



theme: The Gospel of Mark #4 – Breaking the “Rules”
materials: Bibles, your “Jesus Journals” from last week

Starting this month we will be getting back to some basics and working our way through the Gospel according to Mark. Mark presents Jesus as the Son of God, and in particular as a Servant King. These first two chapters are a very sudden (and abridged) introduction into Jesus’ life and ministry, and already he is getting under the skin of some important people.

welcome

Are there any rules – official or unofficial – in our society that you think should be changed? (I.e., speeding laws, legal age for voting, guys being the ones who propose, etc...). Give your rationale for why they should be changed, and how the world would be better as a result.

interact

Share the impression of Jesus you received last week (and hopefully remembered to write down in your “Jesus Journals”). Sum up what some of the common threads were of these pictures of Jesus. Is there anything missing from this picture, something key to the identity of Jesus that you did not see last week? Spend some time worshipping and praying using what you wrote down in your journals to praise and honour Jesus.

read

Read Mark 2:18-28.

Two serious questions are asked in this passage about the behaviour of Jesus’ disciples.

Who was asking these questions, and what were the questions?

Why were these questions being asked of Jesus and His disciples? What were they implying by these questions?

Why did the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast from food at certain times?

Why would fasting have been inappropriate for Jesus’ disciples at that time? (In other words, sum up Jesus’ story about the wedding banquet). Is it appropriate for us to fast now? Or should we be celebrating all the time?

What is Jesus’ point about the new cloth and the new wines? Who or what is the old cloth/wineskins, and who or what is the new cloth/wine?

What will happen when this new cloth/wine (Jesus’ message) comes into contact with the old cloth/wineskins (the purity rituals of the Pharisees, for example)?

How would those who represented the old ways have received this message?

Responding to the question about eating on the Sabbath, what is the significance of Jesus comparing Himself to David?

Who is Jesus claiming to be, to have authority to suspend even sacred Sabbath laws?

Does this teaching by Jesus give us license now to break whatever religious rules we want?

How does this teaching apply to our present circumstance? How does it apply to the way we “do” church?

think

Challenge each person to share their “picture” of Jesus (from their journals or from the cell talk) with at least one non-believing friend this week.



useful resources

Book: *Following Jesus*, by N.T. Wright, in particular Chapter 5 on Mark.
Website: http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/5_33-39.html
Scripture: 1 Samuel 21:1-6

leader's guide

The 2 questions being asked were about holiness. The first was about why Jesus' disciples didn't fast, and the second was about why Jesus allowed them to eat on the Sabbath. These questions were being asked by "the people" (first question, but having to do with John's disciples and the Pharisees) and by some Pharisees themselves.

The implication of the first question is that Jesus' disciples really aren't spiritual or holy enough. The implication of the second question is that Jesus is allowing His followers to break the most sacred Sabbath Law. In both questions, a true "Messiah" should not have disciples who behaved like that.

People would fast, sometimes twice weekly, as a sign of remorse, humility, and mourning over the fact that Israel was still in bondage to pagans (the Romans). Jesus is saying that his presence means freedom from sin and bondage, that a new Kingdom is being initiated (though not as people expected) and that just like at a wedding, it would be inappropriate for His followers to fast. He is not saying that fasting is wrong – His point is not about fasting, but about who He is. The issue of the 'spirituality' of His followers is unimportant. The matter of who Jesus is and what His presence meant is eternally more important. Jesus does say that a time would come when fasting would be appropriate for His followers, probably referring to the crucifixion. Christians still fast today, recognizing that Christ has come, but that we still await His coming again.

Jesus seems to be saying that there is no point trying to fit him and his Kingdom message into old forms or old teachings. He is bringing something so huge, so new and earth-shattering that it won't fit into the old ways. The old ways will have to be seen in the light of what He is doing, not the other way around. And it was already happening that Jesus and His message were exploding the old set ways – this Kingdom could not be contained. By comparing himself to David, Jesus is claiming the authority of kingship over Israel. David could eat the Bread because he was the anointed king. Jesus had an even greater anointing than that, one that carried the authority to set aside sacred law (though there is some question as to whether or not what the disciples did was unlawful). His use of the term "son of man" is even more impressive, indicating not just Kingship but divine authority.

This teaching should help us to see that the person of Jesus takes precedence over everything else. Jesus must be central to our religious life. However, we should also be careful to note that Jesus Himself instituted His Church, and that it was Jesus Himself who had the authority to make things new. This does NOT give us the authority to do whatever we want and call it new wine.