**It’s About Relationship Not Ritual**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 2:18-28**

**Wednesday Evening**

**September 5, 2018**

**18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"**

Saints, John’s disciples refers to the remaining disciples of John the Baptist. These men and the Pharisees were fasting—that is, they were going without food in order to spend time in prayer repenting and humbling themselves before God. The Old Testament law set aside only one day a year as a required day of fasting for all Jews—the Day of Atonement.

**Photo of the Seven Feasts>**

**Leviticus 16:29**

"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.”

The Pharisees, however, fasted on Mondays and Thursdays as an act of piety, and most likely promoted this among the people.

**Luke 18:9-14**

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

John the Baptist was in prison, and his disciples erroneously sided with the Pharisees on this issue, fasting when they should have been feasting with Jesus. Naturally this caused a question: “Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don’t fast?”

**19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.**

Saints, the Pharisees fasted as a show of piety; the disciples of John the Baptist fasted as a sign of mourning for sin and to prepare for the Messiah’s coming. But, like Jesus’ disciples, they did not need to fast because the Messiah was with them! To be with Jesus the groom is as joyous as a wedding feast.

Wedding guests do not mourn or fast; a wedding is a time of celebration and feasting.

Likewise, Jesus’ coming was a sign of celebration, not mourning and fasting. Jesus did not condemn fasting—he himself fasted (Luke 4:2).

**Luke 4:1-2**

1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

Saints, Jesus emphasized that fasting must be done at the right time for the right reasons.

**20 But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.**

Saints, while Jesus walked the earth, his presence was a cause for celebration—the Messiah had come! The people did not need to mourn, they needed to rejoice. But Jesus knew that soon he (the groom) would be taken away from them. The word someday refers to the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. On that day, Jesus’ disciples would indeed fast and mourn.

**Ephesians 5:25-27**

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

**2 Corinthians 11:2**

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

**Revelation 19:7-9**

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

**21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.**

Saints, Jesus’ arrival on earth ushered in a new time, a new covenant between God and people. The new covenant called for a new way of expressing personal faith. The newness of the gospel and its relationship to people could not be combined with the religion of Judaism any more than a piece of unshrunk cloth should be used as a patch on a worn-out garment.

When the garment is washed, the patch will shrink, pull away from the old garment, and leave a bigger hole than before.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-18**

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation…

**22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."**

Saints, in Bible times, wine was not kept in glass bottles, but in goatskins sewn around the edges to form watertight bags called wineskins. New wine expanded as it fermented, stretching its wineskin. After the wine had aged, the old wineskin (that had gotten brittle with age and couldn’t stretch anymore) would burst if more new wine was poured into it. New wine, therefore, needs new wineskins.

Like old wineskins, the Pharisees and indeed the entire religious system of Judaism were too rigid to accept Jesus, who could not be contained in their traditions or rules. They were the self-appointed guardians of the “old garments” and the “old wineskins.” Christianity required new approaches and new structures.

**Romans 6:6-9**

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

**23 Now it happened that He went through the grain-fields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"**

Saints, Mark prepares us for a conflict with the opening words, one Sabbath day. Jesus, determined not to be confined to the Pharisees’ petty rules, always seemed to be doing something against those rules on the Sabbath.

Jesus and the disciples were walking through some grainfields. As they walked, they began breaking off heads of wheat to eat. The Pharisees (who apparently were following them around) pointed out that they were breaking the law against harvesting grain on the Sabbath.

**Matthew 12:9-14 (Living Bible Version)**

9 Then he went over to the synagogue 10 and noticed there a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it legal to work by healing on the Sabbath day?" (They were, of course, hoping he would say yes, so they could arrest him!)

11 This was his answer: "If you had just one sheep, and it fell into a well on the Sabbath, would you work to rescue it that day? Of course you would. 12 And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, it is right to do good on the Sabbath."

13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your arm." And as he did, his hand became normal, just like the other one! 14 Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot Jesus' arrest and death.

The Pharisees had established thirty-nine categories of actions forbidden on the Sabbath, based on interpretations of God’s law and on Jewish custom. Harvesting was one of those forbidden actions. By breaking off heads of wheat to rub in their hands to eat, the disciples were technically harvesting, according to the religious leaders.

**25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?"**

Saints, this story is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Each week twelve consecrated loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, were placed on a table in the house of God, here meaning the Tabernacle.

**1 Samuel 21:1-6**

1 David went to the city of Nob to see Ahimelech, the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw him. "Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?" 2 "The king has sent me on a private matter," David lied. "He told me not to tell anybody why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later.

3 Now, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you can." 4 "We don't have any regular bread," the priest replied, "but there is the holy bread, which I guess you can have if only your young men have not slept with any women for awhile."

5 "Rest assured," David replied. "I never let my men run wild when they are on an expedition, and since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more so on this one!" 6 So, since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread-the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the Lord in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread.

Saints, this bread was called the bread of the Presence. After its use, it was to be eaten only by priests. On one occasion, when fleeing from Saul, David and his men were given this special bread to eat by the high priest.

The priest understood that the men’s need was more important than ceremonial regulations. The loaves given to David were the old loaves that had just been replaced with fresh ones. Although the priests were the only ones allowed to eat this bread, God did not punish David because his need for food was more important than the priestly regulations.

The Pharisees knew the Scriptures thoroughly, yet Jesus’ question, “Haven’t you ever read,” reveals their ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures that they claimed to know so well. Yes, they had read this story many times, but they had obviously not discerned or applied its meaning.

Jesus justified his disciples’ action on the grounds that they were hungry and that their need superseded the technicalities of ceremonial law. When Jesus compared himself and his disciples to David and his men,

Jesus was saying, in effect,

“If you condemn me, you must also condemn David.”

Jesus was not condoning disobedience to God’s laws. Instead, he was emphasizing discernment and compassion in enforcing the ceremonial laws, something the self-righteous Pharisees did not comprehend. People’s needs are more important than technicalities.

**27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**

Saints, the Pharisees, having added all kinds of restrictions for the Sabbath, had completely forgotten God’s purpose in creating the Sabbath. God mercifully provided the Sabbath as a day of rest for his people—a day to set aside the normal duties of the workweek and spend time resting and worshiping (Genesis 2:1-3).

**Genesis 2:1-3**

1 Now at last the heavens and earth were successfully completed, with all that they contained. 2 So on the seventh day, having finished his task, God ceased from this work he had been doing, 3 and God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he ceased this work of creation.

But the Pharisees had only succeeded in making the Sabbath an impossible burden. Jesus made clear that the Sabbath was made to benefit people by providing them a day of rest. God did not create people in order to place impossible restrictions and burdens on their lives.

**28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."**

Saints,

**Who created the Sabbath?**

God did. Therefore, because Jesus, the Son of Man, is God’s Son, given authority and power by God himself, then he is master even of the Sabbath. By saying this, Jesus claimed to be greater than the law and above the law. To the Pharisees, this was heresy.

**Colossians 2:16-17**

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

They did not realize that Jesus, the divine Son of God, had created the Sabbath. The Creator is always greater than the creation; thus Jesus had the authority to overrule their traditions and regulations.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**