word just now. The question is, are you happy to be with him?

Are you happy to be in his presence? Or are you like the group here, the crowd here, you'd rather keep relying on your own self-righteousness?

You'd rather keep saying to yourself, I know Jesus is here. I know he's in his word. I know his presence is here today with his people. I know that if only I would just come and come to him and give my life to him, he would save me.

I know that's true. But I would rather keep on going, keep on doing my own man-made fasts, and rather keep on trying to impress him in my own special way.

[ 51 : 42 ] As Jesus stands before you just now, as you ignore him one more day and say, I know you are there, I know you're the Lord, I know you're the Son of God, I've seen the miracles you've done in those around me, but yet, yet, I will keep trying, as it were, to impress God, to get to God, by doing my own thing, my man-made fasts, by serving God in a way I think pleases him.

And you mean well, you mean well, you try hard, and it's genuine from you. The Pharisees meant well.

The Pharisees tried hard. The Pharisees were genuine. They lived and breathed and died being Pharisees. Their whole life dedicated towards God.

But, it was dedicated to God in a way God never asked them to. God never told them to. And they, again and again, faced the Lord Jesus Christ and to his face, as we see here, to his face, they questioned him, they interrogated him, they received answer from him, gospel-filled answer from him, and yet, they turn away and go back to man-made service, man-made fasts, man-made self-righteousness.

Do you think of joy this morning, this afternoon, when you think of Jesus? Think of the joy of a bridegroom when he sees his bride. This is the joy that our Saviour has when he sees his people and the image here of a bridegroom and a bride, it's not just convenient for Jesus.

[ 53 : 35 ] He uses this, of course, because it speaks of himself. He is the bridegroom. His church is the bride. And think of the joy our Saviour has when he sees his beloved people. When faced with the ways of the world, when faced with the self-righteousness you find in your own heart, when faced with your own wrong belief, you can somehow impress God with your life and with your actions.

When faced with all of that, knowing Jesus surpasses it all. surpasses it all. Dear friends, you are genuine.

I get to know you more and more and I'm not just saying this, I'm saying this to make a point, but I mean it honestly. You're a genuine congregation. You're a genuine gathering here. Those who, as of yet, who don't know Jesus, I've talked with you, I'm getting to know you, I enjoy your company, you're genuine people, you're honest people.

But you can be genuine and I say this very carefully, but it's no fun in saying it, I assure you. You can be genuine and of course be genuinely wrong.

You can be faithful, but be faithfully wrong. If your life is not set on Jesus and worshipping him truly as he is, if your devotion is not devoted to Jesus, and worshipping him as scripture tells us he is, if you're trying to make your life good and your life God-pleasing by doing anything, anything other than seeking to know Jesus, to love Jesus, to serve Jesus, you're wasting your time.

[ 55 : 24 ] You cannot impress God. You can't somehow pretend to him you're okay if it's either Jesus or nothing. We either love him and seek to serve him the way God tells us to, or we're like the Pharisees and the disciples of John here, working very hard to keep all these man-made fasts, but in the end they mean nothing.

That brings us to the final image we have here. First of all, Jesus uses the image of the wedding and the bridegroom and the joy that gives us, but then we see finally the two images he uses here, verses 21 down to verse 22 where we see new life, new life.

The first image, of course, is the image of the fabric. You have a garment and you have also the wineskins. The old and the new, quite simply, the two images here tell us that the old and the new cannot coexist.

It cannot coexist. Not truthfully, not genuinely, not in a way that is safe, a way that is beneficial. The new and the old cannot coexist.

The old. What is the old that Jesus speaks of here? He talks about the old garment and the old wineskins. What is the old? Well, the old, of course, is here the man-made religion of the Pharisees.

[ 56 : 55 ] It's the dependence of the self, the dependence on your own self-righteousness. That is the old. The old. It's the dependence.

It's the need to look to yourself rather than look to God for your self-righteousness, for your hope, for your future. The old here is a life without Jesus.

A life without Jesus. What's the new? What's the new? The new, of course, is Jesus himself.

The freedom that Jesus brings to serve him freely. The joy that knowing Jesus brings to joyfully spend a life serving him.

not bound by the man-made rules of this world, but serving him according to scripture with joy and freedom.

[ 57 : 57 ] It's the forgiveness that Jesus brings, knowing that you're forgiven by him. It's the peace that Jesus brings, knowing that he calls you his own, that he promises never to let you go.

he promises that your salvation is no longer based on how well you're doing this week, this day, this year, but your salvation is based on his finished work.

