

Mark 2:18-26

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[0 : 00] Great to see you again. Things move really quickly, don't they, these days. You can't really be blamed for being behind the times a little bit, can you?

Things advance so quickly. But is there a point where living in the past, living in history, becomes a worrying habit?

As a ridiculous example, just imagine today that if I turned up to the lunchtime talks on a horse-drawn carriage, wearing a pair of tights and a cravat, smoking a pipe, Mr. Darcy style.

Well, if I live in the Victorian era, when it's the information era, you would instinctively know that there is something seriously wrong with me, wouldn't you?

You can't mix the old and the new. Sometimes things just happen in history, don't they, which mean that you can't live in the same way anymore.

[1 : 02] You can't mix the old with the new. The past can no longer fit with the present. New times roll in, don't they? The new millennium. The digital age.

The old must go and the new must come. Get with the times, people say. Don't get stuck in a time warp, they say. And it turns out that that is what's happening in Jesus' day when he arrives. It's as if a new era begins when Jesus arrives to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Have a look back at verse 15 of chapter 1. Jesus appears in Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying that time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. But as he appears, people are caught in a kind of spiritual time warp.

Now, very early in this book, Mark has shown us the growing and intensifying hatred towards Jesus from different people around him.

[2 : 20] And questions are fired at Jesus, not really to get answers, but to put him on the spot, aiming to destroy him, to accuse him, to undermine him.

Just listen to some of those questions now. Chapter 2, verse 7. Chapter 2, verse 7. Why does this man speak like that?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Chapter 2, verse 16. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Chapter 2, verse 18. Why do Jesus' disciples not fast like the other disciples? Chapter 2, verse 24. Why are your disciples doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? And then as chapter 3 opens, the implied question in the synagogue is why does Jesus heal on the Sabbath?

[3 : 19] Intensifying hatred, accusations to Jesus and to his disciples. And if you look at the world today, that is not that different from how the world treats Jesus and his disciples today in most of the world.

But Jesus' explanation of this hatred is to do with people's willingness to get with the times.

To live in the era that he has brought about. Because with the arrival of Jesus is an altogether new time for humanity. The time is fulfilled, Jesus says.

And the old must go, and the new must come. Just listen again to what he says in verse 21 to 22 of chapter 2.

And note the words old and new here. No one shows a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.

[4 : 30] If he does, the patch tears away from it. The new from the old. And a worse tear is made. No one puts new wine into old wineskins.

If he does, the wine will burst the skins. And the wine is destroyed. And so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins or new wineskins.

Now there, Jesus is giving illustrations from common everyday experience that the people would have known. Where it would have been inconceivable to mix old things with new things.

So if you've ever tried making wine, I don't know if you have. But you start with the fruit, the juice, and you add sugar. And you wait for it to ferment, don't you? The new wine. And as it does that, it expands in volume.

It grows. So to put new fermenting wine into old, already stretched wineskins would be really silly.

[5 : 34] It would split the old wineskins as it grows. And you'd lose all of your wine. Similarly, if you're doing a bit of patchwork on an old pair of jeans, And you put unshrunk denim on the patch, you put it in the wash, The unshrunk new patch shrinks, and it tears the old jeans around it.

So they're just normal examples of silly things you wouldn't do to mix old and new. And so Jesus is saying that the problem for these haters around him, Is they're trying to do the silly thing with Jesus. They want to keep old ways that they have, The old skins and the old jeans, But Jesus appears and brings a new way, That if you try to mould it onto your old ways, He will simply tear it away.

Jesus comes and he says, You've got to get with the times. Or putting it more accurately, You've got to get with my times. Because I'm bringing a new era.

They're stuck in a spiritual time warp. They're being spiritual Victorians, In the modern day era when Jesus comes. So just exactly what is it, That Jesus has come to change?

[7 : 03] What was old, And what exactly is it, That is new with Jesus? Well I think we get clues about that, By looking at the three kind of accusations, That are made in this passage, There are three incidents here, Aren't there?

Where the old clashes with the new. One of them has to do with a question about fasting, And the other two are about behaviour on the Jewish Sabbath day.

Now maybe, I think we've probably only got time for the first two, This afternoon. So let me try and talk you through them. So incident number one, Jesus brings an era of feasting, Not false fasting.

An era of feasting, Not false fasting. Look at verse 18, Again there. Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, And people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, But your disciples Jesus, Do not fast.

So Jesus and his disciples are compared with, Other popular leaders of the time, So the Pharisees, Maybe John the Baptist.

