

So if you would, take your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 2 with me, please. Mark chapter 2. We're going to be looking at the next two altercations that we're going to see, or the next altercation, I should say, that we're going to see with the Pharisees and their scribes as we see a mounting hostility of the Jewish religious leaders in Christ. So we're going to tackle that today. We're going to be in Mark 2, verses 14-22. The title of the message today is, Something New. Christ is bringing something new that they did not expect. If you would, and are able to, please rise with me in honor of the one who gave us this word, and we will read the text together this morning. Mark 2, verses 14-22 reads, And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax office. And he said to him, Follow me. And he stood up and followed him. And it happened that as he was reclining at the table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many of them, and they were following him. And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they were saying to his disciples, He is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. And hearing this, Jesus said to them, Those who are healthy do not have need for a physician, but only those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and they 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 attendants of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, otherwise that patch pulls away from it. The new from the old, and a worse tear results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well. But one puts new wine into fresh wineskins. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do come to you as a grateful body for your grace, as redeemed sinners, wretches that have been made righteous by your work. Lord, we thank you so much. And in praise we have sung to you. I pray that we will worship now in the preaching and exclamation of your word. And I pray that we will all take this word. Your spirit would apply it to us, that we could see that there is something new that you brought that was different from the old. and that we will see the need for you and the need for your righteousness, and we will rejoice in that. I pray that you will help me,

Lord, remove any nerves, remove any stumbling or lame tongue or anything else that could distract from the ultimate message. You, Lord, I pray that you'll be glorified today. In your holy name I pray, amen. All right, you can be seated.

Alright, so today's message is something new. For those who were able to make it with us last week, we talked about the paralytic at the beginning of chapter 2. We saw that there was a purpose for the paralytic, that the purpose of the paralytic was for Christ to show Himself, to show in a veiled way, but for us to understand that the Son of Man was beginning to reveal Himself to people around Him. And we're going to see Christ go a step further. Jesus is going to now show even further His authority. He's going to show even further who He is, what He is fulfilling from the Old Testament, and that truly there is something new that He is bringing to the table. He is bringing something new that was better than the old. It is not the same thing that the Jews thought it was going to be. It is something altogether new. Now Mark is moving quickly. We're going to see him move very quickly, as we've already seen in chapter one. Chapter two, honestly the whole book, Mark does not slow his pace down. He makes it very quick, very succinct. And so we're going to dig in here and see that in order to understand Mark, we have to see the nuance of the words that he uses and see that even though he's saying things quickly, there is so much packed into each text. And what we're looking at today is two more altercations of Jesus and the scribes. You'll notice that it is intensifying, so the intensity is going to continue to ratchet up. Remember, there's five different altercations that Mark records here. Of course, he had more than just these five. But Mark chose to include these two, of course, under the inspiration of the Spirit. But he wants us to understand, he wants his readers to understand that this is where the animosity of the scribes and Pharisees came from. Jesus is essentially building his death warrant, if you will. Mark is showing us why they want him dead. And so he's going to go through five different altercations in chapter 2 and on into the beginning of chapter 3 that we'll be looking at in total. And today is just two more of those examples. And what I want us to really dig into today and really understand is that the Jewish people of Jesus' day had a particular way of looking at God, themselves, and their relationship with Him. And that Jesus is bringing something new. There's something new, there's a different relationship that He is bringing to the table for God and humanity. And so we're going to look at that and see the differences that Christ is bringing to the table in our text today. So let's look at point number one. If you have the sermon outline, you're welcome to write this down or take your own notes. But number one is, not what you

do, but what He does. Not what you do, but what He does. And that's in particular verses 14 through 17. So I'm going to reread verses 14 through 17 for us this morning. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax office. And he said to him, Follow me. And he stood up and followed him. And it happened that as he was reclining at the table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many of them, and they were following him. And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they were saying to his disciples, He is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. And hearing this, Jesus said to them, those who are healthy do not have need for a physician, but only those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." So when we think through here on what Jesus is doing, what Mark is recording. We left off last week on verse 13, and it said that Jesus went out again by the seashore, the crowd was following Him, and He was teaching them, and then suddenly Mark, almost without warrant, shifts very violently, too, and He passed by and saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Now, you may think it doesn't sound very violent shift on where He is, on the setting of where this is taking place, but there weren't tax houses on the side of the lake. He had to have been back in town, so Mark is taking us very, very quickly. He's moving very fast from one scene to another. He went out, he taught them, and now he's back in the city of Capernaum. And so as he's passing by the tax office, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Now, you may want to make a note here, or you may already have it in your Bible, but Levi is Matthew, the one and same who wrote the Gospel of Matthew. So Levi, the son of Alphaeus, is Matthew, as he's called in other Gospels. And so as he begins to call Matthew, we see an even shorter "Mark is even taking his short rendition and shortening it. The first four disciples that we saw him call had more words recorded by Mark, but here Mark says no. He looked at Matthew and said, follow me. And that's all he recorded. And so walking by this tax office, we see the Levi, or Matthew, stood up immediately and followed him. This command to follow was an imperative. This was not an option. He said, follow me. Now, what I want us to understand is the setting of where this took place, the tax house would have had stacks of money. They didn't have online banking or electronic records of anything. There was tangible, physical money that was backed up by the gold that it was made out of. And so this tax house was absolutely stacked and would have had a collection of money. It doesn't say that Levi does anything else besides stand up and follow the imperative, the

