

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 8: Always the bridesmaid?

The religious folk reacted furiously at Jesus' behaviour because they had no idea how one minute he could teach with authority, perform such incredible miracles and yet then go and hang out with and enjoy the company of sinners.

1. There Are Two Equal Opposite Errors Of Self-Salvation - Jesus Continually Addresses Them Both

- Read Mark 2:18

The Pharisees and John's disciples are just like all people, everywhere, all desperately trying to save themselves.

All of us at some point have struggled with obscurity/anonymity, inadequacy, poverty, suffering & pain, misery/joylessness.

We usually apply 1 of the following 2 strategies to try and escape these struggles:

- Moral Conformity – the belief that obeying the rules gives us the secret meaning to life and right standing with God. Getting it right leads us to pride, while failing to keep the rules causes guilt and bitterness that in turn leads to misery.
 - Self-Discovery – the belief that if we throw off our traditional ways of thinking and doing, we will find meaning, purpose and joy. Jesus shows how both of these strategies are wrong.
- ❖ Q: Which of these do you struggle with the most: anonymity/inadequacy/poverty/suffering & pain/misery/joylessness?
- ❖ Q: In order to deal with these struggles, which strategy do you frequently default to: moral conformity or self-discovery?
- ❖ Q: Why are both of these strategies “normal” behaviour and yet still wrong?

2. The Brilliant News Of The Gospel Is That God, Through Jesus, Is Married To His People

- Read Mark 2:19-20 & Revelation 19:6-9

Jesus tells us that Christianity is a wedding feast, a celebration that is supposed to be fun and sacred.

- Fun – in those days weddings were a wonderful time to feast and party, as well as rest from the mundane routines of survival.
- Sacred – Jesus said that he is the groom and that we (both men and women) are the bride.

Because Jesus is the groom, we know that God's love is:

- I. Permanent
- II. Exclusive
- III. Redeeming
- IV. Passionate
- V. Costly

- ❖ Q: Why does Jesus compare the church to a bride? Why is that significant for us?
- ❖ Q: What do you think it means for us to have an exclusive relationship with Jesus? What are the implications of this exclusive relationship in our lives? Do you think this is something others should be able to notice about you?
- ❖ Q: How do we treat our Bridegroom (Jesus)? Are we as committed to him as we are to our earthly spouses/other significant relationships? (Think about the time, money, energy you invest in the person you love the most as a point of comparison).

3. A Little Gospel And A Little Self-Salvation Leads To Torn Clothes And Spilled Wine

- Read Mark 2: 21-22

Jesus wants people to stop trying to save themselves. His love is not dependent on how well we keep the rules. He wants us to stop comparing ourselves to others, watching to see how well we are doing by measuring them. Our joy doesn't come from keeping the rules, but there is equally no joy in trying to escape from any rules. Our joy comes from knowing that we are in covenant relationship with Jesus. We obey him because he loves us, and because we love him in return.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think we struggle with the idea that Jesus loves us even when we sin?
- ❖ Q: Do you believe that Jesus loves you, is in covenant with you and will never leave you as a result? If so, does that cause you to want to obey him? How is that different from obeying him out of a sense of duty or fear?

