

## Mark

### “From sobbing to song”

2:18-22

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Vs. 18-20 To joyful**
- III. **Vs. 21 To new**
- IV. **Vs. 22 To expansive**

#### I. **Introduction**

We move into the second of the four questions asked about the purpose of religion that Jesus answered. Reading this section causes me to believe that if most literate people in the world would just carefully read the Gospels we would probably witness the greatest spiritual revival. I say this for two reasons:

1. First it would clear up the distortions and mischaracterizations that have been unfortunately taught and displayed by Christians and the church that bears His name.
2. Secondly, people would discover for themselves how absolutely gracious, loving and irresistible Jesus is in the Bible.

Jesus was ever the master illustrator, for Jesus earth was crammed full of heaven as everything spoke to Him of the Father. In these three illustrations Jesus would have us understand Christianity is not “patched-up” Judaism or “New Look” religion. You cannot tack Jesus on to rituals or rules; to use the “New” to fix the “Old” is a sure fire way to ruin booth! What Jesus offers in *these three illustrations describes three characteristics of Christianity that cannot be placed into old tired worn out religion of rules and rituals, for Christianity according to Jesus is:*

- *To Joyful*
- *To New*

- To Expansive

## II. Vs. 18-20 To joyful

Vs. 18 Pharisees were of the sect of Levi and involved in regulating the service of the temple, this was propped up by added ceremonial and ritualistic observances during the week and with John the Baptist being placed into prison his disciples had not heard their leader when he had called them a “*brood of vipers*” and instead joined with the Pharisees disciples in their criticism of Jesus and His disciples. *The complaint was that not only did Jesus and His disciples eat with the wrong people (verses 13-17) they did so at entirely the wrong time (verses 18-22)!* There are special days in which the law spoke concerning a fast such as Yom Kippur also known as the Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees loved to show how religious they were above others and designated more and more days for fasting as a way of getting both God and man’s attention. They fasted two days a week every Monday and Thursday from 6 AM – 6 PM after which they would have a meal. They would put on clothing of sackcloth or burlap, rub ash on their face, suck in their faces to look as if they hadn’t eaten in weeks and make loud prayers to elicit attention. Jesus wasn’t against fasting and neither is the New Testament as there are many reasons for a person to go through a fast, most importantly to draw nearer the Lord as a person would forgo something and replace the time normally spent doing that activity with the Lord. But in the case of the Pharisees it was for self-display that they may present themselves as being spiritual. Religious people likes rules that make them stand out and outwardly appear better than others especially if these rules make them “*nonconformists*” to the world around them. But inevitably their “*conformity*” to the religious rule is designed to be flaunted as a way of demonstrating superiority to the very people they are called to reach. Essentially it is, “*Why don’t you religious people keep*

**OUR** self-imposed traditions to appear holier-than-thou, like we do.” What is at issue is that one group that is attempting to stand out isn’t standing out as much because others who simply love God are standing out by not standing out!

Vs. 19 The word “*friends*” describes guests not the groomsmen as we must not impose our traditions on the biblical text. After the wedding the Jewish couple didn’t go away on a honeymoon they stayed at home for a week with their friends and had a party. In a hard life that they had during biblical times it was easily the best week of the couple’s life. The closest friends of the newlyweds were called the “*children of the bridechamber*” and this is who Jesus likens His disciples too, the chosen friends of the bride and groom.

According to the Talmud there was only one time a man was absolved of religious duty and that was at a wedding. The only duty a man had at a wedding was to rejoice! This was such an important time that there was an actual rabbinical ruling that said, “*All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy.*” Jesus was always pushing the spiritual over the ritualistic elements of religion as he like the spontaneity of relationship above the confines of ritualistic religion.

Jesus, doesn’t condemn them for “***fasting instead of feasting***” He **doesn’t even question the sincerity** as these two groups He only questions the timing of fasting. The problem as Jesus put’s it is, “*You are questioning WHY Me and My followers are fasting? I just want to let you know that you are at a wedding not a funeral!*” The problem, as Jesus explained it, was that those two groups didn’t know what kind of gathering they were at and even though they were a part of the majority that was fasting instead of feasting. It was the “***fasters***” and not the “***feasters***” that were acting inappropriate, albeit ignorantly. Ffrom the perspective of these two groups that the situation and circumstances

that they were living warranted a “*fast at a funeral*” and I believe that is in part why Jesus uses illustrations to explain what He and His disciples knew that the Pharisees and John’s disciples were apparently unaware, namely that the Bride Groom was at the wedding.