command that Christ issued. was followed immediately. And it is very interesting to note that this word for follow in the original language, the word for follow me, or this phrase that we get it from, is synonymous in all of the Gospels, is used only for the disciples. This particular word for follow is not used for those who oppose Christ, are not used for the generic crowds that were to follow Him around. When this word is used, when Christ commands this type of follow, it is specifically for the disciples. And you want to make sure you notate that and make sure that we understand that because this is synonymous with faith. The Gospel writers and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit all writing the same word used for the same directive, the same imperative, the same command. They are using it as a way to describe faith. Because as it's been said, following is an act that involves risk and cost. It is something one does, not simply what one thinks or believes. So this idea of following me cost something. And we know that faith when it's active, faith when it's true and genuine and real costs us something. It's about doing not just thinking.

So as we see here, Levi is now going to get up and leave his stack of money. And so, immediately, as Mark moves very, very quickly, verse 15, and it happened that as he was reclining at the table, so we don't even know what happened in between there. He literally said, follow me, Levi gets up and follows him, and very next scene, Mark very quickly, okay, now they're at a table in Levi's house. Many think that it's very similar to what happened with Zacchaeus in Luke 19, and we'll circle back there later, but one of those situations where he said, hey, I'm gonna come have dinner with you. that Jesus, in effect, would be the host of the dinner, ultimately, in this case. And I'll talk more about that in a few moments, but it's important to understand this is an immediate, right then, follow me, straight to a house to have dinner. Now this word for recline, just so everyone's aware, because we in our Western minds think of, okay, so we're going to go sit at a table but we're going to recline? Do they have lazy boys at the table? No. In the tradition of that particular era, the Jewish culture, reclining at a table, tables were actually only a few inches off of the floor. six, maybe 12 inches off the floor and reclining at a table was a very intimate environment. You would actually lay either on your stomach with your arms crossed and you would eat with your feet away from the table or you would lay on your side very comfortably. You have your head back or there'd be pillows and you would lay on your side and only the arms and the upper torso would be able to be even close to the table. The rest of the body would be strung out away from the table. So kind of imagine people fanned out around a low table on the

ground. Their bodies away from the table. Now the reason for this is simply because there weren't a lot of cleanliness from the waist down in those days. Dusty roads, animal feces, everyone walked pretty much everywhere. So the respectful thing to do was to keep that uncleanness away from the table and the guests around you. So you would keep your lower half of your body away from the table. So as we think of this picture in Levi's house, we see Christ intimately at this table. and he's having dinner, he's reclining, he is eating with tax collectors and sinners. Now, why is this such a scandalous thing? Why is this something that would conjure up this negative emotion from the Pharisees and their scribes who saw them? Well, let me give a breakdown of what tax collectors and this particular word for sinners means in this context and in this culture. Tax collectors in that day would have been collecting for Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, so he would have been collecting money for him. But the tax collectors were Jewish natives, ethnically Jewish, who had abandoned the law, the Torah, the teachings of the Pharisees, abandoned their countrymen to work for the Romans. Now you have to understand, in Jewish culture, Gentiles were considered completely unclean. You weren't allowed to do business with them, you weren't allowed to make deals with them, you didn't have dinner with them. Tax collectors, essentially by view of the Jews around them, had abandoned their countrymen for coin. In fact, Jews looked at other Jews who became tax collectors as completely unclean. In fact, they viewed them as worse than lepers. They kicked them out of the synagogues. They were not allowed to be a judge or a witness in court. Their families were shamed. They were absolutely ostracized by all other Jewish people. And in a sense, I can kind of understand, because what these Jews would do, these tax collectors would do, is they were only required to give X amount of money on trade goods. Now, the Romans collected property tax themselves. They weren't going to allow property tax to be handed over to some middleman. But the Jews, the tax collectors, were given the authority to collect on trading goods. So basically, they would just collect taxes based off of what you had on you as you traveled through. And so Capernaum being where it is with the close proximity to a neighboring town and neighboring region, there would have been a lot of activity for tax collectors in Capernaum. And so what they would do is these men would go, okay, I owe X number of dollars or X number of denarii to Rome for a fish, for example. So let's say it was one. One denarii. I don't know the exact tax rate, but let's say it was one. Well, a Jew could, by force of Roman authority, a tax collector, could collect five denarii for a fish, give the one to Rome and keep the other four for himself. And there was nothing anyone