His finished work. It's the eternal hope that Jesus brings, that in him and him alone we have true hope, true hope of eternal life.

my friends, if you try and take your old cloth, your old life, your old garments we see here, a piece of unshrunk cloth, a piece of new cloth, if you want this new cloth, if you want this new life, and you try to attach that new life to your old life, try and sew it on as best you can, I want to be a Christian, but I also want to keep trying to impress God by my actions, or maybe I want to be a Christian, but I also want to keep living as the world lives, I want to be a Christian, but I won't give up, I will not give up this sin, or that sin, this way of doing things, or that way of doing things, I want to be a Christian, but I want X, Y, and Z along with that.

You're trying to sew a new cloth onto an old cloth, what takes place, rips, shreds, falls to pieces, two things cannot go together, you can't keep the old way of life, and have the new way of life at the same time, you ever know the joy of a new life of Jesus, or you don't, you ever have Jesus plus nothing else, or you have him plus something else, and it all falls to bits, the garment tears, the wineskins burst, it's never about fasting, the question is never about fasting, the question is, why, why are you living a life, as the Pharisees and the disciples asked, the disciples of the Pharisees asked Jesus, why, why are you not following our rules, our ways,

[ 60 : 33 ] Jesus says, no, you must follow me, you must follow me, it's either Jesus, my friends, or it's nothing, it's either his ways, or it is no way whatsoever, at the end of time, at the end of our time, the end of our lives, when we appear before the judgment seat, if we say, Lord, I tried to serve you well, I really did, I served you really well, I worked really hard to serve you, I did the best I could, I fasted, now put in here what you want yourself, whatever your fast might be, I did X, Y, and Z really hard, I fasted really hard for you, I tried really hard to be a good person for you, I really did my best to serve my family and my community for you, good things, of course there are good things, if on that day you appear before the Lord and you say anything other than

Jesus is mine and I am his, anything other than I trusted in Jesus and he has covered me, he has saved me, if you come to that day at the end of your life and you say anything other than Jesus and him alone has covered you, has saved you, it means nothing, it means nothing, it's torn garments, it's tattered and torn and burst wineskins, leaves you with nothing at the end of the day, Jesus is either all that we have or we have nothing, simple as that and I assure you that there's no joy in seeing this, in fact it's quite the opposite, there's real sorrow in seeing this because the truth is as I say this week after week and I will say this till my last Sunday up here for the Lord's help, week after week, the same message, the same gospel goes out, it's Jesus plus nothing, it's Jesus and him alone we must come to, it's Jesus and him alone that we find our hope and our trust in, anything else, everything else is torn cloth and burst wineskins, it's in him and him alone we have new life and our prayer, our hope, our joy would be to see you come to know Jesus, come to have a life that is spent worshipping him, not relying on your own self righteousness but relying on his perfect righteousness to cover you fully.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Lord God we come before you and we thank you for the gift of your word, we thank you Lord for the promises of your word, but in it we find such good news, and we find at times also such challenges.

I pray Lord just now for your people, for those of us who know and who love you, help us to find our joy again and again in the finished work of our saviour, not to be tempted back into the old way of man-made things.

We pray once more Lord for those here today who as of yet do not know you, who are still trying to please you by their own actions. Lord we pray that even today you would remove from them that burden, they would come to know you and come to love you and come to know Jesus as our saviour and come to serve him truthfully and faithfully with nothing else added on.

[ 63 : 59 ] We come to serve him and him alone and he would be their full righteousness, their full peace, their full joy. Let's call these things in and through and for his precious name's sake.

Amen. Let's sing once more to God's praise in conclusion. Scottish Psalter and Psalm 121.

Scottish Psalter and Psalm 121. That great psalm of God's help and God's deliverance for his people. We ask who else do we turn to?

Where do we find all our hope? Psalm 121 on page 416. I to the hills will lift mine eyes. From whence doth come my need? That's a question.

From whence doth come my need? My safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made. By foot he'll not let slide nor will he slumber that he keeps. Behold he that keeps Israel he slumbers not nor sleeps.

[ 65 : 02 ] The whole psalm to God's praise. I could the hills within my eyes long west of my name I saved it come from the Lord who led down there of my hand thy fruit did not last time■ he somber and he keeps in what he that keeps his high hand he somber nor

Gary 39 40 O'er the light of shame, on thy white hand does day.

And in thy night, he shall not smile, nor yet the sun by day.

As Lord shall keep thy soul, it shall be there, be the mother.

And for thy holy art and in God, he forever will.

[ 67 : 11 ] May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both you now and forevermore. Amen.