

8- Servants Works Beyond Religious Constraints *Mark 2:18-3:6; 7:1-23*

In the name of religion...wars are fought...young children are given as wives to old men...men to strap bomb on themselves and kill innocent people and fly airplanes into building full of innocent people.

If we only practice Christianity without the relationship it simply becomes a lifeless religion.

Let me make a few simply statements that I believe to be true in our relationship with serving and religion.

1- Religion calls us to ritual but salvation calls us to relationship. 2- Religion says it has to look like this servanthood takes many shapes. 3- Traditions of Men and the will of God clash sometimes.

I am not advocating throwing off all things in the past. I simply want to set us free to do the will of God in whatever shape or fashion that takes as long as it does not violate the Scriptures.

I- The Four Questions of Religious:

Would you say that Jesus was a conformist? I mean, did He simply do what was the common practice of the day, or did He do things as a Servant that was beyond the constraints of religion.

In our context today we will look briefly at three different places and four events where Jesus did not meet the expectations of the "religious" crowd.

1- The Question about Fasting:

This greater text is *Mark 2:18-22* but we will only look at a few verses from this content. *Mark 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?*

There was really only one day a year that the fast was compulsory, the Day of Atonement. The Jews however had started making it a two day a week event, Mondays and Thursdays from 6am to 6pm.

Notice the response of Jesus is not that He was against fasting, He was against the legalism that if you do not do exactly like I do you cannot love God.

Jesus answer to them was that they did not fast because it was time to celebrate and have joy like was practiced during a time of wedding feast. *Mark 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?*

Beloved religion wants to take they joy out of salvation sometimes by placing a yoke around our neck. Jesus said in *Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

He used wine skins to show them that what God was up to was not what they were used to seeing. In fact what God was doing was going to blow apart their concept of things. Jesus was and still is a radical when it comes to practicing the religion of men but totally obedient to the things of God.

2- The Question about Harvesting on the Sabbath:

The next scene is on the Sabbath and Jesus and His disciples walked in a cornfield. *Mark 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?* They were breaking the law, as interpreted by the Pharisees, when they plucked the ears and ate corn because they were hungry. Let me try to convey the emotions of those that set rules based on the Bible. They become so important to them that they are very upset by rule breakers. I chose to think they are upset because of their concern for the spiritual state and fate of the law breaker.

Jesus reminded them of a past event when in the life of David when he did something considered unlawful as well. Then made the great statement in *Mark 2:27 And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.*

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

3- The Question about Healing on Sabbath:

The next encounter that Jesus had with the religious crowd was in the synagogue in Capernaum. There was a man who was crippled. *Mark 3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.*

What needed done? A man needed healed. They watched to see if Jesus would. He asked them a question. *Mark 3:3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.*

Notice the emotion that Mark gives in his account that other gospels omit. Jesus was moved to anger. Not destruction anger but anger at their religious pious standing in the way of having a heart for others.

Mark 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

They are seeking to kill Jesus for doing what He did to help a man because He had broken their religious convictions.

4- The Question about Unwashed Hands:

The fourth question has a lot to teach us about making sure that we are clean within and not just without. *Mark 7:1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. ... 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*

The response of Jesus was one that showed that He was aware of just how far away from God the hearts of these religious crowd was. They washed outside and never paid heed to the need for internal cleansing.

Mark 7: 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

They made the Word of God of no importance because their tradition supplanted it. *Mark 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.*

Jesus told the people in *Mark 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.*

He explained it to the disciples that did not understand in *Mark 7:18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

So the lessons are many in these four confrontations of Jesus as He worked as a servant. My questions are but two. Have you allowed your religion to get in the way of your relationship with God and by that trying to make others conform to your religion? Second, is your heart right with God?