could do about it. And so the tax collectors not only have abandoned the Jewish custom of Gentile separation, they have linked arms with the enemy, the ones who were oppressing their brothers and sisters, their countrymen, but they were also robbing them blind and getting paid to do it. So you can see why there would be maybe some hostility from the local Jews to a tax collector. And then the word sinner here carries a little different weight than what you might originally think. This is not the idea of someone who's simply morally broken the law of God, right? This isn't just, oh, I lied, or I bore false witness, as the Ten Commandments called it. This is someone who is diametrically opposed, and staunchly and aggressively opposed to the law. Specifically the law of the Pharisees that had been added on to the original Torah. Some would call it the Mishnah. So we see the sinners here are those who refuse to allow the Pharisees to dictate how they were going to live. They would absolutely oppose the Pharisees to their face. They would not listen to their Sabbatarian laws that they added on. They would not listen to their separation laws or to their ritual cleansing laws. They were not only ignoring them, but were often aggressively opposed to it. The same word in the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, this same word is used for wicked in the Old Testament. So the idea here of those who were sinners in this view is not simply the common man who makes a mistake and has to go to the temple and make a sacrifice. No, these are wicked men who oppose the law and the Pharisees around them. So when you think about the animosity that the Scribes and Pharisees would have for them, you can kind of understand a little bit more. Now I'm not justifying what they said or did, all I'm saying is you understand from a cultural perspective where they would have been coming from. Because it was vastly different than maybe what our Western minds would think of just from tax collectors and sinners. None of us are a big fan of the IRS, but I don't know that we would quite take this level, right? So I just want to set it in proper perspective so that we understand what the Pharisees are saying. So now that we know that they were indignant, in verse 15, Mark makes note, there were many tax collectors and sinners reclining with Jesus and his disciples, and it is interesting to note, really zoom in here, the end of verse 15 says, for there were many of them, and they were following him. So we established a moment ago that this word for follow me or following is synonymous with what? Faith. So we have a large group of people that were detested by the local authorities, that were seen by the common Jew as underneath them, below them, and they are the ones who are following. They have the gift of faith. Christ has called them to himself, and they are following him. And not only are they following

Him, but Christ is having an intimate relationship with them. In this culture, you did not have dinner with someone you didn't agree with. You were invited to the table only if you were family or intimate friends. You did not dine with someone you did not like or agree with. Now think about that for just a moment with the Lord's Supper. This is just a side note, because we'll be taking communion together this morning. Think about that and what that means from an intimate relationship with Christ that we are invited to His table. If culturally they were only allowed to eat dinner with those or would only eat dinner with those whom they considered family or close friends, how much more weight does us gathering at the table together carry for us? So here Christ is reclining at the table, with these sinners, these reprobates, those who were detested by those around him, by the Jews around them. And in verse 16, it says, and when the scribes of the Pharisees, so it wasn't even the Pharisees themselves, it was the scribes, those who were under the Pharisees, saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they were saying to His disciples, He is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. So they didn't have the backbone to go to Christ Himself. No, no, we're going to go to His disciples. Let's go to his students and talk to him. Maybe they can reason with him and get him to change his mind. Surely he doesn't truly understand who he's having dinner with. Maybe that's what it is. But let's go challenge him. And of course, Jesus was within earshot. We know from earlier in Mark that he didn't have to hear them. He knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart. But here Mark records, Jesus heard them, so they're within earshot. And Jesus replies to them. In verse 17, those who are healthy do not have need for a physician, but only those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. Now I want us to think here for just a couple moments about the indignant attitude of the scribes and the Pharisees, the scribes and the Pharisees. They were on the outside watching while Christ was having intimate relationship, fellowship with the sinners and tax collectors. Those they would never dream of being found with in close proximity to, not even talking to, ignoring. And they're basically coming to him and saying, hey, if you want us to take you seriously as a teacher, remember what they've been calling him? Teacher. What did he do? He went to the synagogue after synagogue. We've already seen records of that in Mark, and we know from other Gospels they're already calling him rabbi. They're calling him teacher. So this would associate them with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the teachers of the common man. So from the common man, the Jew, who wanted to simply live and follow the law and do what he thought was right, go to the temple when he's supposed to go to the temple, that group of people saw Jesus in the same

category as the Pharisees, simply a teacher, a rabbi. And so these scribes are coming to him saying, hey, if you want to be considered to be a Pharisee, if you want to be considered to be one of us, this is not how you achieve that. You're giving us a bad name because people think you're with us and you're eating with the sinners. You're reclining with the tax collectors. This is not where you should be. And so when we think through the indignation here and what they're coming to try to get Him to do, they are understanding the mission of Jesus as being completely distorted by His actions. You guys remember over the past few weeks we've talked about the true mission of Christ was wildly different, the Messiah's mission was wildly different than what the Jews thought it was going to be. This is another clear example of that. They thought He came to be with them. We're the righteous, right? I don't have suspenders on, but you can imagine them putting their thumbs behind the suspenders. We're the righteous ones. We're the ones that you should be sitting, wow. Oh, did you guys hear that? That was rough. All right, let's try again. We're the ones that you should be seated with. We're the ones that you should be reclining with. Why are we not in intimate fellowship with you? We're the ones that have been holding up the law. Not only do we hold up the law, but we added 600 and some new ones to it just to make sure we're not getting anywhere close to breaking the law. Why are you here with them? What have I done all this work for? Haven't I done all this work to make God happy with me? Haven't I gone out of my way and done all these things? I don't even go around the people that you're with. That's how righteous I am. Look at where I've earned myself. I deserve to have another look. Come look at me. And yet Christ corrects them. He brings something new to them. And he tells them, it is not about what you do, but what I do. It is not about what you can do, but it is about what I do. Verse 17, and hearing this, Jesus said to them, those who are healthy do not have need for a physician, but only those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners. Can you hear the irony? Can you hear the sarcasm in that? He is challenging their very foundation of thinking. You think you're righteous. Why would I come and talk to you? You will think you're already good. You think you're already enough. You're following laws that you think has brought you to a place of right relationship with a holy God. Why would I come to you? I'm here to heal those who understand their need for a savior, who understand it's not about what you do, it's about what I do for you as the great physician. He's bringing something new to them that has never even crossed their minds. So we see that He's seated, Christ