[8 : 20] And he's different, Because his disciples don't fast. Now fasting is a common thing in the Bible, It is to abstain from food, For a day or so, And in the Old Testament, God had said, God had given a command, For the people to fast, Once a year, On the day of atonement.

That's all he said. You could do extra fasting, If you wanted, It could have been a good thing to do. But the fast was designed to help people remember, Sorrow for sin, And to humble themselves before God.

It was a somber thing to do, Once a year at the day of atonement. So in the time that Jesus arrives into here, It seems like fasting has now been changed, Into a regular work of religion.

We are not told it's the day of atonement, Are we? There are no particular reasons, For a national fast here.

So what they're doing is using fasting, As an outward sign of piety and virtue, It's like a badge of honour. Jesus enters this old world, Obsessed with religious cliques, Who do outward religious work.

[9 : 48] That's the old era. So what is new, About Jesus appearing? Well you might expect him to say, Might you at this point, Guys, come on, You know that fasting is not supposed to be like this.

Just think, How your fathers, Displeased God in the same way. You can read chapters like Isaiah 58, With false fasting.

This isn't from the heart, Is it guys? You're just being outwardly religious. He could have said that, And he would have been right. But his answer is really surprising.

His answer is to say, In my new era, All fasting is now inappropriate. Look at verse 19, There. Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests fast, While the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, They cannot fast.

[10 : 52] I wonder if you've ever received, A wedding invitation, That says, Dress code, Black, No dancing, No talking, No laughing, No eating, RSVP.

Of course not, have you? Weddings are for feasting, And enjoying, Not for fasting in. When the bridegroom is there, You cannot fast, can you?

It just would be really silly. You can't go to a wedding, Sit at the top table, Next to the bridegroom, And sit there and refuse to eat, The reception meal. And Jesus' time, His new era, Is like a wedding

party, Where sorrow and fasting, Are just silly behaviour.

And just listen to these promises, That God makes, To his people in Isaiah chapter 62. He says, You shall be called, My delight, And your land, Married for the Lord.

The Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married. As the bridegroom rejoices, Over the bride, So shall your God, Rejoice over you.

[12:07] You see, They're stuck, In a spiritual time warp, Because God, The bridegroom, Is now finally with them. He is right with them.

The time is fulfilled, And the kingdom of God, Is at hand. Jesus' time, Is the time for God, To delight in his people, And to marry them.

But they're living in the past. The past, That they have constructed, Of piety, And of outward religion. Dress code black, No dancing, No singing, No eating.

They totally miss, That the bridegroom, Is there with them. And they fast, And they fast. But then there's, Incident number two, Isn't it?

Which shows us, That Jesus' era, Is an era of, His lordship, Not our legalism. His lordship, Not our legalism. Look at verse 23, To 24 there.

[13:14] One sabbath, Jesus was going through, The cornfields, And as they made their way, His disciples began, To pluck ears of corn, And the pharisees, Were saying to him, Look, Why are they, Why are they doing, What is not lawful, On the sabbath?

Now, And the word sabbath, It means to cease, To cease, From work, And again, God had given commands, In the old testament, About stopping work, On one day in the week, On the sabbath day, And the point of that, Was to stop work, And to remember, All that God had worked, For them, In their salvation, To stop from work, And to remember, The rest that they had, In God, In his care for them, The sabbath day of rest, Was a rest, From work, A rest, For blessing, For the people, But you see here, Jesus comes into an era, Into their era, Where the sabbath, Has been twisted, And corrupted, By the Jewish, Religious leaders, And they had the bible, Didn't they, But they, They made an extra book, Of rules, And laws, Extra standards, Which had to be, Followed, Where the sabbath, Became a much tighter thing, Rather than being, A day of rest, It becomes a day of work, Doesn't it? The pharisees, Worked out this book, Of rules, Which gave a rule, Or a law, Or a precedent, For every single, Eventuality, On the sabbath, So, They were more holy, Than God, Weren't they, If I can put it like that?

Let me give you, Some examples, It was against the law, On the sabbath, To fix, To fix a dislocated, Ankle or a wrist, It was against the law, On the sabbath, To repair a fallen roof, It was against the law, On the sabbath, To walk more than, 800 metres, It became, Unbearably, Scrupulous, So, Jesus' disciples, Get slammed, For picking corn, On the sabbath, When they were hungry, So, Just think again, Here, About what Jesus could say, To these Pharisees, Guys, You know, That what God's law, Really asks from us, Is not like this, And you've added, All these extra rules, So just chillax, He could have said that, Couldn't he?