Vs. 20 Jesus went on to explain that as far as His present disciples were concerned there would be a time for their mourning and fasting when He would temporarily be taken from them. Jesus would further explain this time in John’s gospel in chapter 16 verses 16-24. He said in a little while that they wouldn’t see Him as He was going to the Father. He told them that it would be natural for them to weep, lament and be sorrowful even as the world would rejoice. But He said that their sorrow will be turned into joy. He promised that they would see Him again and they would have joy that “*no one will take from them.*” Jesus had already told them in John chapter 16 verse 7 that it was better that He go away because if He didn’t the Helper would not come and that His departure meant that Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to them. Hey saints, Jesus has died and rose again, the Holy Spirit has come and indwelt us as Christ abides in His disciples, the Holy Spirit is available to fully immerse and empower our lives. **So are you “feasting at a wedding” because we have “Joy, that no one will take from us” or are we the church acting like we are “fasting at a funeral”?** It is clear that the relationship we now enjoy with Christ is what ought to change not just our outlook on life but our entire disposition from fasting to feasting, from sobbing to a song. Saints the life lived in Christ cannot be lived any other way than joy! **Jesus said something that ought to be understood and repeated each time we gather the truest character of Christianity is that it is a wedding not a funeral, a feast not a fast, a song not a sob!**

### III. Vs. 21 To new

Vs. 21 It take no imagination to see that Jesus grabbing up first a piece of clothing that had been patched by an unshrunk piece of cloth then a new wine skin both to illustrate what having the bride groom meant relating to fasting turned to feasting. Jesus illustration is common sense and natural! The word “old” in the Greek is a word that describes its age NOT in reference to *time* but *usefulness*. The garment wasn’t merely “*out of date or fashion*” rather it had “*used up its purpose*” and patching it up with the new cloth would only make the differences more noticeable. The “*New cloth*” is a reference to Jesus and His ministry which by definition in this illustration wasn’t meant for the purpose of *mending* but a “*new garment*” all together. Jesus hadn’t come to reform Judaism, to “*patch it up*” or “*pour new wine into old wineskins*”. Countless people try to do with the “*Royal Righteous Robes*” of Jesus as they try to sow them onto the rags of either their former life or some belief system that never fully covered them! Listen, you do not add Jesus to your life, you must not try as you will only make your attempt obvious and the holes in your life more visible. To “*Put on Jesus*” you must “*Put off*” your former life! It has become popular to purchase clothes that by design look like they should have been tossed years ago. I can’t find a better illustration of our modern society than people preferring to identify more with what is the worn out rags of self-worship and yet its continual appeal to a society that is so trapped and obsessed by it that they will pay 10 times more for something that has already not only been proven but by designed to: Not last, not cover and be more expensive!

#### IV. Vs. 22 To expansive

Vs. 22 Again the word for old is the same as above “*worn out for its original purpose*” and the Greek word for “New” is a word that means “*in point of use*”. This 2<sup>nd</sup> illustration takes a little more understanding as the ancient world didn’t use glass it used animal skins or bladders for the fermentation process. New wine would be early in that process and would give off more gas that would require the flexible characteristics of a new wine skin otherwise the old wine skin would have been too brittle for the process. Wine is always used of joy symbolically in the bible and to try to contain joy in the brittle inflexible nature of the religion of the time would have ruined the wine and destroyed the religion. The principal Jesus is using is that: “*Religious tradition must never trump relational triumph*”! These stories speak of what the Son of God came to initiate an entirely new order of spiritual life and experience which of necessity make necessary new expressions which was best understood in feasting instead of fasting. Our attitudes ought to reflect a wedding and a funeral, feasting and not fasting. The presence of Jesus is not at our gatherings if joy isn’t visible. Psalm 144:15 says, “*Happy is the people whose God is the LORD!*”