is eating with these men, that He is redeemed, that He is called to follow Him, they are expressing and exercising the faith that He's given them, and now He puts the religious leaders in their place and tells them very clearly, it's not about what you can do, it's about what I do, or will do soon. Romans 9, verses 30 and 31. gives us an idea of this. Paul is writing about the relationship between law and gospel. Romans 9, verses 30 and 31. It reads, "...what shall we say then, that Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness laid hold of righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith? But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not attain that law." The bottom line here is that the scribes of the Pharisees had been taught so ingrained by the Pharisees, and I'm going to go into more detail about who they are here in a moment, but the scribes had been so ingrained in the Pharisees' teaching that they thought they could uphold the law enough that they could become righteous in the sight of God. And what Christ is saying is that's not the way this works. That's not the way this works. There is a key difference between law and gospel. There is a clear distinction. The law is to show us our need for a Savior, and the gospel is to show us the Savior that completes that need. And that there is nothing that we can bring to the table to make ourselves righteous before a holy God. Notice that the men reclining with Jesus were not reclining with Him until after He gave them the gift of faith and called them to follow. What were they doing before they were given the gift of faith and called to follow? living as unrighteous men and sinners. I'm not saying that they were more righteous than the Pharisees. What I'm saying is they understood their depravity. They knew they couldn't uphold the law. So they basically did what any natural man would do. If I can't uphold the law, I'll just do whatever I want. But the Pharisees and scribes were faking their righteousness, were outwardly clean, but inwardly dirty. They were whitewashed tombs filled with dead men's bones, as Matthew 23 would tell us. And yet Christ is here to tell them, that is not how this works. There is something new that I'm bringing here that we are going to address. So He corrects their thinking. He corrects everything they think is going to happen. Very similar, as I mentioned earlier, to Luke 19. Zacchaeus was changed immediately. Immediately, the relationship with Christ, when he called Zacchaeus, come down from that tree, I'm going to your house today. He had changed. He said, how can I do this thing? I will give back to people that I stole from four times the amount that I stole from them. And I promised he had records. It was a significant change in

who these men were. You cannot come in contact with Christ without a radical change. Because these Pharisees did two things that you cannot do. Number one, they grossly overestimated their standing before God. You cannot do that, saint. Never overestimate your standing with a holy God. There is only one reason, and one reason only that you stand before a holy God, and that name is Jesus Christ. Secondly, they greatly misunderstood the mission of the Messiah. The righteousness of God escapes those who seek to establish their own righteousness, whereas those who are too far off to hope for the righteousness of God are graciously granted it. James Edwards. We have to understand our position before a holy God and rightly see our need for a Savior. And so there's something new that was brought by Christ to the Pharisees we see as corrective of their thinking. Not about what they do, but about what He does. For in Romans 5.20 it says, "...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." We see grace abounding all the more with the tax collectors and sinners. But where there is no sin, where the righteous think that they have no sin, does grace abound there? Not to the extent that it does to those who realize by the grace of God their need for a Savior. So our application here is simple on this first point. We see the Jews were under the impression that they were right with God because of what they did or did not do. What they avoided, who they associated with, how they washed their hands. But He came to show them something new. The new covenant that He was initiating for the Kingdom of God was completely unlike anything that they had heard before. It is not about what they could do or avoid doing, it is about what He was doing, and we have to view it the same. Our salvation does not, cannot, and will not rest in our hands. When we begin to look to ourselves to justify whether we are a child of God or not, that literally leads us into sin. How quickly do you become prideful when you look down and realize, man, I haven't sinned in a while. Oh, there it is. How quickly do we run into those traps? We have to look at what God and God alone has done for us through the work of Christ, through the application of the Spirit in our lives, and understand there is nothing we can bring to the table. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. Our very best doesn't get it done. I don't trust my best 15 seconds, as I've heard it said, to get me where I need to be. All we have to do is rest in what Christ has done. That's all we can do. That's all we bring to the table. The only thing we bring to the table is the sin that makes us need a Savior. That's it. And if you haven't been challenged by that before, I would challenge you right now. If you're here and you haven't heard the gospel presented in such a way, I challenge you right now to pray and think about. I pray that the Spirit

