

“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

“ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.” (Matthew 11:16-19)

Jesus is the God of the dance. He came to bring joy and celebration.

Does your God Dance? Mark 2:13-22

This is what we encounter in Mark 2:13-22 this morning. These words will call us to...

The Point: Join the kingdom celebration launched in the coming of Jesus Christ.

Mark 2:13-22 displayed

I want to ask three questions that will help us take in these stories from the life of Christ and what they call us to as followers or potential followers of Jesus.

1. Who do you invite into your life? (2:13-17)

Story

Immediately, we hear an echo of Jesus calling his first disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John. He's beside the sea again. He calls out with those two simple but profoundly important words: "Follow me."

But this time it's different. He's not calling fishermen, but a tax collector...

It's likely Levi, also known as Matthew in the other gospels, including the one he wrote, collected taxes on the main trade route that passed by Capernaum.

Why was this such a big deal? It's tax season, and not many of us get excited about sending off our our hard earned money be sent off to Uncle Sam!

But tax collectors in 1st century Israel were looked upon with great disdain and disrespect. Why?

- The tax collectors worked for Rome, which made them look like traitors!
- On top of that, they often overcharged, so they could stuff their pockets with excess funds.
- Their frequent interaction with Gentiles also exposed them to ritual defilement, which is probably why Jewish tradition held that a tax collector would render a home "unclean."
- To sum up how they were viewed, the Talmud, a key historical writing of the Jews, lumps tax collectors with murderers & robbers!

Everyone despised and ignored Levi, but not Jesus! Jesus looked at him, he called out to him, he invited him to be in relationship, to follow him! And then, he takes it a step further and goes to his house to hang out with his whole crew of tax collecting and sinful friends.

This was a radical act.

- In Jesus' day, sharing a meal was more than association. It communicated friendship.
- This was outrageous to the religious leaders known as the Pharisees. They could not believe Jesus would receive those they had rejected.
- That's why they go to his disciples in verse 16: "WHY does he EAT with tax collectors and sinners?"
 - The term sinners likely refers to the worst of society: people who participated in flagrant sin (tax collectors, thieves, and prostitutes). Jesus loved people on the margins. He loved outcasts. He loved people no one else loved.
 - This was a defining characteristic of Jesus' life and it is on full display in the gospel of Luke!
- The Pharisees did not think it was okay to associate with people like this!

Jesus says, "It's not only permissible. THIS IS MY MISSION!"

You can step by them or step around them. I will step toward them. You can keep them out of your gatherings, I will let them in.

These extremely provocative acts epitomized Jesus' purpose!

Listen to his bold pronouncement in verse 17. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

- To "call" these people is to invite them into God's kingdom, to call them into relationship, to call them to salvation and discipleship.
- Why? That's exactly what they need! They are sick. They are broken inside. Jesus, the traveling Physician, showed up to heal our souls.
- But there is a bit of sarcasm in Jesus' words. When he says, "I came not to call the righteous," the NLT gets the meaning right when it says: "I have come to call not those who THINK THEY ARE RIGHTEOUS, but those who know they are sinners."

In other words, we're all broken. We're all sick! No one is righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10).

How much time do you spend with not yet believers? Do you love people like Jesus loved people?

- No one is off limits!
- God's salvation is coming after every one, and we get to be the mat carriers and the party throwers that bring people to healing power of Jesus!
- Verse 15 makes my heart burn. "Many followed him." This is not a one off. Jesus consistently spent time with people who might make us uncomfortable. When is the last time you invited someone who seems far from God into your life? Do people who don't yet love God love spending time with you?

Do you see people like Jesus saw people? Jesus looked past their present condition to their future potential!

"From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." (2 Cor 5:16)

We should get excited to spend time with people who are a little rough around the edges, because it provides a platform for God to do his work of healing, restoration, and salvation.

Who's the self-centered person in your office? The rudest neighbor on your street? The person you feel is the least likely to follow Jesus?

Go love them! Invite them into your life! Shovel their snow! Give a Bible to the person least likely to read it!

Don't see them as they are! See them for who they can be in Christ!

"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend, [A FRIEND!] of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Luke 7:34)

Jesus would be a fixture at AA and NA meetings.

T: Why do you invite into your life? #2)

2. Are you experiencing the joy of Jesus' kingdom now? (2:18-22)

Story

Verse 18 marks the third of five consecutive controversies in this section (2:1-3:6). People (likely prompted by the Pharisees) ask Jesus: "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (2:18)

What is fasting?

Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food or another regular routine for spiritual purposes.

Why don't you live by the same high, spiritual standards we do? After all, we not only fast on the sacred days prescribed by the law and Jewish calendar (like the festival of Purim as we saw in the book of Esther), but we also fast twice a week (cf. Luke 18:12)!

Their question was loaded with criticism, but it also sparked a teachable moment, leading Jesus to three consecutive analogies. The first provides the heart of the explanation. *Verse 19.*

Wedding Celebration.

Verse 19: And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"

Everyone in Israel would have answered: "No." Even in our day, people do not show up to weddings without partaking in the celebration, but Jewish weddings were next level.

- They were "festive and extravagant affairs," typically lasting a week.
- They were the "largest social events of village life." (Strauss)
- They were a time of intense joy and celebration!