And he would have been right, But his answer, Is surprising again, Look at verse 25, He said to them, Have you never read, What David did, When he was in need, And was hungry, He and those, Who were with him, How he entered, The house of God, In the time of, Abiathar the priest, And ate the bread, Of the presence, Which is not lawful, For any, But the priests to eat, And he also gave it, To those, Who were with him, It's great, Isn't it?

[16:20] He says to the Bible experts, Have you never read, What David did, Have you ever read the Bible, He reminds them, Of a famous moment, In the Old Testament, Where King David, In 1 Samuel, Took his men, Into God's house, And ate some of the holy bread, The special bread, It was a bread, That only the priests, Were allowed to eat, It was a serious, Crime really, But as God's, Anointed king, David, It seemed as though, He had the authority, To obey the spirit, Of God's command, Rather than the letter, To obey God's command, As a blessing, And not as a burden, King David, Could do that, And as a direct, Descendant of David, Jesus is, King, In David's royal line, He is,

Lord, God's Lord, Verse 28, He is even Lord, Of the Sabbath, But they're stuck, In a time warp, God the bridegroom, Is right with them, King Jesus, From David's line, Is right there, The time is fulfilled, And the kingdom, Is at hand, The past, Of piety, And outward religion, Dress code black, No dancing, No singing, And no eating, They've actually, Turned a day of rest, Into a religious work, And they miss, The bridegroom, They miss, The Lord himself, The king, Of the Sabbath, Jesus brings, A new era, Era, He is the God, The bridegroom, The king, And he says, Get with the times,

Because I'm here now, As we close,
 Folks, I just want to, Bring out some implications, From this, For us today, There are a few things,
 That, That are significant, In this difference, Between the old era, Of the Jewish religion, And the
 newness of Jesus, We see two lives here, Don't we?
 Two possibilities, The old life, Is centred on, Outward religion, Whereas the new life, Is centred on
 Jesus, The old life, Is centred on, Outward religion, The new life, Is centred on Jesus, As we read,
 Those passages earlier, I wonder which, People you would, Rather be, The Pharisees, Or the
 disciples, The Pharisees, Living life, Based on outward piety, On approval, On rivalry, About whose
 disciples, Are doing what, On religious points, Or the disciples, Who have a life, Centred on Jesus,
 Who feast, And enjoy, Their bridegroom, And their Lord, Their lives, Are centred on him, And how
 different, Their lives are, Aren't they?
 Which life, Do you think, Is more hard work, Out of the two? Which life, Is more tiring, Do you think?
 So the old life, Is centred on, Outward religion, The new life, Is centred on, Jesus the Lord,
 Secondly, The old life, Corrupts, God's law, But the new life, With Jesus, Upholds, God's law, The
 old life, Corrupts, God's law, But the new life, Upholds, God's law, Now the Pharisees, Have the
 Bible, That is the ironic, Thing here, But naturally, Like the disciples, The Pharisees, We take God's
 word, And we make it, Into what we want it to be, We naturally, Turn it, Into rules, Into what suits us,
 Into ways, That we can control, Our own morality, They misrepresent, God's word, But Jesus, Gives
 us, God's word,
 [20 : 44] Proper, He gives us, The Bible, Proper, Doesn't he, God's word, As it's supposed, To be
 lived out, So we can see, How living God's law, Is meant for blessing, And not for burdens, The old
 life, Corrupts God's law, But the new, Jesus, Life, Upholds God's law, And thirdly, And lastly, The
 old way, Brings death, But Jesus, New way, Brings life, Jesus shows us, Doesn't he, How
 upholding, God's commandments, Doesn't crush my life, Like the life, Of the Pharisees, But it gives
 it, Back to me, Not to starve me, But to feed me, But to feed me, The problem is, That actually, We
 all like, The old way, Don't we?
 The old way, Of Israel, In Jesus' day, We like, We like, The old genes, Of man-made, Of man-made
 religion, And we love, The old wineskins, Of controlling, Our own morals, Having outward work, To
 do, We're stuck, In a spiritual, Time warp, Aren't we?
 But if you try, And hold Jesus, Into that, He will simply, Tear away, What you have, Jesus comes,
 And he says, You've got to get, With the times, Or more accurately, With my time, The new era,
 The era of, Feasting, And not, False fasting, The era of, My lordship, Over your life, And not, Your
 legalism, It's the era, Of the bridegroom, Of the lord, So, Get out of the time warp, Let's pray.