would convict your heart that you would understand there's nothing you can do. It's all about what He does. So let's rest in those nail-pierced hands, brothers and sisters. Those who are children of the Almighty God here today, rest in His nail-pierced hands. It is what He did. There's nothing you bring to the table. There is law which is due, and there is gospel which is done. And friends, I tell you, it's been done. How we live after the gospel has been applied to us is no different than the intimate relationship that the tax collectors and senators had. They were reclining at the table. They're a family of believers. Zacchaeus gave everything back. That change happens after Christ's command to follow, not before. All right, number two. There's only two points. Don't get too excited. Number two. So there's something new that he also shows us here is it's not about their expectations, but his mission. Not their expectations, but his mission. So we're going to look at verses 18 through 22 together now. Verse 18-22 reads, And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, and they 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 attendants of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them? So long as they have their bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and when they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, otherwise that patch pulls away from it. The new from the old, and a worse tear results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, and otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, the skins as well. But one puts new wine into fresh wineskins. So now we're here, we're gonna actually have another challenge from those who follow the Pharisees. Here in verse 18, we have the group of common people that would follow the Pharisees. So when it says, and John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, they came and said to him, this is a very generic they, it means those who were followers of both John and the Pharisees, probably a mingling of both. But the primary thing we're going to see here is the Pharisees' attitude behind what's being asked. So I want to take just a couple minutes and make sure we're all on the same page on who the Pharisees are, because I think sometimes through different sermons and maybe different things, we think of the Pharisees as these people that were shunned by the common people, and how dare they keep us under their law. But that's not who the Pharisees were to the Jews of that day. In fact, the Pharisees had been around for some 200 years before Christ even walked the earth. They rose up out of the Maccabean revolt. They were considered

holy ones, that's what their name truly meant, the set-apart ones, or holy ones. And they stood solidly upon the rock of the Torah. In fact, they have in their writings, it says that the Torah is the precious instrument by which the world was created. And the Pharisees were made up about 1% of the Jewish population, but they held authority over nearly the entire Jewish population. In other words, nearly all people that were of Jewish nationality listened to them as the supreme authority on translating and applying the law in their own lives. In fact, they carried so much weight with the lay people and even with the Romans, that they were the only branch of Jewish the only Jewish group that survived Rome's demolition of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In fact, today's modern Judaism owes their very existence to the fact that the Pharisees were a group that survived. So this was a big deal. This was a large group. They had a lot of sway. This is the primary group that Jesus stood toe-to-toe against in the Jewish culture. They represented everything that was wrong and every misunderstanding the Jewish people had about the law, the relationship with God, and the Messiah. But the point I want to make is, by giving you all this information, is the Pharisees had an immense influence on the common man. An immense one. It's hard to really overestimate the amount of influence they had. So now we have these common folk, the followers, those who wanted to be righteous, those who simply thought by following the Pharisees they were doing what a good Jew should do. And they come to him and say, or come to the to Christ, and they say, why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not? So now they're speaking directly to Jesus, they came straight to Him, and they wanted to have the same understanding that we had a few moments ago. Their idea is, if you want us to take you seriously, you have to do what everyone else does. This is the practice. You fasted. That's what the Pharisees taught. But what's interesting is here, their verbal interpretation of the law is so far off of what the original law stated. Did you know that in the entire Old Testament law, there's one single fast that was required? And that was on the Day of Atonement. That was it. There is no other fast required in the Old Testament outside of the Day of Atonement. Now when I say required fast, I'm not saying that's the only time you'll see fasting happen in the Old Testament. There are examples of repentant fasting, there's examples of fasting to know the Lord's direction, there's examples of fasting as a nation to find direction. But the only required fast of the law was one time a year on the Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees had made it such a requirement, they had added so much on, that they said not only was it the Day of Atonement, but to really

be right, the Mishnah says that the Mishnah is where the oral traditions of the religious leaders, so that's where the extra things that the Pharisees would have added on to the law were housed, that you had to fast also when there was a tragedy, you had to fast when there's times of crisis, You had to have self-imposed fast. Wow, that was self-imposed fast. There we go. And so when you really wanted to be righteous, when you really wanted to be pious, when you really wanted to understand really God and get close to Him, you fasted. And in the culture of the time of Christ walking the earth, the average Pharisee and those who really wanted to be pious fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. Every Monday and Thursday. And so they would abstain from food. And they literally brought this abstinence from food to a point that it became, in Jesus' day, a prerequisite of religious commitment, a sign of atonement of sin, and humiliation and penitence before God, and a general aid to prayer. Basically, if you wanted to be seen as righteous, you had this, what they called, affliction of the soul, making it a sacrificial act of piety. In other words, if you really wanted to be close to God, you would hurt yourself in this way, you would bring yourself down in this way. So this was not as simple, fast as we may think of it today, or as maybe our Western minds would think of it. This was an intense labor that was added onto the shoulders of the common man, simply because the righteous, quote unquote, righteous people of the day said, this is how you really look good. This is how you really impress God. This is really how you draw yourself close to him. So now we see this solemn fast, this time of affliction of the soul. In fact, it was very common in those days for Pharisees to really make sure those around them knew that they were fasting. They would wear disheveled clothing. They would even put makeup on that literally made them look more, their cheeks sunken in, oh, I'm just so afflicted. and their hair would be all messed up, and they would put dirt on their head. They wanted the world around them to know, I am righteous and you are not. So this solemn act of self-deprivation. And Jesus' answer is fascinating, fascinating. Look at verse 19 and 20. And Jesus said to them, can the attendants of the bridegroom fast when the bridegroom is with them? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. So in stark contrast to a fast, their question is, why aren't you fasting? And he responds, we're at a wedding. Why would they fast at a wedding? Now, you have to take a moment and understand what the Jewish wedding was. So let me paint a picture for you here of that. I know there's a lot of extracultural things, but in order for us to