Jesus is saying, I have come, as the bridegroom to launch the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. Fasting often expresses sorrow and mourning and longing. Jesus says, "This is a time for celebration!!"

- Lame people are walking. Sinful people are being forgiven. People are turning back to God!
- But there is more, much more. As _____ Edwards points out: "The wedding imagery is unusually provocative, although its full significance is often missed. . . . For in the OT Israel's husband and lover is not the Messiah but God (Isa 5:1; 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Ezek 16:6-8; Hosea 2:19).
- In other words, Jesus provides another veiled allusion to his divinity. He is the Son of God.
- He came to unite people to a perfectly restored relationship with God, in a perfectly restored world. That's why Revelation 19:7-9 tells us about the wedding feast of the Lamb (see also Matthew 22:1-14 & 25:1-13).

2 Parables: Wine and Clothes

Jesus goes on to explain what his coming means with two other analogies from everyday life. He says, just as people don't mourn and fast at a wedding, in the same way people don't put new wine into old wineskins *and* they don't patch up old clothes with new cloths. Why?

- New wine causes wineskins to expand. Like a coke left in the freezer, new wine in old wineskins would cause it to burst.
- The same is true for patching clothes. A new piece will eventually shrink over time (laundry - haha), causing it to pull away from the old clothes, which makes the hole bigger.

What does Jesus communicate with these two pictures?

- The new wine of Jesus' kingdom cannot be poured into the old wineskins of Judaism. They are incompatible!
- Jesus says, "I did not come to destroy or modify the law (see Matthew 5:17-20). I came to fulfill it! A new day has dawned. The old ways of relating to God through extensive ceremony & sacrifice are unnecessary, because it all culminates in me!"
- As Edwards says, "Both [analogies] illustrate the radical new era in Jesus' coming. Jesus is the new cloth and the new wine. He is not an attachment, addition, or appendage to the status quo. He cannot be integrated into or contained by preexisting structures—even Judaism, the Torah, and the synagogue."
- He did not come to do away with Judaism, he came to complete it, to make it what it was destined to become. That is why there is both continuity and discontinuity between the OT & NT.
- I think one of the greatest examples of this is found in Jesus' words in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: [That's not new, Jesus. We've been hearing about loving each other since the garden, and Cain and Abel, and Leviticus that tells us to love our neighbor like we love ourselves. BUT Jesus doesn't stop there.] *just as I have loved you*, you also are to love one another."

When we see who Jesus is, when we truly understand what Jesus has done for us, celebration is the only option!!

Jesus brings JOY!

- **"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)**
- In God's presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). Our God is a God of celebration...

Every birthday party. Every feast. Every parade. Every anniversary. Every fireworks display points us to the joy filled kingdom of God. #Fightforvision.

For those who acknowledge their need for God, it is a time of joy and celebration. We enter into the newness of the kingdom of God. "If anyone is in Christ, they are a *new creation*, the old has gone; the new has come."

So.... turn the music up really loud. Give another toast. Do another dance. The kingdom of God is here! One of the reasons our friends don't want to follow Jesus is because we don't make it look that enjoyable! God, help us see you for who you are and live in the fullness of your joy (John 15:11)!

T: The kingdom has arrived, but it has not arrived fully, which leads us to our third question to consider...

3. Do you live with a longing for the not yet of Jesus' kingdom? (2:18-20)

Look back at vv. 18-20. "THEN THEY WILL FAST..."

Jesus knew he would be taken from them, a reference to his death, resurrection, and ascension we just read about in the Book of Acts as a church.

Then we will fast... Jesus says it in Matthew 6:16-18

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18)

Fasting is an expectation for followers of Jesus. There is a time for celebration: God is good. He is working. He is on the move. BUT.... There is also a time for longing: people are hurting, our world is still broken, millions in our city right now do not have a vibrant relationship with God and their eternal destiny hangs in the balance.

The kingdom is coming, it's now, it's here, and that is reason to celebrate, BUT
The kingdom is not yet here in its fullness, and that is reason to fast and long for his return.

The Rhythm of a Christian

- 1. Celebrate the now of Christ's kingdom.**
- 2. Fast with longing for the not-yet of Christ's kingdom.**

We celebrate. Jesus is alive. Our hope is secure. But the next day or the next hour...
We mourn. People are full of hate. Injustice abounds. The love of God is not known or displayed.

In fact, these are the two primary reasons we fast... we long to be with Jesus (he's gone). We long for his kingdom to come (it's not here in its fullness).

What is fasting?

Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food or another regular routine for spiritual purposes.

As we move into a season of fasting with Lent starting this Wednesday, I want to encourage you to set aside food and/or some regular routine, so that you can draw near to God and pray his kingdom come!

Fasting expresses and allows us to experience a fresh hunger for God and his kingdom. When we give up something in our lives (food, technology, whatever), we fast to feast!

Be intentional. Take the Monthly Prayer guide and ask God to move. Take the Bible Reading plan and let God speak to you every day.

Live with a longing for the not yet of Jesus' kingdom.

Conclusion:

Jesus was NOT okay with the brokenness of our world. He didn't simply give up food. He gave up his life. He was so NOT OKAY with the brokenness of our world that he became broken for us.

I want to follow a God like that!!

How about you?

Invitation...

Reflect. Respond... (Guitar only)

Pedro and team lead us