understand this text, we have to understand the culture, because our Western minds has no idea what is being said here. So let me paint a picture for you. A bride and a groom, the bridegroom goes and picks up the bride from their father's house and brings him back to his father's house, where he has probably built on an additional room. This is where him and his wife will raise their family. Houses in those days were usually built onto each other as families grew, and the patriarch is who would leave that family as a whole, and each additional son would bring a wife back home. And then the celebration would begin when they got back home, and it would be seven days, a full seven days, of singing, drinking, dancing, revelry, joy, celebration, both inside the home, it would almost always explode out into the street. There'd be tambourines, and it would be seven days of nothing but joy and celebration. Seven whole days for a wedding feast. I didn't want to pay for one couple hour part. I can imagine the cost of these kinds of things, okay? But this seven day celebration

stands in stark contrast to fasting. This would be one of those situations

where those asking the question will be like, what are you talking about? I was talking about fasting and you're bringing up a wedding. What does that have to do with anything? And yet Christ, in such beautiful fashion as He does, as we saw last week, a veiled unveiling of who He is, is telling us something so significant that if we look at it with Western eyes, we'll miss it. Do you know that in nowhere in the Old Testament, nowhere at all, is the Messiah referenced as a bridegroom? Nowhere at all. Do you know who is consistently referenced as the bridegroom? Yahweh. Yahweh is consistently referenced

throughout the Old Testament by prophets and Moses alike as the bridegroom of Israel himself. Herself, excuse me. And so Jesus is revealing something not only about those who are with Him, not only is He saying, my disciples, my sons of the bridegroom, in verse 19 where it says, can the attendants of the bridegroom, in the original translation it's literally sons of the bridegroom. Those who were invited to the feast were considered sons, family. You did not come to the intimate feast of the bridegroom without being an intimate, close relationship with Him. So he's saying, not only are these men intimately my family, but we are celebrating, they cannot fast. The celebration is too great.

I am here right now, redeeming my bride, and we are in celebration. There is no fast. So he's saying that. But also, to those who would have ears to hear, he is telling them, I am God. I am the bridegroom of Israel. Let me show you. We cannot miss this imagery. Isaiah chapter five and verse one. Excuse me. Isaiah chapter five and verse

one, it says, let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. In reference there in context, you'll see that it's a husband is the well-beloved. Isaiah 54 verses five and six. For your husband is your maker. Isaiah is prophesying to Israel. For your husband is your maker, whose name is Yahweh of hosts. And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For Yahweh has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected, says your God. I won't read these other two, but please write them down. Ezekiel 16, verses 6-8. Ezekiel 16, verses 6-8. And Hosea 2, verse 19. Those are four examples of specific texts that reference Yahweh as the bride of Israel. But then we see it in other places as well. Does God not choose a prophet who goes and takes a prostitute as his wife so that he can give the example of himself as the trustworthy bridegroom and the wife as the adulterous Israel who chases after other gods? So we see the imagery laid out in the entire prophet's life. We see the kinsman redeemer laid out in the book of Ruth. Anybody ever wonder why the book of Ruth is in the scriptures? Because it gives us a beautiful example of the kinsman redeemer, who married the spouse, the wandering one from outside the nation of Israel, who redeemed her, who threw his cloak over her in symbolism of, you are now mine, and I will protect you, and I will raise you up, and I will raise your children as my own, and we will come together. and a beautiful picture of a bridegroom and his bride, who, by the way, is also in direct lineage of Christ himself. So we see this picture all throughout the Old Testament, that Christ's bride, God's bride, will be the true spiritual children of Abraham. Both Jew and Gentile who have been brought in. How many times do we see also in the Gospels, Christ using the bride's imagery, the wedding imagery, to literally pull people off the streets because the one that he invited, it stands in contrast of Israel versus Gentile, the one that he invited, the bride that he originally had called for himself, or the sons of the attendant that he had called for himself, would not come and celebrate with him. Does it sound like these Jews are celebrating with Christ? No. And so he sends his attendants, his servants out to gather from the streets and the byways in the picture of the Gentiles coming into the wedding feast and being part of the celebration. Do you see the imagery? And so Christ is here revealing himself. I am God. I am the bridegroom, the one over the bride who is here to rescue you to myself. So he's revealing himself as the fulfillment not only of the Messiah as we've seen in Mark

so far, not only as the one who was sent fulfilling prophecies in Isaiah, but now we see him revealing himself as Yahweh as well. Now in this wording here, this answer, the first part of Christ's answer to them, he tells them that my sons cannot fast. But in verse 20, he says, the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. This word here, taken away, has the idea of ripped, torn, removed forcefully. And so he's speaking now to the tearing away of himself from his wedding party. There is no misunderstanding about what will happen to Jesus. He knows His mission. He knows the opposition. The opposition is right here in front of Him. He's had a second encounter now within a few moments of these Jewish religious leaders coming to challenge the very existence of who He is and who He claims to be. He knows what's coming. In fact, this is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53.8. Isaiah 53.8. It reads, by oppression and judgment, he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, that for the transgression of my people, striking was due to him. Isaiah said this exact kind of terminology, that he would be ripped away from his people. He will be taken away for their redemption. Because of their transgressions, they would strike him. And in that time, they would fast. So there's not a command here to fast, but he's prophesying about what his disciples will do. And we know in records of Acts and on into the early church in the first couple of centuries that fasting was a regular part of what they did as a way of being watchful, being contrite. but it has a different idea behind it than what those of the Pharisees had. It was simply an act of physical privation so that they could focus on Christ himself, not to show how righteous they were. In fact, in Matthew, Christ teaches on fasting and says, if you do fast, or when you do fast, in reference to his disciples, make people think you're not, in essence. That's Josh's loose translation. So we know that the fasting was going to come. But then Mark records two back-to-back parables. These are the first parables in Mark. So if you want to make a note in your scriptures, if you like doing that, these are the first parables in Mark. In verse 21 it says, no one sews a piece of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment, otherwise that patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the worst here results. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well. But one puts new wine into fresh wineskins." Now, it's debated on whether Jesus said these things immediately after here. Peter, remember, Mark is



writing what Peter was remembering during his time with Christ. And so some think that this fit very well here, that it may not have been the exact words that he said at this time, but this was the teaching that Peter remembered going along with this. So just keep that in mind. But in context here of what we're seeing, Jesus is linking his overall ministry together here. This further example, these parables, are not about fasting in and of itself. This is about his ministry as a whole. He has just explained that he's the bridegroom. Didn't he? He explained by reference of the words that he was choosing to use, a reference that the Jews would have known was coming from Isaiah and Hosea and Ezekiel that we've just looked at. They're under the impression Christ is communicating that this is about his ministry as a whole, not just fasting. And so now he's going to teach them what it is He has come to do and why it's something new. This is the something new that He's showing them out of this particular part of our text this morning. So in verse 21, we have an unshrunk cloth being attached to an old garment. And in verse 22, we have new wine being poured into old wineskins. Christ is the new of both of those parables. He is the new patch. He is the unshrunk cloth of the new cloth. He is the new wine. being poured into old wineskins. But what he's trying to teach here, what he's trying to reveal in a parabolic way, is that he is something new and cannot, does not, and will not fit into the law. into the first covenant, into the old way, into the way the Pharisees thought it was going to work. It is something completely new. And if you try to force it, it's going to tear up the old, and it will be gone. If you notice in both parables, it is a complete decimation, an utter loss of the original garment that needed a patch, and of the wineskins. It's gone. It's a complete loss. If you try to fit Christ, if you try to fit the gospel under the law, it wrecks both. How many times have we seen that in our Christian lives today? When you try to fit Christ under the law, it wrecks both. When you try to attach, do this, don't do that. Now, is there righteous living? Yes, I'm not saying that. Understand what I'm talking about in salvation. If you try to put the gospel of salvation into the law, it destroys both. Because the essence of the law gospel distinction is, the law is here to show us what we cannot do for ourselves. The gospel is here to show us what we have to have, which is Christ. And it's been provided by grace alone, through faith alone, by God alone. And so Christ is saying, I'm the new. This idea here in verse 21, where it says, the patch pulls away from it. Do you see that? Otherwise the patch pulls away from it. This is the same word for taken away in verse 20, where the bridegroom is taken away from them. It's the same idea of ripped, torn away, forcibly removed. It's the same idea. So I want

to get the verbal picture here of the parables. I didn't think an illustration here, because this illustration is beautiful. So in those days, especially with the material that they use, as a garment gets worn, it gets stretched out. Anybody else here stretch out clothes? I definitely do. But if you take stretched out clothes and you attach good, a new patch that's good, not been proven, not been stretched out, as that particular patch goes through its formation of being washed and heated up and sweated on, and all the things that clothes go through, and it begins to do its own stretching and shrinking, it will actually rip out even worse than the hole that was there before, destroying the garment. And the picture of the wine, the illustration of the wine, is if you've ever fermented wine or understood that process of how it works, fermenting wine expands greatly as it's fermenting. There's gases that build up. And so if you use old stretched out wine skins, in those days they used leather skins, animal skins, to ferment their wine. It would expand and contract, and old wineskins are those who've been used for the fermenting process already, and it's already been stretched as far as it's gonna stretch. This is all it's got. And you can't use the same wineskin to then re-ferment wine again. In other words, you had a new wineskin for every batch of wine, because the expansion process was so hard on the material. And so if you poured new wine into the old wineskins, as it stretched, it would explode, decimating the wineskin, because once you fermented wine, you could pour it in old wineskin. It'd been fermented, it's not gonna go through that process anymore. But you just can't put new wine in an old wineskin. And so, Christ is saying if you force this new, this something new that I'm bringing, if you try to force who I am and what I bring to the table, the redemption, the new covenant of grace into the law, it destroys it. It will tear away. You can't force law and gospel together for salvation. It doesn't work. And we see that all throughout the New Testament. We just finished Ephesians as a body, didn't we? And how much did we stress that you have to have the gospel, and then you have what comes from the gospel? You don't reverse those. You don't have righteousness by what you do, and then you get the gospel. There's a very clear distinction in Christ's making it very evident here. His mission is to bring something new. It is not about their expectations. It is His mission. He is doing something new and better. He is not an attachment, an addition, or appendage to the status quo. He cannot be integrated into or contained by preexisting structures, even Judaism, Torah, and the synagogue. There's a quote I found this week. Now I wanna pause for just a minute, because if your brain is like mine, I start challenging things very quickly. But Jesus followed the law, didn't he? Didn't we just see that he told the paralytic to go, or excuse me, the leper in chapter one,

to go show himself to the priest? Isn't he submitting to the law? Why is he now saying, if you try to force me into the law, it's gonna destroy both? Because Christ brought a change that wasn't chaotic. He's not an anarchist. But did he or did he not step out of the law, out of the Torah, when he needed to, when it challenged his mission? We're going to see that next week whenever he talks about the Sabbath. He broke the Sabbath regulations in the Mishnah that the Pharisees had added on when it was his mission that needed to be completed. In other words, his mission took priority over what they were practicing. And he didn't come to abolish the law, so don't hear me say he's coming to abolish the law. He came to fulfill it as he says he did. The distinction I'm making is you cannot force the gospel back into the law and say, do this so that you can be saved. It's wholly separate. And so when you try to attach the new covenant to the old covenant, it destroys both. And so now we've seen the joy of the disciples here in the second portion. We've seen the joy that is brought by being sons of the bridegroom and participating in the celebration. We've seen Christ... identify himself with God, revealing in a veiled way who he is for those who have ears to hear so that they can understand. And then in these parables, he is showing those who can understand, those whom he has given the gift of understanding, the gift of faith to, that you cannot put me into the old covenant. There is something new that I'm bringing to the table. Now, I want to correct misunderstanding of this particular text that I've heard it preached this way and I want to make sure that I clear the air of this. Verses 21 and 22 I have heard live preached that the old wineskin and the old cloth are us. And we have to make sure that we make room for Christ in our lives, or His patch, where He'll tear us away if we're not living right. And if we don't prepare ourselves as new wineskins and make sure that we're ready to be filled by Jesus, He'll burst us wide open with who He is if we're not living right. That is not at all the context of what this is saying. Please don't take this as that interpretation. If you've heard it as that, I stand here and correct it, and denounce that teaching. That is not at all what this text is saying. This text is telling us that we are made new, and using wording from Paul, we are made new as a new cloth, and Jesus attaches himself to us, that we are united with him. and that we are made new, not as old wineskins, but we are made new as new wineskins filled with Him, so that He shapes us and molds us and we expand and contract according to His direction, for He fills us. This is about Christ entering us, not about us preparing ourselves for Christ, if you want to use that analogy. Christ is saying He's the new. He is the new. The old cannot take the new. And that's truly our application. It's that simple. Christ makes

us new. He has imputed to us His righteousness so that we are not destroyed by His holiness. He imputes to us His holiness and His righteousness, and then after that, as we're new and we're expanding and we're growing and we're filled with the Spirit, and we're made sanctified, continuing progressive sanctification and renewal as the Spirit and Christ works within us, we then see the law for what it truly breaks down to be, Matthew 22, 36 through 40. what the law in all of its many parts and pieces, Christ summed it up for us, the one who breathed out that law when it was given, summed it up for us, that you are to love the Lord your God with all of you, and you're to love your neighbor as yourself. So as new articles of clothing and new wineskins that are united with Christ, that's where we then walk according to how we are to walk. because he writes that law on our hearts according to Ezekiel. The law is not how we are saved. The law shows us our need for a Savior. Christ is the something new, the new covenant, the grace that we have through him by his sacrifice and his redemption is what we rest in. So in conclusion, I want us to remember that Jesus coming to earth inaugurates and begins something new. It's a new covenant. There's something new that He's bringing here, and it was planned. It's not new to God, but it is to us. It was planned by God from the beginning as part of the redemptive plan, but as He came to earth and explained this to the Jews, it is something completely new and a stumbling block to them. Understand the stumbling block that it was to them. And yet to us, to those who have been given the gift of faith and understanding, those whose ears have been cleaned so that we can hear, we understand it to be the most beautiful, the most amazing, the most redemptive, the most awe-inspiring thing that we could ever imagine. that as Wes was talking about at Sunday school this morning, isn't it amazing that a wholly other than us God, completely different from us, would look down through his absolute perfect knowledge, through his love and grace, and would look down and redeem pitiful wretches like us to himself. This new thing that Christ brought is for you and I. The law is not to make us righteous unto salvation, for we are sinners and have broken the law. And in breaking the law, we are guilty of the whole. It is only Christ that we look to and Him we rest. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity to look today at the something new that you brought. Thank you for helping us to see the distinction that we have there. for the grace that you provide to us, the love and put on display and the redemption that we have. I pray that we will have the joy of the wedding party that gets to celebrate with the bridegroom as he redeems the bride to himself. There's so many beautiful word pictures here, Lord, we can almost get lost in trying to work them

all out. But I pray that the thing that we walk away with this morning and carry through with us the rest of the week, would be the beautiful grace that we see in you and you alone redeeming us. And I pray that we have the right view of the law and the right view of the gospel. I praise you and thank you and your revelation to us for your spirit. We love you. Amen.